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**INTERPRETATION AND VIOLENCE:
REASON, NARRATIVE, AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN THE WORKS OF
JOHN MILTON**

By Phillip Johnathan Donnelly

**A Thesis Submitted to the
University of Ottawa Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English**

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the prose and poetry of John Milton (1608-1674). It considers how his poetic practice was shaped by the sustained attempt to argue for religious toleration. The first stage of the analysis examines, in Chapter 1, the theological basis for arguments justifying the use of religious coercion in seventeenth-century Britain. Chapter 2 then considers Milton's response to such arguments in his pre-Restoration prose. This first part of the argument clarifies one of the most urgent questions that constituted the horizon of expectations to which Milton's writing was addressed. The second stage considers, in Chapter 3, the debate over whether Milton authored the Ramist treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, in order to understand how he attempts to move beyond the stylistic limitations of customary theological and theoretical discourse. Chapter 4 compares the apparently contrasting accounts of rational truth presented in *Areopagitica* and *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio* in order to establish a precise account of the educative reading process to which Milton exhorts his readers. The third stage of the argument demonstrates how *Paradise Lost* addresses, by the most biblically consistent and subtle means, the root issues of human freedom and divine justice, as they relate ultimately to arguments regarding the use of state coercion in religious causes. The analysis considers Raphael's narration of the war in heaven (books 5 and 6), the account of the Fall and its consequences (books 9 and 10), and Michael's account of biblical history (books 11 and 12). The argument shows the poem's exceptional capacity to engage the issues of coercion, charity, and biblical truth by a necessarily indirect means that recapitulates within itself the whole of the biblical story. In effect, the epic poses for its English Protestant readers a necessary choice between either advocating religious toleration or abandoning their own sense of authentic Christian faith. The conclusion briefly considers how the preceding account of *Paradise Lost* leads also to a new understanding of *Paradise Regained*.

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I am grateful to David Shore for his seminar on Renaissance prose which occasioned my first sustained thinking on the debate between Erasmus and Luther on the freedom of the will and on the relationship between Milton's *Areopagitica* and *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio*.

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Abbreviations and Editions

CPW *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. 8 vols. Eds. Don M. Wolfe et al. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82.

Works *The Works of John Milton*. 18 vols. Eds. Frank Allen Patterson et al. New York: Columbia UP, 1931-8.

All quotations from Milton's English prose or English translations of his Latin prose are from the Yale edition. Latin quotations are from the Columbia edition. In cases where I cite an introduction or annotation to the Yale edition, I name the editor, followed by *CPW*, volume number and page. Unless indicated otherwise, citations of Milton's poetry are from the edition by Merritt Hughes, *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

Introduction

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how the formal and rhetorical purposes of John Milton's poetry unite to address one of his recurrent thematic preoccupations: religious toleration. To understand Milton's poetic achievement, however, requires a clear account of both the theological arguments used to justify religious coercion and Milton's explicit response to those arguments in his prose. As a result, this investigation concerns the intersection of philosophical and theological discourse within his poetic practice. The general field of inquiry is well established in Milton studies. The means, however, by which the argument here proceeds involves an important departure from customary investigations of Milton's theology. My specific treatment of *Paradise Lost* begins by questioning the attempt to use explicit theological formulations as a means to gloss Milton's poetry. Although I demonstrate a continuity in the conceptual and rhetorical preoccupations between Milton's prose and his poetry, the aim here is not simply to observe how Milton handles the issue of religious toleration in different generic contexts. Rather, by considering the composite of substantive theological claims used to defend religious coercion, we can then understand how Milton's poetry, through its formal capacity for indirection, attempts to subvert and then reconstitute the assumptions underlying the debate over religious toleration in seventeenth-century England. The wide ranging investigation of historical theology in the first chapter, and of the substantive claims in Milton's polemical prose in the second chapter, are therefore not simply general background to Milton's poetry. Rather, those chapters, which constitute Part I of the dissertation, present the main conceptual dimensions of the debate over religious toleration to which *Paradise Lost* offers a response.

Part II of the argument begins, with Chapter 3, to open the question of how Milton's biblicist poetic practice offers an alternative to the customary modes of theoretical theology. The recent debate over whether Milton authored the Ramist theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* provides the occasion, though not the final context, for reflection on the purposes of Milton's poetic biblicism. Chapter 4 addresses the question of how Milton's potentially reductive Ramism relates to his repeated appeals to "reason" as a substantive guide to interpretation. Of the three terms, reason, narrative, and religious toleration, the role of "reason" is likely the most contested within Milton studies. Except for those who condemn Milton because his writing does not perfectly mirror contemporary liberalism, most critics would readily admit that Milton believed in some form of religious toleration. Likewise, few would deny that Milton understood the theological implications of differing narrative styles. The conflicting assessments of Milton's "rationalism," however, are surprising in their number and range. Milton has been variously characterized as an epistemological rationalist skeptical of all sensory knowledge (Milner 120-26); an advocate for the "instrumentalization of thought" which entails the "removal of the transcendental imperative" (Rapaport 170, 178); an adherent to the metaphysical realism of earlier Christian humanism which opposed the predominant nominalism of the period (Bennett 7-32); a formal logician participating fully in the reductive tendencies of Ramist method (Ong, "Epithet" 189-212); a nominalist practitioner of a paradoxical baroque rationalism that celebrates irreducible indeterminacy (Martin, *Ruins* 121-55; 287-99). Predictably, the account offered here agrees entirely with none of these, though it is most similar to Bennett's. My characterization of Milton's rationalism, however, involves a difference in mode of inquiry, as well as a difference in conclusion. Rather than search for an epistemology or philosophical position with which to identify or compare Milton, the analysis here attempts a more inductive

account of how Milton uses “reason,” both in terms of his explicit appeals to it as a category, and his evident practical deployment of reason as a principle so defined. By approaching Milton’s rationalism through the specific logic of his arguments regarding religious toleration, we can understand the relationship between his deployment of “right reason” as conscience and “reason” as the human faculty which enables individual understanding of the world and of texts.

Some initial clarification of how the phrase “religious toleration” is used in this study may also be helpful at this point. We are concerned here with “toleration,” not as a personal quality, nor as a virtue, but as a legal parameter. As indicated by the sub-title to his *Treatise of Civil Power in Religious Causes*, genuine religious toleration, for Milton, involved the conditions under which “it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compell in matters of Religion” (CPW 7:238). In short, Milton opposed the use of coercive state power to control religious belief or practice. Because the goal is to understand the implications of such a belief for Milton’s writing, I do not here interrogate the way in which Milton or his contemporaries use the terms “religion” or “toleration.” A different kind of historiographical investigation might raise questions about how early modern writers deployed the very idea of “religion” in relation to the emergent power of the modern nation-state (for example, Cavanaugh 403-8; C. Smith 30-44). Without denying the value of such investigations, the aim here is to focus on how Milton formulated his response to the question of religious toleration as he understood the terms of the question. Milton distinguishes between “true” and “false” religion, but he does not use the term “religion” to indicate a genus that has several species. “True religion,” for Milton, is simply true worship of God, that is Protestant worship. Accordingly, to “tolerate” a given action or practice means, for Milton, the freedom to act publicly without fear of prosecution under civil laws, whether the laws entail fines, imprisonment, or other bodily force.

In seventeenth-century England conflict regarding religious toleration was ultimately tied to disagreement over biblical interpretation and consequently to the meaning of biblical narrative. Such disagreement concerned not only how to understand particular passages of Scripture, or whether they were even relevant to the question, but also how to understand the nature of the presumed relationship between individual reason and the biblical text. In that context, it was possible for both those arguing for and those arguing against the use of religious coercion to appeal to the concept of “reason.” Those following, for example, the lead of Richard Hooker (considered in Chapter 1 below) emphasized the role of reason as a guide specifically in temporal matters, as distinct from the guidance of Scripture in spiritual or eternal matters. On such a basis, the inheritors of Hooker’s position tended to justify the use of coercion as part of church discipline, by claiming that the external government of the church pertained to temporal rather than eternal matters and was, like civil law generally, based on the use of human reason. By contrast, Milton argued that the use of regenerate reason by Christians precludes the use of coercion in religious matters, whether concerning explicit belief or external conduct. In one sense, Milton follows Hooker in emphasizing the role of reason as it participates in the continuities between temporal and eternal order. In effect, Milton runs the implications in the opposite direction, arguing that the law of reason inherently presumes freedom from coercion at the moment of choice. But those who argued that “reason,” as distinct from revelation, legitimated the use of merely temporal coercion were also able to draw upon the ecclesiology of Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*. By elaborating the entire scope of biblical history in a way that argued for the hidden or spiritual nature of the true church, Augustine presented a version of the overarching biblical narrative that would dominate the Latin West and would later provide the ecclesiological basis for the logic of religious coercion. Those following Hooker’s arguments

could draw upon Augustine's account of biblical history in order to guide interpretation of specific biblical passages. At root, the debate over the temporal meaning of the church as an institution hinged on how to understand specifically the end of that larger biblical story, or what is called eschatology. Apocalyptic and millenarian interpretations of eschatology were based on a confidence that references to specific temporal events could be discerned in biblical prophecies regarding the end of human history. Augustine ultimately rejected such a view because of the theological and ecclesiastical dangers of triumphalism, insisting that the spiritual nature of the true church precluded temporal identification of events or personages from prophetic biblical narratives. This "spiritual" version of eschatology was, however, later deployed to justify religious coercion, and in this respect ecclesiology forms the potential link between the interpretation of biblical narrative and the justification of religious coercion.

Both Hooker and Milton, however, also acknowledged the central place of regenerate reason in biblical interpretation—as did most Protestants, despite a corresponding emphasis upon the poverty of unregenerate reason. And thus, the debate over religious toleration was also tied to the central question of Protestant hermeneutics: how to sustain the Reformed critique of ecclesiastical authority as a mere outward form (whether Church tradition or ceremonies) while preserving the integrity of the Bible as an authority external to the individual believer. In short, how could the doctrine of *sola scriptura* be understood so that it guarded against simple self-projection, collapsing into *solus ego*? One common response to that Protestant challenge was to invoke the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*) which was, in effect, a substitute for tradition that offered an intersubjective means to deliberate between competing interpretive claims (Haskin, *Burden* 76-83). In practice, however, the exact content of such a rule proved notoriously difficult to stabilize, as it was variously defined according to specific Protestant doctrine, or

ancient creeds, or received doctrine in general, until, according to Dayton Haskin, “it proved the Achilles’s heel of Protestant hermeneutics” (79; 77-83). Such an assessment suggests that, like Achilles, Protestant hermeneutics, despite its heroic qualities, is simply dead, suffering its fate as a result of deeply rooted intellectual incoherence that could not finally be overcome. Indeed, the extent to which such a view inhabits the core of Milton studies as whole is difficult to overestimate. In one sense, the assumed story is simply that of “secularization” which claims to explain how Protestantism necessarily led to rationalism, skepticism, and unbelief (compare Weber; Habermas, *Transformation*; Habermas, *Theory*). Milton’s aim in *Paradise Lost*, of course, is to tell a story that he believes to be “Not less but more Heroic than the wrath / Of stern Achilles” (9.14-15). This investigation proceeds by holding in question the validity of Milton’s hermeneutics, rather than presuming its ultimate incoherence. As a result, one of the central claims of this study is that Milton offers in *Paradise Lost* his own version of the “rule of faith” that would address the role of reason as it pertains both to biblical interpretation and religious toleration. Milton’s renarration of the whole of biblical history would serve as a guide which embodied in itself an interpretive and ethical practice through biblical content. Milton knew that in order to address adequately the problem of religious coercion, he needed to engage the overarching narrative of the Bible in a way that, like Augustine’s account, explained the relationship between the church and the world, as well as reason and revelation, but, unlike *De Civitate*, could not be misconstrued as a justification of religious coercion.

The analysis of *Paradise Lost*, which constitutes Part III of the argument, unfolds in four stages. Sections 1 and 2 both focus on Raphael’s narration of the war in heaven to show how the central location of that story within the larger plot of the epic serves to advance the poem’s stated purpose as a theodicy. The first section demonstrates how the typological dynamics of

Raphael's story help to make intelligible the unity of freedom and charity within a contingent universe. Moreover, the typological poetic strategy becomes formally inseparable from the poem's claims as a theodicy. The second section considers the importance of Raphael's story as a prelapsarian revelation which complements and fulfills human reason. In effect, the complex intertextual biblicism of the inset narrative and its relationship to the larger poem allows Milton to circumvent the potential antinomy between more functional accounts of reason (exclusively logico-deductive) and more substantive accounts of reason (involving some necessary prescriptive or descriptive truth content). The eschatological aspects of that same intertextual strategy are simultaneously part of the means by which the epic attempts to engage the affections of readers. Section 3 focuses on the account of the fall and its immediate consequences in books 9 and 10 of the poem. The analysis demonstrates how Milton consistently invokes and then frustrates the customary allegorical interpretations of the fall which described that event in terms of faculty psychology, and specifically in terms of the faculty of reason. In those books of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's double insistence upon individual responsibility and mutual dependence is inseparable from the epic's typological embodiment of charity. Bringing together these three accounts of how Milton argues for a humanly intelligible integration of reason, freedom, and charity through biblical narrative, the final section of the analysis considers the treatment of religious coercion in books 11 and 12 of the epic. Ultimately, the argument shows that Milton attempts to pose for his English Protestant readers an unavoidable choice between either advocating religious toleration or abandoning their own Reformed understanding of authentic Christian belief.

This introduction indicates the lines of investigation for the study, but offers no theoretical explanation for the reading practices deployed here. I have previously addressed the demand for

that kind of explanation in *Rhetorical Faith: The Literary Hermeneutics of Stanley Fish* (2000). That study was initially undertaken as just such a theoretical preface to any further publicly defensible interpretive practice. Only after completing that study did I realize how deeply modern is the very demand for a theoretical prolegomenon which could claim to show the inevitability of the ensuing interpretation. From that earlier study I incorporate here only one substantive claim: that modern readings of pre-Enlightenment texts typically privilege the role of immediate readerly consciousness to the complete exclusion of memory. By failing to consider the presumed role of memory as a mediating category between consciousness and truth, critical practice today tends to attribute to pre-Enlightenment texts an alien division between subjectivity and mind-independent reality. That tendency results in ascribing to such texts a claim either to complete immediate knowledge of ultimate reality or to a complete disavowal of any knowledge whatsoever. My previous study demonstrates how that error informs Fish's reading of Augustine, but the theoretical orientation of that argument required that Fish's interpretation of Milton be accepted on its own terms throughout. The present study is, therefore, the first occasion I have had to engage directly Fish's treatment of Milton. The previous argument did, however, involve some characterization of Milton's rationalism. And though my claims regarding reader-response theory remain unchanged, the present analysis involves a substantial rejection of that earlier account of Milton, which had for the sake of argument, depended exclusively upon *De Doctrina Christiana* and selected passages from *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio*.

By considering Milton's poetry as it engages the relation between reason, narrative and religious toleration, this study ultimately offers a new account of the meaning of Milton's biblicist poetic practice. In doing so, the argument also results in a new account of the

substantive relationship between Milton's prose and poetry. In this respect, the investigation differs from other attempts to use seventeenth-century philosophic discourse as a gloss on Milton's poetry. Such arguments often tend toward a preoccupation with the axiomatic content of the poems in such a way that overlooks the philosophic content inherent in specific literary forms. In effect, in their zeal to demonstrate how Milton's poetry engages such contemporary issues as materialist monism (S. Fallon, *Philosophers*) or predestination (Sellin, "Predestination"), critics risk obscuring the fact that Milton chose to address those issues specifically through a biblical epic. My point is not that these issues should be ignored in favour of some retreat into formalism; rather, only through an understanding of how Milton approached the relation between biblical narrative form and rational intelligibility can we begin to discern why Milton would have thought narrative poetry was, in fact, the most effective way to deal with such philosophic issues. Through that attention to poetic means, this study demonstrates the deep integration between the claims of *Paradise Lost* as a theodicy and its political purpose as an argument against religious coercion. But first, it is important to understand the precise character of the theological basis for the political question which *Paradise Lost* addresses. For those most interested in the epic, rather than the prose, this particular structure of argument requires some patience, but also offers the most promise of reward for those who remember, as they read, the beginning and end of the study.

PART I
THE LOGIC OF FORCE AND FREEDOM

Chapter One:
Theological Reasons for Religious Coercion

Milton's account of religious toleration adopts and transforms earlier treatments of the issue. But to evaluate his position requires that we recognize the mixed character of the conceptual framework inherited by Milton and his contemporaries. This chapter responds to Milton's own preoccupations by focusing on the theological bases for religious coercion and toleration. Despite the intellectual focus of the argument here, the question of religious toleration often had an immediate urgency for the writers who lived within the shifting theological and ecclesiastical controversies of seventeenth-century England. The experience of the English Church after the Reformation had often concerned the relation between church and state, specifically as it pertained to religious coercion. From the times of William Tyndale's and Thomas More's executions, and the subsequent Marian persecutions, through the program of state-regulated mutilation and imprisonment under Archbishop Laud, through the civil war, and beyond into the Restoration, English writers debated fiercely the right ordering of the relationship between religious authority and state power.¹ The aim of this first chapter is to outline the conceptual background to the topic by three means: first, to describe the tensions within the Augustinian legacy regarding religious toleration before the Reformation; second, to offer a brief account of the debate between Erasmus and Luther over

the freedom of the will, as a key to understanding how that Augustinian legacy bifurcated at the Reformation; third, to consider how Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* attempts to overcome that bifurcation, even as it presents the most lucid exposition and defense of the ecclesiastical position generally held by Milton's prelatical opponents.

Because this chapter is so different from those that follow, both in its historical scope and its theological emphasis, some preliminary explanation is in order regarding the means and ends of the analysis. The particular readings of Augustine, Erasmus, Luther, and Hooker presented here are not intended to be, in themselves, especially innovative. Such brief treatment of several major writers requires the setting aside of many questions, ambiguities, and complexities, without denying that those subtleties deserve fuller consideration elsewhere. As a result, this chapter necessarily presumes, rather than interrogates, some of the historiographical commonplaces of patristic and Reformed theology. I offer, however, a reading of the primary texts which is unique in emphasis, and which allows a new understanding of the connections between those works. Thus, my account of Augustine and pre-Reformation history, for example, draws upon the influential work of R.A. Markus and Oliver O'Donovan. But my aim is to show some of the deeper connections between Augustinian ecclesiology and the most important intellectual influences on seventeenth-century English church policy regarding coercion. This is why my historical account, in a sense, begins at the end of the story, with the attempt by Restoration clerics to deploy Augustine's writing as part of their argument against religious toleration.

In terms of the ends, or purposes, of this analysis, each of these writers contributes something specific and necessary for a full account of Milton's response to the theological justification of religious coercion. In Christian traditions of the Latin West, Augustine's work

provided a paradigmatic account of the possible relationship between biblical interpretation, historical narration, and ecclesiology, but also a justification for religious coercion. Erasmus, Luther, and Hooker each formulated differently the relationship between reason, soteriology, and coercion in a way that altered the Augustinian account of the church, the Bible, and the intelligibility of human history. As a matter of course, the last sentence raises the question, among others, of what is meant here by the wide-ranging term “Augustinian” (Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz* 13-16). There is little doubt that Milton read Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, given the 45 citations from that work in Milton’s *Commonplace Book* (Fiore 1-2). But the larger argument of this study does not depend upon claiming a direct importance for that reading. Rather, the ultimate focus of this chapter is the Reformed transformation of the ecclesiology in *De Civitate*, epitomized by Hooker, which provided the intellectual context in which Milton and his contemporaries debated the question of religious toleration. Even allowing for the heterodoxy of the *De Doctrina Christiana* attributed to Milton, the critical practice of observing some Augustinian influence upon Milton is not unreasonable, given the virtual identification of Augustinian theology with orthodox belief in the Latin West. Such investigations, however, tend to focus on either Augustine’s hermeneutic and rhetorical influence (for example, Egan 1-10; Fish, *Self-Consuming* 21-42) or his doctrinal and philosophical influence (for example, Fiore 1-11; J.S. Hill, *Infinity*), rather than upon the aesthetic or poetic implications of a substantive Augustinian teaching. Milton adapts much from Augustine, but he also knew that the ecclesiology of *De Civitate*, in both its initial and Reformed versions, remained a source for legitimating religious coercion. The issue is first taken up indirectly within his prose tracts, but the attempt to provide a complete and explicit alternative to the Reformed Augustinian allowance of religious coercion led him to renarrate

the whole of biblical history. In effect, the conceptual relationships outlined in this chapter present a central question to which Milton's writings propose an answer, through their varied attempts to integrate biblical narrative form and content.

At first, it might seem surprising that ecclesiastical writers of the English Restoration appealed directly to St. Augustine's anti-Donatist writings in order to justify their practice of religious persecution. One of the most extended and influential instances of such an argument can be found in Thomas Long's *The History of the Donatists* (1677). Long claimed to show "how exactly every scene of that horrid tragedy, which was first acted in the churches in Africa, hath been acted over, and (if I may so speak) over acted in the Church of England" (57). Similarly, a collection of essays known as *The London Cases* (1685), viewed "as the definitive refutation of Nonconformity," included no less than four essays that "explored the parallels between Donatism and modern Dissent" (Goldie, "Theory" 342-43; see Cave, et al.).² And there were, indeed, some close parallels between the Donatists of the late Roman Empire and the Dissenters of the English Restoration. At root, both groups insisted upon an identity between the "visible" and "invisible" church, arguing, for example, that the legitimacy of the church hierarchy extended no further than the moral authority (or corruption) of its leaders. Correspondingly, it may seem natural that in both periods there would be a similar response to such opposition from the leaders of the state-supported church. The correlation, however, is not just incidental. It has strong historical roots.

Augustine's opposition to the Donatists was not simply a situational polemic, but was based on the core of his ecclesiology. As a result, the inheritors of an Augustinian doctrine of the Church were already equipped with the basis for addressing similar positions. Long before the Restoration, Richard Hooker used an Augustinian foundation to articulate a

rationale for state-sponsored, episcopal ecclesiastical polity. Those who defended the established Church both before and after the Interregnum, and who were so deeply influenced by Hooker, chose to deploy the anti-Donatist tracts against Dissenters not just as a result of *ad hoc* convenience. The decision resulted in part from the deeper extent to which the Augustinian foundations for such an argument were already integral to the ecclesiology that they had inherited from Hooker. The first challenge here is to clarify some of the difficulties in understanding Augustine's mature doctrine of the Church in *De Civitate Dei*. We can then consider how that doctrine was shaped by later writers and ultimately became part of the intellectual rationale for coercion in seventeenth-century England.

Three aspects of Augustine's thought help to elucidate the broader implications of his position: first, his general view of human history and historiography, in contrast to "prophecy" or "sacred history"; second, his specific understanding of Roman imperial history; third, the implications of that understanding for the relation between Church authority and state power. With respect to "history" as a sequence of temporal events, Augustine clearly maintains that God is sovereign and that no human action is "secular," as though it could ever be outside of the divine authority over all creation (Markus 14). Augustine does employ a historiographical distinction, however, between the narratives offered in Scripture and those written by pagan historians, referring to the former as *sacra historia* or *prophetica historia* (*De Civitate Dei* 15.8.1; 16.2.3). Because Scripture involves a divinely inspired interpretation of the events of universal history, events equally susceptible to other interpretations, the defining characteristic of sacred history is its status as a revelation of the divine meaning of historical events. This is why in *De Civitate Dei* Augustine makes the connection between sacred history and figural interpretation (15.8.1). In his earlier writings, Augustine uses the terms "prophecy" and

“history” in the more common sense of “mutually exclusive categories,” where the former pertains to future events while the latter pertains to past events. By the time he wrote *De Civitate Dei*, however, he “had come to abandon this way of speaking” and instead employed the term “prophecy” in the broader sense of prophetic insight into historical events (Markus 15). Thus, the divine character of “sacred history” resides in the “special quality” of the narrative rather than the events themselves, while the term “secular history” includes all extra-biblical historical narrative (14-16). This hermeneutic aspect of Augustine’s position, should not, however, obscure the pivotal importance that he still maintains for the language-independent reality of historical events and their consequences.

Another change in Augustine’s thinking involved his ultimate “rejection of any attempt to introduce any division [of temporal epochs] derived from sacred history into the history of the age after Christ” (20). This movement is evident in Augustine’s repudiation of “naive millenaristic speculations,” such that by 400 A.D. “even the residual echoes of millenaristic ideas which have been detected in his earlier writings finally disappear” (20).³ In reference to Augustine’s other writings (pre-400 A.D.), the developmental character of Markus’ argument is worth emphasizing: Augustine began holding many of the millenarian assumptions of his time but only gradually came to re-examine and reject them over a period of several years. Augustine makes a similar observation himself: “I also entertained this [“millenarian”] notion at one time” (*Civitate* 20.7), but rather than refute that view specifically, he offers his own alternative interpretation of St. John’s Apocalypse which is “spiritual,” rather than historico-speculative. Based on the character of that exegetical response, R.A. Markus describes Augustine’s mature view of millenarian speculation in these terms:

Since the coming of Christ, until the end of the world, all history is homogenous,... it cannot be mapped out in terms of a pattern drawn from sacred history... it can no longer contain decisive turning-points endowed with a significance in sacred history. Every moment may have its unique and mysterious significance in the divine *tableau* of men's doings and sufferings; but it is a significance to which God's revelation does not supply the clues.

(Markus 20-21)

The main elements in the first sentence above seem accurate, but the implications of the last sentence do not fit entirely with other aspects of Augustine's mature theology. Clearly Augustine would insist that part of the importance of biblical narrative (sacred history) is precisely to "supply clues," so that believers can interpret correctly, albeit in a limited way, the "doings and sufferings" of their own historical lives: This point is corroborated by all those who, for example, locate in Augustine's *Confessions* the source of a tradition of "personalized" biblical interpretation (Haskin, *Burden* 3-7). Augustine's critique of millenarianism need not be radicalized so that it is no longer consistent with the rest of his own teaching or practice. He insists upon a degree of skepticism regarding post-biblical historical narratives, but that should not be taken to imply that the credibility of all such narratives is equally indeterminate and obscure in their relation to the revealed truth of scriptural history. Otherwise, Augustine would have no basis for claiming that his own narrative in *De Civitate Dei* is superior to those of the pagan historians. The crucial point here is that Augustine rejects the specific millenarian strategy of using biblical frameworks of epochs or figures to interpret current "historical" (public or political) events (*Civitate* 20.7). This view of history enabled Augustine's desacralization of the Roman Empire, underwriting

his refusal to identify any aspect of the imperial political agenda with a providential design. But that same view also entailed the rejection of a millenarian hermeneutic which demanded that the biblical elect be susceptible to definitive corporate identification within the *saeculum*. Nevertheless, despite refusing to superimpose biblical epochs onto current events, the nature of Augustine's own argument in *De Civitate Dei* required him to recount the whole of biblical history as a divine interpretation of events within a universal human history.

Augustine's view of history is therefore crucial to his ecclesiology, in that it underlies his argument for the essentially "hidden" nature of the true Church:

All we can know is that the two cities are always present in any historical society; but we can never--except in the light of a biblical revelation in the unique strand of 'sacred history'--identify the locus of either.... The citizen of the heavenly city was no more a stranger to the *saeculum* than was the citizen of the earthly city, for here and now the two cities between them are, quite simply, what the *saeculum* is. It is neither a third thing somewhere between them, nor is it, except eschatologically, resolvable into its two constituents. For the citizen of the heavenly city, concern for the *saeculum* is the temporal dimension of his concern for the eternal city. (Markus 101-2)

With this characterization of the relation between the two cities in the temporal realm, Markus concludes that Augustine saw Christians as being "bound" "to a temporal society devoted to the service of objectives which lay well on this side of the final goals of life" (102). The problem is that this latter point involves a mixing of terms whose separation has thus far been the basis for the characterization of Augustine's position. The difference between the earthly and heavenly cities lies in the respective objects of the communities' founding affections and

in their respective ends (*Civitate* 14.28). The idea of *saeculum* is introduced to indicate that period of time during which the two finally divergent cities are temporarily mixed. However, to suggest that *saeculum* then further constitutes a realm where Christians are "bound" in the service of wholly temporal objectives re-introduces the dimension of "ends" within *saeculum*. Such a view, in ascribing temporal ends to both the "city of man" and the *saeculum*, seems to confuse the distinction between them. For *saeculum*, as Augustine uses the term, is simply the time between the present and the eschaton, not a religiously neutral social space (O'Donovan, "Augustine's" 141).

We can see an instance of how Augustine's ecclesiology shapes his interpretation of "prophetic history," in his handling of Revelation 20:1-6 (*Civitate* 20.7). In that context, he interprets the angelic "seal" upon the binding of the Devil to mean that "God wished it to be kept secret who belongs to the Devil's party, and who does not":

For in this world, to be sure, this is kept a secret, since it is uncertain whether he who seems to be standing firm is destined to fall and whether he who seems to lie fallen is destined to rise again. (*Civitate* 20.7)

It is not incidental that Augustine here offers another biblical proof for the hidden character of the true Church, only fully revealed at the end of time, within the course of an interpretation that he proposes specifically as an alternative to millenarian readings of the Apocalypse. In this respect, the relation between Augustine's view of history and his attitude towards the Donatists is less paradoxical than it might seem. The doctrine of the church implicit in Augustine's view of history is directly consistent with the substantive basis of his disagreement with the Donatists. The Donatists insisted that the true members of the Church could be known by humans before the end of the *saeculum* and thereby gave the external form

of the Church a spiritual importance that Augustine would not allow. That claim, to the direct spiritual or eternal identity of their temporal institution and all its members, is the ultimate basis for their opposition to the Catholic Church. Because Augustine's view of the hidden character of the church is based on his distinction between secular and sacred historiography, his opposition to the Donatists is ultimately rooted in his view of history, whose meaning until the eschaton remains concealed.⁴

Moreover, Augustine's "desacralization" of the Roman Empire and his attitude toward the Donatists, regarding coercion, "spring from a single root" (Markus 151). It is worth clarifying the character of that "root," and how it later changes. In Augustine's account, "the two eschatological cities always coexist and overlap" within the *saeculum* (150, 64-71; Augustine, *Civitate* 19.17). This belief led him, in turn, to insist upon the "eschatological ambivalence of all empirical human groupings," thereby enabling him to "dissolve" all institutions "into terms of the individuals who compose [them]" (Markus 151). Although he does not subscribe to an "atomistic personalism," the basis for his theological rejection of Donatism stems from precisely his tendency to see reality in terms of the eternal destinies of souls, rather than human institutions.⁵ This attitude, however, apparently also concealed from Augustine the inconsistency between his limited endorsement of coercion, with respect to the Donatists, and his tendency otherwise to desacralize society and history. At the same time, Augustine's thinking is so removed from anything approximating the conception of a "state," as we understand it today, that he does not consider the issue of religious coercion in terms of "church-state relations" but in terms of the specific people who would have to make political decisions—that is, rulers and ruled individuals both accountable to God.⁶ In this respect, early modern inheritors of Augustine's position made two important changes. First, within the

context of the nation-state, the account of coercion could not be tempered to the same degree by regard for persons in their specific circumstances. Second, the emphasis upon individual accountability to God was theologically resituated by later writers within an account that emphasized the need for institutions, and ultimately the state, to govern bodies (as distinct from souls). The latter development allowed a rationale for religious coercion to be institutionally legitimated in a way that Augustine's personalist attitude could not.

At the same time, the legacy of Augustine's ecclesiology involved a central tension over the extent to which the Church, as a visible community, could assert its complete independence from a given society whose members also made up its own numbers. Augustine's model for the two communities was based on his reading of Jeremiah which describes the relation between the city of Babylon and the exiled community of Israel (Jeremiah 29:7; *Civitate* 19.26). There are, however, different ways "of identifying the duality in this situation": "On the one hand, there are the two 'cities', the social realities of Israel and Babylon which live side by side; on the other, there are the two 'rules' under which Israel finds itself, that of Babylon and that of Yhwh" (O'Donovan, *Desire* 83). The potential to emphasize that the duality is either between political communities or between political authorities had far-reaching implications throughout the medieval and early modern period. This is evident in the shifting interpretations of the tradition of "Two-Governments-Christendom" in the repeated attempts to reassert the evangelistic dimension of ecclesial life within Christendom. The consistent challenge was to maintain the church's independence even after the ostensible conversion of the political leadership:

The papalist revolution of the eleventh century attempted to disengage the clergy from the structures of society in order to establish a distinct juridical

order with superior authority. The mendicant movement of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries attempted to identify an apostolic class set apart from property and rule. And the Calvinist and Tridentine reforms of the late sixteenth century attempted to redefine autonomous structures of ecclesial government.... The question which created the church-state relations in the West was how the sign of Christ's victory [the conversion of earthly rulers] could be protected against subversion, which would leave the church in a Babylonian captivity to its own Christian rulers. (196-97)

Thus, for example, the Franciscans attempted to recover a true sense of spiritual authority independent from property and were critical of papal authority, whose apologists assumed the equivalence of property, power, jurisdiction, and authority (207). However, by distinguishing the authority of the "word of Gospel truth" from "the authority of threat or command," those defending the Franciscan cause also laid the foundation for the Erastian principles of the early Reformers (207-8). The work that is "usually identified as the herald of this new [proto-Erastian] conception" is *Defensor Pacis* (1324), by Marsilius of Padua. It is therefore revealing that the text was published in England in the 1535 "as an act of propaganda by the English Government" (O'Donovan, *Desire* 207).⁷ Although the Marsilian account restricted the use of force to civil authorities, it did not necessarily preclude coercion from being used by civil authorities to enforce a conformity of religious practice or belief (Copleston 188-89; Marsilius 177-81; Monahan, *Consent* 210-11).

When Luther "revives the Augustinian division between opposed, coexisting social realities whose interaction creates history," or Calvin employs a similar distinction, they tend to do so within the terms of a Marsilian interpretation of the dualities of society and rulership

(O'Donovan, *Desire* 209-11; Cavanaugh 399; Monahan, *Personal* 198-99). According to the Marsilian view:

The secular and spiritual law each has its judge and its coercive sanctions: the civil ruler on the one hand; Christ himself, in future judgement, on the other. But for the present there is no surrogate to represent Christ's future coercive powers. The priesthood only "judges" in a very limited sense, for it has at its disposal no coercive sanctions. (O'Donovan, *Desire* 208)

Marsilius' aim was to ensure "total mutual compatibility without mutual infringement" by recognizing the differences in kind between the two types of authority (208). The result was to give secular authorities the power to govern the organization of ecclesial bodies while claiming to preserve the independent authority of the church to proclaim "certain truths which [the state] was not in a position to establish for itself" (208).

In the case of Luther, the Augustinian distinction between the "two kingdoms" (*zwei Reiche*) "turns out to be an ideal one, needing to be complemented by the functional distinction of 'two governments' (*zwei Regimente*), which correspond to the two authorities of the Marsilian pattern" (209; Cargill Thompson, *Luther* 47-48; Monahan, *Personal* 197-204). Similarly, despite Calvin's attempt to base the form of church government on Scripture alone, his idea of the "two-fold government of man," emphasizing the differences between internal (spiritual) reality and external conduct, also fits well with the Marsilian division. In the case of Catholic writers, the Thomist division between Nature and Grace, Natural and Divine Law, was radicalized (in a very non-Thomist way) so that the office of the pope was limited to issues pertaining to "the salvation of souls and religion" (O'Donovan, *Desire* 210; Cavanaugh 400-8, 414-16). In this way, opponents on both sides of the Reformation shared some of the

same Marsilian assumptions that would lead them to seek an Erastian solution to the problems raised by religious controversy. The legacy of the “two-fold government of man” does, however, take a specific shape in Reformed thinking because of the central distinction between justification and sanctification, as we shall see, for example, in the work of Richard Hooker. But before considering Hooker’s position, it is important to clarify the nature of the hermeneutic and ecclesiastical questions raised by the Reformation.

The debate between Erasmus and Luther over the freedom of the will is useful for present purposes because it involves so many of the central intellectual questions of the early modern period. The debate offers a sharply focused demonstration of the contradictions at work in the crises over religious authority precipitated by the events of the Reformation. Luther’s rejection of the Church’s interpretive authority, in favor of *sola scriptura* and the “clear light of reason,” intensified to an unprecedented degree the public debate over what constitutes sufficient warrant for individual belief. Because the rejection of institutional authority also entailed a specific account of individual conscience and the intelligibility of divine revelation, the interpretive program of the Reformation also implied a substantive connection to the debate over the freedom of the individual human will. However, rather than valorize the freedom of the will, as might seem consonant with an emphasis on the individual, Luther argues for the radical bondage of the fallen human will, apart from divine grace. In the specific debate between Erasmus and Luther we can see how the tension between the divergent hermeneutic and doctrinal directions of both writers destabilizes their implicit textual claims to authority (that is, to warrant religious belief and action). By looking first at the broader doctrinal issues that inform their debate over the freedom of the will, and then at how their respective theological positions shape their interpretive choices, we can clarify the

nature of the disagreement between these two writers, whose legacies directly influenced the thinking of Milton and his contemporaries.

The way in which Erasmus and Luther each frame the question is all-important, because the debate over the freedom of the will had direct implications for the central points of contention between Reformation and Counter-Reformation theology. How the respective sides understood the human will determined how they, in turn, answered the pivotal question whether humans are saved from sin and its ultimate consequences by grace through faith or by works. Luther saw that if he admitted freedom of the will, it would mean that salvation was dependent, at least partially, upon human choice and no longer entirely God's sovereign work. That is, if people can be freed at all from sin by their own effort, then they could save themselves from sin completely, by gradations, and thereby render the sacrificial death of Christ superfluous. On the other hand, as Erasmus points out, to maintain that the human will plays no role at all in salvation and is radically passive, means that everything happens by "pure necessity" (15).⁸ As a result, Luther seems to imply that God is the cause of evil. Erasmus's point is simply that Luther goes too far by denying the will any freedom altogether (6-7). He maintains with Luther that salvation is a gift ("by grace through faith" [which is also a "work" (38)]), but he also wants to show that grace and freedom are complementary rather than antagonistic (58). Erasmus argues that Luther only goes too far in deriving from the doctrine of justification by faith the false conclusion that everything happens by "pure and perpetual necessity" (53). This is why Erasmus limits the focus of his argument in the way that he does: "all I am willing to assert is that the will enjoys *some* power of freedom" (7, emphasis added). Thus according to Erasmus, the nature of the disagreement between them is one of degree.

Because the cornerstone of Luther's Reformation project hinged on the exclusive efficacy of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, he recognized that to admit the freedom of the human will was to undermine his central teaching. For Luther this central teaching of salvation by grace through faith simply is the gospel and is the central message of all Scripture and hence synonymous with "the words of God." This explains why Luther believes that Erasmus's account of free will is easily refuted by the very assertion of the Reformer's doctrine (also identified as "Christ crucified"):

The essence of it all could have been summed up in the following "dilemma":
Your Preface complains either of the words of God or the words of men. If the latter, it is all written in vain. If the former it is all blasphemy. Wherefore it would have saved much trouble if it had been plainly mentioned whether we were disputing concerning words of God, or the words of men.... We teach nothing save Christ crucified [that is, nothing but justification by faith]. But Christ crucified brings all these doctrines [for example, bondage of the will] along with himself. (113)

Once we understand that by "Christ crucified" Luther means "justification by faith," we see why he maintains that the simple and certain truth of Scripture denies the freedom of the will—he takes the doctrine of justification by faith to be the central simple and certain teaching of all Scripture. Readers today may be put off by Luther's apparent hubris in equating his own interpretation with "the words of God," but such a reaction fails to appreciate how Luther saw justification by faith as the overarching self-evident theme of Scripture, a theme which necessarily entailed the bondage of the will. Nevertheless, contrary to Luther's accusation in the above passage, Erasmus does indeed make it clear that, in his view, the point

in question is not the status of God's word (on that they both agree), but on the human words used to interpret God's word:

I admit that it is right that the sole authority of Holy Scripture surpasses the voices of all mortals. But we are not involved in a controversy regarding Scripture. The same Scripture is being loved and revered by both parties. Our battle concerns the sense of Scripture. (15)

Thus, although they agree on the need to address this central issue, there remains an apparent incommensurability in their respective assumptions concerning how or even whether the matter can or should be resolved. Underlying these issues is the hermeneutic question of who has the authority to interpret Scripture correctly. Generally, as a matter of course, Luther affirmed the need for each individual to interpret the Bible. But with respect to the specific issue of the will's freedom, there remained the further question of how Scripture should be read so as to know when to interpret a passage literally and when to take it figuratively. Beyond that, in turn, lay the further question of who has the authority to establish such an interpretive rule?

Erasmus recognizes the centrality of the hermeneutic question and tries to find his own way around the problem, even as he outlines the difficulty:

When we ask, what are the marks of a true scriptural interpretation, since both sides are represented only by human beings, their answer is "The mark of the Holy Spirit." If you ask why the Holy Spirit should have forsaken the side which is also distinguished by miracles, and be found rather amongst them, they answer as if during all these hundreds of years there had been no Gospel in the world. (18)

Erasmus goes on to show that an appeal to an “exemplary life” is also rendered irrelevant to the question of interpretive authority, because of the radicalization of the doctrine of justification by grace (18). Incidentally, this passage also demonstrates that Erasmus saw the direct bearing of the point in question upon the larger issue of Luther’s teaching about salvation (as if “there had been no Gospel in the world”). More importantly, Erasmus recognizes that both sides can produce countless proof-texts from Scripture: “By utilizing and distorting one set of passages, man appears impotent. By emphasizing in partiality the other set, man will be doing everything” (59). This is why Erasmus is so certain that the question cannot be resolved by appealing to Scripture and why he insists that the issue is concerned with the words of men and not God. But what then provides the basis for Erasmus’s own interpretive authority? His solution is evident, although only implicit, in the following passage:

Even though Christ’s Spirit might permit His people to be in error in an unimportant question on which man’s salvation does not depend, no one could believe that this Spirit has deliberately overlooked error in His Church for 1300 years, and that he did not deem one of his pious and saintly Church Fathers worthy enough to be inspired with what, [the Reformers] contend, is the very essence of all evangelical teaching. (19)

Implicit in this passage is a specific view of the intelligibility of God’s justice. In effect, to allow the essence of the Gospel’s saving truth to be lost by the Church for 1300 years (as Luther contends) is simply inconsistent with divine justice and fairness. Conversely, Erasmus points out the need for what will become the Protestant strategy of accounting for that 1300-year lapse through an interpretive practice that connects specific historical events with biblical

prophecy. By contrast, Erasmus's own argument links a limited "rationalist" belief in the intelligibility of providence with the authority of Church tradition. Ultimately, however, his own hermeneutic authority rests upon an implicit understanding of God's moral character, rather than an explicit textual technique.

In this respect, the differences between Erasmus's and Luther's accounts of human freedom are partially a function of the unacknowledged differences in theology that underlie their opposing interpretive strategies. In different but related ways, both writers inherited the terms of the earlier theological debate between voluntarism and rationalism. The crux of that debate, in very reduced terms, was whether God is righteous simply because he is God, or whether there is a standard of justice outside of God, as it were, to which he conforms.⁹ Voluntarists emphasize God's freedom, arguing that his actions, whatever they may be, are in themselves just, while "rationalists," in this specific theological sense, emphasize the ultimate intelligibility of God's actions in relation to an external standard of rationality. These two opposing positions generally characterize the main alternative directions in late-medieval and early-Renaissance theology, the nominalists tending towards voluntarism and the realists tending towards rationalism.¹⁰ These terms of reference are helpful in understanding the theology that underlies the hermeneutic choices that Erasmus and Luther each make.

Initially at least, Erasmus's position seems to issue from the perspective of a theological rationalist. He insists that, however obscure God's purposes may be from our limited perspective within time, God's justice is at least partially intelligible to humans. This is why Erasmus emphasizes the importance of moral virtue, even in the context of theological debate. The assumed intelligibility of divine justice is also evident in Erasmus's attention to rhetoric, where he maintains that to argue charitably is, in a sense, more important than to be

correct in matters that are not essential to Christian faith (19-20). Moreover, he implies that the very ability to discern what is and is not essential to Christian faith requires a charitable disposition. Erasmus's position finally depends, however, on the belief that the ability to discern from Scripture what is or is not essential to Christian faith also assumes a specific view of how God's justice operates. This emphasis upon the ethical dimension is consistent with his decision in the *Novum Instrumentum* to translate the Greek *logos* of John 1:1 using the Latin *sermo*, rather than *verbum*. His choice of *sermo* reflects his belief that the use of discourse itself has a moral status, in that using language is always a morally charged action (Boyle, *Language* 40-46; Boyle, *Rhetoric* 132-52). Thus, for Erasmus, theology simply is rhetoric, and rhetoric theology, in the fullest and best sense of both terms. At the same time, this ethical hermeneutic is based ultimately on a "rationalist" conception of God's justice which entails also a deference to the authority of Church tradition (18-19). Both the hermeneutic preoccupation with charity and the deference for Church authority are consistent with an Augustinian tradition of hermeneutics.

By contrast, Luther assumes the voluntarist position which emphasizes the radical freedom of God's will (119). To maintain this conception of God, he denies altogether the efficacy of the human will, lest it be thought to impinge upon divine sovereignty. Also in keeping with this position, Luther emphasizes the inability of humans to comprehend the terrifying reality of a sovereign God. Once again, the critical point is that this theological voluntarism shapes Luther's hermeneutics, because when it comes to the question of which biblical passages to interpret literally and which to interpret figuratively, his reading is always subject to the following logic: first, any interpretation that seems to limit divine sovereignty, or salvation by grace, is wrong; next, to believe in freedom of the human will is to limit divine

sovereignty and the operations of grace; therefore, any interpretation of Scripture that implies freedom of the human will is wrong. Luther's belief in the scriptural clarity of "the gospel"—justification by faith—thus derives from his rigorous and repeated application of this interpretive logic which, in turn, is based on a specific view of God's freedom.

Given these connections between their respective theological presuppositions and their interpretive choices, we can now examine in some detail Erasmus's claim that the central difference between them is really one of degree rather than substance. Erasmus first attempts to formulate his own moderate position with respect to Luther's. He insists that the human will, or faculty of judgement, although distorted or effaced by sin, was "not extinguished" at the Fall (22-23). As a result, God's grace partially restores free will, such that even the grace of freedom can be freely rejected or accepted. The key element is the persistently complex cause of each human action—grace and freedom are always partial and intermingled in each decision:

God's mercy precedes our will, accompanies it, and gives it fruitfulness.

Nevertheless it remains that we wish, run and attain, except that all this we must ascribe to God, to whom we belong with everything we are. (49)

The tendency towards evil existing in most men does not completely cancel out the freedom of the will, even when one cannot overcome evil without the help of divine grace. (62)

In effect, Erasmus wants to maintain that salvation is only by grace through faith and that God is sovereign, but that people are also free and that God is not responsible for evil. The point that he never clarifies is the character of universal grace that operates, or even whether it does,

apart from the proclamation of the Gospel. As a result, it is difficult for his admission of the primacy of grace to avoid logically discounting the human freedom altogether. In one sense, Erasmus is trying to have it both ways and is to some degree successful through his use of illustrative “parables,” like the analogies of visual perception and parental guidance (86-87). Erasmus is at his best when employing such rhetorical devices and metaphors, but weakest when his position is subject to strict logical analysis; indeed, when Erasmus’s position is reduced to its logical propositions we see the degree of similarity between it and Luther’s.

Luther himself points out that Erasmus’s position actually sounds very similar to his own:

What if I prove from your own words...that there is no such thing as free will at all? [...] You make the power of the free will small and utterly ineffective apart from the grace of God. Acknowledged? Now then I ask you: if God’s grace is wanting or if it be taken away from that certain small degree of power, what can it do for itself? [...] Hence it follows that free will without the grace of God is not free will at all.... I allow you to enlarge the power of free will as much as you like, make it angelic, divine, if you can. But once you add this doleful postscript, that it is ineffective apart from God’s grace, you at once rob it of all its power. (112)

This passage raises two important points: first, Luther does not distinguish between necessary and sufficient causation (that is, whether grace can be a necessary but not sufficient cause of a given human choice). Because Erasmus never addresses this logical problem in Luther’s account, the core propositions of Luther’s argument remain unchallenged. Second, Luther does hit directly upon the central point that Erasmus has not clarified in his own position

regarding the operation of prevenient grace. That is, if humanity is not set free by universal prevenient grace (in effect, if he is not advocating Pelagianism), then Erasmus's account is technically reducible to Luther's. More importantly, their opposition results not so much from the initial positions they hold regarding grace, but from the fact that Luther demands a logical consistency that Erasmus will not allow because of the moral implications of doing so. Is it fair to say that Erasmus wants to avoid Pelagianism, but simply rejects the extremity of Luther's counter-position? To maintain that Erasmus's and Luther's positions are substantively similar with different points of emphasis fits then with Erasmus's claim that the primary difference between them is one of presentation, or "rhetoric." Even for Erasmus, however, the ethos of the rhetoric is not properly separable from the theological content (Boyle, *Rhetoric* 132-52); while Luther's logic precludes the genuine possibility of such gradations. Thus, to treat the difference between them as simply "rhetorical" would seem to deny the respective difference that each writer insists is crucial.

The decisive difference between Erasmus and Luther on this point is not simply that one takes the actions of God to be comprehensible while the other does not. Both of them are careful to maintain that God's ways are finally inscrutable to human understanding, but they argue for quite different accounts of the location and the character of that human incomprehension. Luther argues that God's choice to elect or condemn is simply a function of omnipotent and unintelligibly arbitrary freedom; this argument is itself based, however, on what Luther takes to be the clear intelligibility of Scripture's teaching regarding salvation by faith, which entails predestination and the bondage of the will. In effect, Luther's argument for the unintelligibility of God's actions rests upon a presumed clarity of Scripture and an unrelenting axiomatic logic. Erasmus also emphasizes God's ultimate unintelligibility but

locates the primary obscurity precisely where Luther sees the light. The simple truth that Erasmus sees in Scripture is that the Bible assumes both the operation of human freedom as well as the grace of election. Of course, the obscurity for Erasmus lies in the difficulty of reconciling (that is, making intelligible) human freedom with the operation of omnipotent divine grace, as both are described in Scripture (59). It could be argued that Erasmus indeed fails to reconcile the two and that Luther's implacable logic is correct. However, they are simply locating the unintelligibility of the divine at different points. Erasmus maintains that, even if his attempt to reconcile human free will with divine grace is unsuccessful, or logically weak, the obvious scriptural affirmation of both realities remains undeniable. At the same time, Luther maintains that, even if his doctrine of election seems to make God the cause of evil, the terrifying unintelligibility of such a God rests on the unmistakably clear warrants and ensuing logic of Scripture concerning salvation.

The nature of the disagreement between Erasmus and Luther reveals several ways in which the Augustinian theological legacy, already adapted by Marsilius to the emergent nation-state, was further transformed. In terms of content, Reformed theology tended, as a matter of course, to take Augustine's anti-Pelagian arguments as the whole teaching on salvation (Danielson, *Milton's* 65-67; Steinmetz, *Context* 14-22; Williams 321). But more importantly, the disagreement between Luther and Erasmus reflects a fragmentation within the Augustinian hermeneutic, in which the elements of individual accountability and explicit theological rigor on issues like predestination (in Luther) end up pitted against the deference for Church authority and the "rule of charity" (in Erasmus). The bifurcation of these elements, in turn, determined their differing conceptions of the role of reason. Superficially, it might seem that Luther favors revelation, while Erasmus favors reason, but both views entail a

genuine legitimacy for reason. The real difference between them is the character, rather than degree, of its limitations. Thus Luther emphasizes the capacity of regenerate reason to find God's written revelation intelligible, despite the opacity of God's actions, while Erasmus emphasizes the vestigial efficacy of fallen reason to find God's actions morally intelligible, despite obscurities in Scripture. At the same time, politically Luther adopts a Marsilian view which, as explained, could allow a role for state coercion in church discipline. By contrast, Erasmus advocates a political application of his account of charity which precludes all use of coercion by Christians, except for those who "defend the public and common tranquility" (Erasmus, *Complaint* 44, 24-44). But their respective views of toleration are not a necessary function of their views of reason. The disjunction is especially evident when we consider the influence of Erasmian "rationalism" upon the same "Arminian" writers who admit a role for religious coercion (Trevor-Roper 188-92).

Nevertheless, there is a further respect in which the Marsilian "two realms" doctrine seems to fit perfectly with, and thus tacitly find support in, the classic Reformed theological distinction between "justification" and "sanctification." In conjunction with their emphasis upon salvation by faith alone, reformers distinguished between the forgiveness of a believer's sins (justification), and the practical outworking of that saving faith in a righteous life (sanctification) (Calvin 3.3.9-13; 3.11.1-4).¹¹ The emphasis upon both the distinction and the unity between them is crucial in any reformed account of salvation. The distinction is necessary in order to avoid implying salvation by works—in effect, justification does not depend upon sanctification. But the unity between them is no less important in order to avoid letting the doctrine of salvation by grace become an excuse for license or antinomianism (3.3.14). In a sense, "justification" concerns saving faith and pertains to the eternal destiny of

a person, whereas “sanctification” concerns the necessary temporal embodiment which results from that saving faith. The “magisterial Reformers” elaborated this soteriological distinction within the person of each believer so that it provided a foundation for the ecclesiological distinction between the *forum conscientiae* and *forum externum* in the government of the Church (W.J.T. Kirby 44). Underlying that soteriological account is the Christological doctrine of the hypostatic union (the union between Christ’s divine and human natures). The Reformers, as well as Hooker, maintained that only the precise orthodox Chalcedonian formulation of the union between the human and divine natures in the single person of Christ, as redemptive mediator, provided a sound basis for understanding how Christians can be righteousness in view of eternity (by grace through faith in Christ), despite ongoing temporal struggles with sin (51-52). Thus the ecclesial doctrine of the “two regiments” was rooted ultimately in the core of Reformed orthodox Christology and soteriology.

In each one of these key respects—Christology, soteriology and “two regiments” ecclesiology—Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* follows the classic Reformed teaching. Hooker affirms, for example, the hypostatic union as the mediatory basis for Christ’s reconciling work: “of both natures there is a *cooperation* often, an *association* alwayes, but never any mutual *participation* whereby the properties of one are infused into the other” (Hooker 5.53.3). This “conjunction of natures” within the person of Christ which nevertheless remain distinct (5.53.1) then provides a foundation for the soteriological doctrine of the believer’s dual status as both “in Christ” (justification) and “Christ in us” (sanctification) (5.56.11). Because the key to both of these doctrines is to insist upon the unity of Christ and the individual believer, while still emphasizing the distinction between the two aspects of the person that must not be confused, they provide a clear basis for Hooker’s ecclesiastical

doctrine of the "two regiments." The soteriological distinction allows him to emphasize a similarly distinct duality within the unity of the Church: "The mixture of those thinges by speech which by nature are divided is the mother of all error" (3.3.1).

In describing the nature of the Church, Hooker thus emphasizes that the operation of the Church as a "sensible knowne companie" must not be confused with the reality of the Church as a "body misticall" (3.1.2-3). In keeping with Augustinian ecclesiology, Hooker states simply: "If by external profession they be Christians, then they are of the visible Church of Christ", regardless of whether they are part of the mystical reality of the Church (3.1.7). Hooker, however, also builds further on this dual character of the Church to argue, not only that human knowledge is limited to others' professions of faith, but that the distinction between external and mystical realms also designates different realms of authority (8.4.5,8). Christ is obviously head of the eternal reality of the mystical Church (5.56.11), but in the temporal realm "an external regiment of outward actions" is ruled mediately by Christ through "them whom Christ doth allow to be the *Rulers* and guiders of his Church" (8.4.8,9). By contrast, Thomas Cartwright argues for the disciplinarian position on precisely the grounds that "the *externall* government off Christ in his church is *spirituall*" (Cartwright 410; W.J.T. Kirby 55). Here the direct parallel with the Donatist position should be apparent. "This sharp distinction between the eschatological reality of the 'Church of the Elect' and the temporal reality of the 'mixed Church' displays the strongly Augustinian strain in Hooker's ecclesiology" (W.J.T. Kirby 70-71). Thus Augustine's influence persists in shaping key Reformed doctrines, even as those doctrines become radicalized, with respect to both an anti-Pelagian emphasis and the political slippage between the "two cities" and the "two reigns" (or regiments).

In speaking of "Calvinist" ecclesiology, it is important to distinguish clearly between the earlier doctrine of the Church espoused by Calvin and the disciplinarian ecclesiology that later developed among his followers under the influence of Beza:

The context of the English controversy [over the marks of the Church] was a more wide-spread dispute between two schools of reformed ecclesiological opinion. The first school, which I have termed "magisterial", and which includes Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin and the Zurich divines, taught that there were two essential signs of the true visible church, namely Word and Sacrament. Against this view there grew up a dissenting opinion among some of the reformers that a scriptural form of Church-government was also a mark of the true Church, and therefore that its realization was essential to a "true reformation". This opinion was first enunciated by Bucer, was taken up by Beza and from thence exported to England and Scotland, where it was promoted by the so-called Disciplinarians. (W.J.T. Kirby 86)

In this respect, the central polemical task of Hooker's *Laws* is simply to show his puritan opponents that orthodox Calvinist belief does not necessarily entail a disciplinarian view of church government (cf. Stanwood 78-79; Cragg 98).¹² At the same time, Hooker shares in common with most of his presbyterian opponents a belief in the importance of a church supported by the state and, if necessary, by the coercive powers of the civil magistrate. Neither side of the main dispute engaged by Hooker had any doubt regarding the role of the state or the use of coercion in principle. Rather they disagreed as to what the structure of the state-supported church should be.

In arguing that church ceremonies, by virtue of their concern with the “external” aspect of the church, do not pertain to issues of eternal destiny like salvation, Hooker engages an ongoing debate over the nature of “things indifferent” or *adiaphora*. Because Milton also addresses the issue in his polemical prose, a brief explanation here will be helpful later. The potential difficulty in assessing the debate over *adiaphora* results from the shifting uses to which the category of “indifferent” was applied in Renaissance usage. For example, in his account of the “three parts” that constitute Christian liberty, Calvin lists the freedom from trying to earn salvation, freedom to obey divine law out of filial affection rather than compulsion, and freedom from “external things which are in themselves indifferent” (3.19.2-7). More fully, he states:

We are not bound before God to any observance of external things which are in themselves indifferent (*'αδιαφορα*), but that we are now at full liberty either to use or omit them.... For here are comprehended all ceremonies of free observance, so that while our consciences are not to be laid under the necessity of observing them, we are also to remember that, by the kindness of God, the use of them is made subservient to edification. (3.19.7-8)

Calvin adds, as a matter of course, that because the purpose of the teaching is to give rest to consciences that would otherwise labour under false guilt and to guard people against superstition, the doctrine of things indifferent must not be used as a “cloak” for those who would “licentiously abuse the good gifts of God” (3.19.7-9). He also emphasizes the need for it “to be carefully observed that Christian liberty in all its parts [of which *adiaphora* are one] is a spiritual matter” (3.19.9). The use of things indifferent is intended to serve the larger purpose of “edification” of the others, that is, charity. Similarly, the second aspect of

Christian liberty, freedom from the law, is intended not to license sin, but to “encourage us in well-doing” (3.19.6)—that is sanctification, or the outworking of faith planted within.

Moreover, Calvin emphasizes that the first aspect of liberty, freedom of conscience from the law, is only with respect to justification. Rather, the law continues “to teach, exhort, and urge them to do good, although it is not recognized by their consciences before the judgement seat of God” (3.19.2). The tension within Calvin’s account arises from the fact that he clearly thinks that some external actions are not indifferent with respect whether they ought to be done or not, even though they are indifferent with respect to justification—for example, obedience to the moral law and to civil authorities (3.19.2; 3.19.15). Yet he implies that there is also a category of actions which are indifferent with respect to whether they ought to be done, specifically because they are indifferent with respect to salvation—for example, whether to eat certain rich foods. In the latter case Calvin emphasizes that the given action can be good or evil, depending on the freedom of the conscience before God (3.19.8-10). Yet the purpose of the doctrine things indifferent is not simply “internal” to the believer, because it involves the edification of others and the practice of virtue. Thus Calvin’s teaching on *adiaphora* is not to be equated with the doctrine of sanctification, but is intended to facilitate the actual process of sanctification within a believer.

In one sense, Hooker’s distinction between matters of faith and matters of discipline simplifies Calvin’s treatment of *adiaphora*.¹³ In brief, Hooker claims that “matters necessarie unto salvation are of a different nature from Ceremonies, order, and the kinde of Church-governement” (Hooker 3.2.2). He elaborates that claim by appealing to the distinction between doctrines that “we know and beleewe” and those things that must be “done,” or the “workes of charitie” which are “matters of action” (3.3.2). Already Hooker’s formulation

involves some important shifts in emphasis from Calvin's account. Although Calvin's account of faith includes substantive doctrine, he also maintains the sense that justification involves an existential trust in God for salvation. In Hooker's formulation, faith is almost completely intellectualized to mean simply doctrine or precepts that "must be believed" (3.3.2). Hooker's account is actually clearer than Calvin's, but not without exacting a price. Part of the increased clarity derives from the fact that Hooker never allows the suggestion that the law is any less obligatory simply because its fulfillment is not necessary to salvation. He does not need Calvin's counter-balancing qualifications about the ongoing importance of the law for temporal affairs because the continued obligation to law is never doubted for even a moment. This difference in emphasis results in the consequences of their deployment of adiaphorism being almost directly opposite. Calvin cites the importance of freedom regarding things indifferent, emphasizing a particular category of actions that could be good or evil depending on their use. As a result, he must emphasize the ongoing importance of law as a guide for temporal virtue or sanctification. By contrast, Hooker emphasizes the ongoing temporal obligation to various kinds of law, including those not found in Scripture, precisely because they are indifferent with respect to saving faith. In effect, Hooker resolves the apparent tension in Calvin's account by simply identifying the temporal realm of sanctification (all action) with the realm of adiaphora, even as that sphere of "indifference" with respect to eternal salvation is pre-emptively constituted as the realm of legal obligation and hence potential compulsion. Milton argues, as we shall see, that such an appeal to things indifferent involves a fundamental betrayal of the Reformed gospel.

Despite the irenic and conciliatory tone of Hooker's writing, the nature of his argument entails a persistence in the use of state coercion to support religious causes. And in this

respect, his adaptation of the doctrine of the two regiments, based on Reformed Christology and soteriology, also follows the Marsilian recasting of Augustinian ecclesiology. As a matter of course, the careful elaboration of Hooker's argument usually allows him to avoid the charge of being of "Erastian" (Stanwood 79). Nevertheless, by allowing the magistrate the coercive power to enforce church government, his position entails practical state control over the religious behaviour of the laity, if not theoretical legal control over the Church hierarchy. Similarly, although Hooker never formulates an explicit argument for or against religious toleration, and seems to avoid a direct treatment of the subject (Allen 239-41; Monahan, *Personal* 275), he clearly presumes that religious coercion can be appropriate. In precise terms, Hooker's position might be described as "a kind of Marsilianism in reverse," in that it attributes "some of the spiritual functions of religion to the temporal ruler in order to guarantee them the highest level of importance" (Monahan, *Personal* 274). The problem is that, with respect to religious coercion, the practical implications of this distinction are negligible.

This Erastian susceptibility is evident in the Preface to the *Laws* where Hooker points out the circular character of the dissenters' apocalyptic interpretation of Scripture:

When they read the Scripture, they may think that everything soundeth towards the advancement of that discipline, and to the utter disgrace of the contrary....

When they of the family of love have it once in their heads, that *Christ* doth not signify any one person but a quality whereof many are pertakers; that to be *rayseed* is nothing else but to be regenerated or indued with the sayd quality; and that when separation of them which have it from them which have it not is here made, this is *judgement*; how plainly do they imagine that Scripture every

where speaketh in the favor of that sect? ... [They are also taught before hand] that by mysticall resemblance mount Syon and Jerusalem are the Churches which admit, Samaria and Babylon the Churches which opugne the said form of regiment. (Hooker Pref.3.9)

He then poses the question of how such interpretations can be tested, when they are claimed to be based on divine illumination even though other people “discern them not.” They can be tested by reason or by revelation, says Hooker, although reason is the more usual means of doing so:

If the Spirite by such revelation have discovered unto them the secrets of that discipline out of Scripture, they must professe themselves to be all (even men, women, and children) Prophets. (Pref.3.10)

Most striking here is that the strategy used by Hooker to oppose the disciplinarians in this passage depends upon the same distinction that Augustine makes between prophecy and history (Augustine, *Civitate* 15.8.1; 16.2.3). Moreover, precisely because the issues of church discipline pertain to the temporal *saeculum*, rather than to eternal reality, the use of state coercion is therefore acceptable. Thus Hooker moves almost directly from his critique of dissenting biblical interpretation to a citation of Augustine (Epist. 50) regarding the distinction between genuine martyrdom and suffering just punishment, observing that dissenters suffer justly for their opposition to civil authority (Hooker Pref.3.15).¹⁴

Although Hooker’s deployment of the concept of *saeculum* might seem, unlike Augustine’s to imply a “religiously neutral” social space, the relative indifference of those temporal considerations underwrites the use of coercion against those who reject the plain dictates of reason. The tendency toward a kind of “practical Erastianism” in Hooker’s position

shows that he shapes his Augustinian ecclesiology along Marsilian lines. This becomes clear in the way Hooker argues for the strict separation between the two realms in which Scripture and Reason have their respective authority. The rationale that Hooker offers is one of "ends": "The absolute perfection of scripture is seene by relation unto that end wherto it tendeth" (Hooker 2.8.5): that is, knowledge sufficient unto eternal life (salvation). In contrast, the end of Reason is to discern the natural law so that temporal life might be ordered aright:

[Natural law] is an infallible knowledge imprinted in the mindes of all the children of men, whereby both general principles for directing humaine actions are comprehended, and conclusions derived from them, upon which conclusions groweth in particularitie the choice of good and evill in the daylie affaires of this life. (2.8.6)

Once again, this distinction is ultimately used to support the view that Church discipline, as a function of the visible (temporal) rather than mystical aspect of the Church, is under the authority of Reason rather than Scripture. The extent of Hooker's emphasis upon the division between the two realms of authority clearly goes beyond Augustine's qualified emphasis upon the hidden character of the mystical church. The key point is that Hooker, partially because of his different context within an early modern nation-state, construes this aspect of Augustine's teaching along Marsilian lines, by introducing the idea of temporal "ends" that are relatively neutral, the ends of reason. This alteration proves crucial because the respective Augustinian "cities" (of man and of God) are defined according to their ends, and the correlation between the goals of the nation-state and the temporal aims of church government is only made possible by introducing that additional category of neutral temporal ends.

Nevertheless, it must be observed that Hooker's undertaking also attempts more generally to reintegrate the Augustinian hermeneutic tradition of *fides quaerens intellectum* with the content of Augustinian theology. This double aspect of Hooker's project was apparently obscured in part because Erasmus was later disowned for a time on both sides of the Reformation divide.¹⁵ Driven by the necessities of the issue in question, Hooker attempts to resynthesize those elements of Augustinian thought which had become radicalized and made mutually exclusive by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The difficulty lies in accepting the debate between Erasmus and Luther over the freedom of the will as the definitive articulation of both opposing sides without noticing either their shared assumptions, or the way in which Augustinian imperatives motivate both of their excesses, whether Luther's anti-Pelagianism and unrelenting logic, or Erasmus's pre-occupation with charity, reason, and church tradition. The similarity in theological content between Augustine and the Reformers on some points should not obscure the fact that Erasmus's views on Church authority and the role of reason are no less consistent with the heart of Augustinian teaching. In reduced terms, Hooker effectively argues for an Erasmian approach to Church authority, appealing to reason and tradition by means of charitable rhetoric, but from the foundation of a Calvinist theological framework. In this way, Hooker attempts to reintegrate elements of the Augustinian legacy which had become separated in the Reformation.

Unfortunately, the larger dimensions of Hooker's intellectual project were not immediately understood, although some of the implications of his church politics certainly were. Indeed, it is difficult to overestimate the influence of Hooker's writing upon the century following his death. Any account of how seventeenth-century English writers conceptualized the relationship between church and state must consider Hooker's *Laws*. Although most of

the work was published toward the end of the sixteenth century, the treatise consistently grew in influence over the ensuing century and effectively marks “a new phase in English religious thought” (Cragg 97-98). Hooker’s influence can be seen, for example, in two of the most notable arguments for religious coercion: Samuel Parker’s *Ecclesiastical Politie* (1670) and Edward Stillingfleet’s *Unreasonableness of Separation* (1680). Both works “broadly adopted the adiaphorist argument,” but they were really only “works of theology” “in a limited sense” and “were not efforts at pastoral commitment or catechesis” (Goldie, “Theory” 333). Yet the foundational adiaphorist claim, which was largely mediated to Anglican churchmen through Hooker, remained the crucial theological distinction that allowed the legitimization of coercion for temporal ends, and specifically the temporal ends of church government. The most apparent and definitive instance of Hooker’s influence upon the Restoration church polity is the case of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon:

During [Clarendon’s] exile in Cologne, from 1654 to 1656, he would translate Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* into Latin, so that its message might be understood in Europe.... He quoted Hooker in the declarations which he wrote for the King on the eve of the civil war, and the first paragraph of his *History of the Rebellion* is deliberately modelled on the beginning of Hooker’s great work. Thereby he implicitly declared his aim: his *History of the Rebellion* was to be a secular counterpart of Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. (Trevor-Roper 191)

Here Trevor-Roper’s use of the term “secular” inadvertently obscures the deeper continuity between Hooker’s *Laws* and Clarendon’s *History*. Hooker’s topic is, according to his own account, just as “secular” as Clarendon’s, in the sense that they are both concerned with

outward, temporal government. And that shared concern with the *saeculum* is precisely what underwrites their agreed views on the legitimacy of state coercion to support religious conformity. Thus, notwithstanding the irenic character of Hooker's argument, Clarendon's involvement in instituting the Conventicle Act (1664) and the Five Mile Act (1665) is deeply consistent with Hooker's logic. The former legislation prescribed, among other things, penalties of imprisonment, fines, or removal to the colonies, for those caught in attendance at a house meeting of "five or more persons in addition to the household" (Seaton 337). The Restoration church polity can be viewed as an attempt to apply Hooker's *Laws*. And in this respect, Clarendon's writing and political practice together embody most clearly those aspects of Hooker's legacy that Milton continued to oppose as late as *Of True Religion* (1673).

Hooker's influence, however, was not limited to Clarendon or to the Restoration period. His wide influence had been continuous from early in the seventeenth century (Trevor-Roper 45-90), despite the ways in which Laudian churchmen "misrepresented" Hooker (Stanwood 82).¹⁶ In *The Reason of Church Government* (1642), we find Milton's "only explicit reference to [Hooker's] works" (Stanwood 73). Yet even that singular reference is revealing. The tract is Milton's final antiprelatical work and marks a relative clarification in his central arguments and his sense of his readership. The ostensible occasion for the tract's publication was to offer a response to *Certain Briefe Treatises, Written by Diverse Learned Men, Concerning the Ancient and Modern Government of the Church* (1641). Yet of the eight essays in that collection, Milton barely engages two of them directly: the one by Lancelot Andrewes and the other by James Ussher. Also, because he was aiming for a more popular London readership, Milton did not "make extended use of the learning which had occupied his life," but instead "referred mainly to well-known writers like Plato,

Anselm, Hooker, Jerome, Josephus, and the like” (Haug, *CPW* 1:739). That Milton presumes the familiarity and undisputed importance of Hooker to his readers is indeed telling. And his concern is not simply with Hooker’s stature as a writer, but the specific claims advanced in *The Laws*. Rather than engage, or even mention, the short prefatory text ascribed to Hooker in *Certain Brief Treatises*, Milton refers directly to *The Laws* at that specific point where Hooker denies that Scripture offers direction with respect to Church government (*CPW* 1:759-60). In contending that Scripture does indeed provide a necessary and sufficient guide for Church government, Milton argues against Hooker’s claim that the word “commandment” in I Timothy 5:21 refers only to “some one speciall commandement among many,” rather than to the entire preceding discussion of Church leadership (Hooker 3.11.11). The root issue is not simply a local concern with exegesis. Hooker’s interpretation had supported his larger claim that Church government is subject to the “external government” of human reason and positive law, rather than Scripture. Milton thus engages, and presumes that many of his readers knew, the crux of Hooker’s argument, and he does so because he understood that it ultimately led to the permitting of religious coercion.¹⁷

The next chapter will consider Milton’s engagement with religious toleration more fully, but Hooker’s deployment of Reformation theology already anticipates several of the central issues that Milton will address in different ways throughout his writing. Hooker effectively deploys the Reformed logic of salvation by faith, as distinct from sanctification, in order to argue for an effectively Erasmian belief in the humanly intelligible justice of God’s actions. The character of the disagreement between Luther and Erasmus shows just how difficult it became to affirm both the Reformed teaching on salvation by faith alone and a belief in the human capacity to understand divine justice, however incompletely. The work of

Jacobus Arminius embodies one kind of attempt to make just such a dual affirmation, and it is not surprising that Milton later seems to draw upon Arminian arguments, as I show in Chapter 3 below (see also Danielson, *Milton's* 75-91; S. Fallon, "Arminianism" 103-27). But Hooker is no less interested in uniting these same elements of thought. Moreover, despite some correlations, there is no necessary relationship between Arminianism and a belief in toleration, as demonstrated by those Arminians who associated with Archbishop Laud (Cragg 101-26) or who, like Jeremy Taylor or Henry Hammond, defended episcopal institutions in the early 1640s (Tyacke 595). It would therefore be a mistake to make any necessary connection between Milton's Arminianism and his stance on religious toleration. Rather, the incarnational and rhetorical emphasis of Erasmian humanism will turn out to be much more pivotal for Milton's engagement with the theological justification for religious coercion.

As we shall see, the real novelty of Milton's position is to emphasize the Reformed connection between justification and sanctification in such a way that reintegrates the Erasmian emphasis upon humanly intelligible charity as integral to the nature of Christian belief. This reintegration is the central conceptual challenge that Milton addresses throughout his writing career, with varying degrees of success. From this account issue several implications which will be helpful to keep in mind as we consider Milton's writing. First, it is important to observe within his texts the capacities and characteristics that Milton ascribes to human reason over time, with respect to divine revelation or divine works. As his position unfolds throughout the tracts of the 1640s, the focus of chapters 2 and 4 below, Milton ascribes to regenerate human understanding a power that is certain of some truth yet never finished in its pursuit, sometimes seeming supremely confident yet indeterminate at the same time. To understand this view of reason will ultimately require that we consider Milton's

account of charity, or divine love, as it is intelligible to humans. Milton's poetry in this respect represents the culmination of his attempt to articulate an account of relationship between reason, charity, and justification. His engagement with biblical narrative, indirectly in the prose and directly in the poetry, is consistent with the understanding that to reform ecclesiology in a manner consistent with reason, charity, and justification, will require situating the whole of human history within a biblical account of its origins and ends. In his prose, Milton invokes that overarching biblical story in various ways without explicitly recounting the whole of it. He knew Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* as the most obvious explicit recounting of that story, but the treatment of the church's dual character within that version of biblical history remained capable of justifying religious coercion. Milton's challenge was to engage that overarching story by preserving the Augustinian duality of the *saeculum* in a way that denies its coercive potential and instead underwrites an Erasmian account of charity and reason. Again, the ingenuity of Milton's project is to undertake that engagement of biblical narrative, not by compromising his Protestant principles, as the debate between Erasmus and Luther might suggest, but through a reiteration of the central Reformation teaching of *sola fides* and *sola scriptura*.

Notes

¹ Given the focus and scope of this study, I do not here survey the vast body of seventeenth-century tracts on religious toleration. In his monumental four-volume work, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, W.K. Jordan presents a detailed account of the full range of publications on toleration in England from the Reformation to 1660. Although useful on its own terms, the nature of his investigation and overall argument tends to occlude the issues that I propose to investigate here. Moreover, because he is interested strictly in those writers arguing for religious toleration, his account does not consider those who make arguments for coercion, arguments that often show most clearly what was truly unique in the newly advanced accounts of toleration. Indeed, a fruitful second study would apply the categories that I develop here to many of the same writers that Jordan considers, as well as to their opponents. In this respect also, the present investigation of Milton's work can be viewed as a prologue to a wider study. On the development of religious toleration generally, see also Le Cler; Seaton; Cavanaugh; Figgis. For studies focused on specific moments in development of religious toleration in early modern English history, see Elton; Worden, "Toleration"; Goldie "Huguenot."

² For a full account of how these and other writers of the Restoration deployed Augustine's Anti-Donatist tracts as part of the theological justification for coercion, see Mark Goldie's essay, "The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England" (333-48; 357-63). As Goldie points out, from the Anglican perspective, the similarities between the ancient Donatists and "modern Nonconformity were too compelling to resist":

Donatism was a schism not a heresy: the separation of the Donatists began in a renunciation of ecclesiastical authority and not ... a deviation in doctrine. [...] Their secession seemed to the orthodox to be grounded in trivial and not fundamental differences, their persistence seemed fuelled less by theology than by personal rancour stemming from circumstantial quarrels about events in the recent past. (341)

³ I use the term “millenarian” in a strict sense to indicate those who argue for a literal and temporal fulfillment of events described in Revelation 20, according to which Satan is bound for a time of one thousand years during which the saints will reign with Christ. This is how Augustine uses the term, as distinct from his own spiritual interpretation of the passage (*De Civitate* 20.7). Millenarianism, therefore, must not be confused with a more general belief in the literal and temporal return of Christ, or the eschaton, which Augustine and most orthodox believers do maintain. The root issue is the interpretive question of the extent to which biblical prophecy can be identified with specific historical events or epochs. In the Reformation period, millenarianism could take much different forms depending upon whether the period of a thousand years was located in the past or the future (Hotson 159-81). “Millenarianism” should also be distinguished from “apocalypticism” which involved, among other things, the identification of the Pope as the Antichrist (Bostick 48-75). Both interpretive traditions predate the Reformation, and although they became closely linked in the Protestant writing of John Bale and John Foxe, there is no logically necessary connection between the two modes of interpretation (Hotson 161-63, 169-70; Bostick 48-61).

⁴ It should be noted that by the use of the adjective “secret” Augustine is not appealing to the modern liberal idea of an interior “motivation,” but is emphasizing the partiality of even human self-knowledge before the “fullness of time” (O’Donovan, *Desire* 110).

⁵ Joanna Scott describes the way in which Augustine’s “personalist” orientation allows *De Civitate Dei* to “focus on sub-institutional and marginal groupings working within, and potentially reconstructing, hegemonic institutions”:

Yet, while for Augustine the clash of conscience and obedience is primarily a pre-political, moral narrative, when he moves to discussions of decisions to obey or enforce public law his greatest praise is reserved for those who find a way to do the right thing and maintain the public interest at the same time, usually at the expense of their lives. The discontinuity between public and private virtue in the fifth century appears so vast to Augustine as to constitute a chasm across which he allows the occasional public figure to pass, but only in the past tense or the subjunctive mood. (165)

⁶ In some respects, it is difficult to exaggerate the differences between Augustine’s situation and the context of the modern nation state, whether today or the early modern period. As Peter Brown points out, because “religious coercion, in some form, was one of the ‘facts of life for a provincial bishop [in the later Roman empire],” circumstances required that a bishop “take some attitude toward it” (107). This does not mean, however, that we can simply dismiss Augustine’s writing on the issue as simply rationalizations for an already established policy. He never formulated a “doctrine” of religious coercion, but only came to adopt a certain “attitude” toward it, after a “painful and protracted attempt to embrace and resolve

tensions” (107). It would therefore be a mistake to formalize that “attitude” into a “doctrine,” “a fleshless abstraction that can be demolished, modified or justified (as has been done since the Reformation)” (107). Moreover, based on Brown’s account (111-16), it remains doubtful whether Augustine’s position could justify the nose-slitting, ear-cropping, or cheek-branding practiced by, for example, the Laudian establishment, or even many of the measures in the Restoration Clarendon Code. Brown’s article offers an exceptionally lucid account of the circumstances, amid the unforeseen collapse of paganism and the resulting problem of feigned conversions, under which Augustine’s attitude changed from a strict refusal of all coercion to a considered allowance of some coercion under specific circumstances (108-111).

⁷ Copleston observes that “the first printed edition of the *Defensor Pacis* was published in 1517 and that the work was apparently utilized by Cranmer and Hooker” (192). Copleston’s account of Marsilius and the claims of *Defensor Pacis* situates the argument well within the political turmoil of fourteenth-century northern Italy, much of which Marsilius blamed on the clerical usurpation of political authority that belonged to the princes (180-92). See also Monahan, *Consent* 209-229.

⁸ In the following account of the debate between Erasmus and Luther, page number citations are from the translation of Erasmus’s *Diatribes seu Collatio de Libro Arbitrio* and Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio* as they are published in a useful single volume, edited by E.F. Winter, under the title *Erasmus-Luther Discourse on the Free Will*. For a slightly different, though not conflicting, account of this same debate as it relates specifically to the question of theodicy as broached in *Paradise Lost*, see Danielson, *Milton’s* 66-91.

⁹ William of Ockham’s writing represents the most notable late-medieval formulation

of such questions. Copleston's account of Ockham provides a nuanced description of the connections between certain claims regarding the limitations on the human understanding of God and the potential for a kind of voluntarism that identifies in precise terms the divine essence simultaneously with both intellect and will (103-7). On the effects of Ockham's voluntarism on Luther's reading of Augustine, see Steinmetz, *Context* 18-21.

¹⁰ See O'Donovan, *Resurrection* 39-42; 114-20. On the late-medieval debate between the metaphysical realists and nominalists, see Copleston 49-57; Gilson, *History* 89ff; Jeffrey, "Breaking" 227-52; Tresko 156-63. The deeper problem with both positions is that they tend to presume a radical separation between the human faculties of will and reason. They both imply that the will could somehow "decide," as it were, between alternatives, understood *as* alternatives, offered by the faculty of reason without some rational standard by which to judge those alternatives (O'Donovan, *Resurrection* 116-17). It should also be noted here that Luther's position, as it relates to the bondage of the will, is the same as Calvin's (Packer and Johnston 58), and that although Calvin (like Luther) disavows any ascription of voluntarism, he does "[end] up being voluntarist in practice if not in theory, so that the argument he presents for the justice of God becomes circular and hence meaningless" (Danielson, *Milton's* 70). Both Calvin and Luther claim to avoid such an ascription of voluntarism by citing the human incapacity to understand God's true justice. But Danielson is correct to point out that the practical implications of such a view end up being the same as voluntarism.

¹¹ On the central Reform teaching regarding justification and sanctification, Calvin and Luther concur (compare Luther, *Two Kinds* 297-306). Thus, although the argument here treats their views on salvation and works as generally equivalent because of the particular

aims of the present argument, that treatment does not deny the many important differences between their respective theologies or historical situations. Hooker is concerned with Calvin because his interlocutors derive their theology from Calvin and claim to derive their view of church government from him. Thus in shifting the focus of this chapter from Erasmus to Hooker, the attention also shifts from Luther to Calvin, without denying their differences.

¹² This characterization of Hooker's position stands in contrast to those who view his work as a reaction against the Reformation:

Hooker's strong affirmation of the authority of human reason has been interpreted by many critics as a sign of Socinianism, Erasmian Humanism, neo-Thomism, and quite generally as a repudiation of Reformation Principles. This interpretation fails to take adequate account of Hooker's two realms doctrine. (W.J.T. Kirby 88)

Trevor-Roper, for example follows the tendency to locate Hooker within a "tradition" of rationalist Socinianism, and a kind of crypto-Arminianism (Trevor-Roper 192-95). Similarly, even though Cragg is careful to note that Hooker does not reject Calvinist theology (Cragg 98, 100), he continues to treat Hooker within the immediate context of those writers who were influenced by Lancelot Andrewes and are somewhat inadequately designated "Arminians" (101-26).

¹³ See Zeeveld for an account of the how "adiaphorism became an integral part of the Anglican polity" (152). Zeeveld specifically cites the writing of Henry VIII's chaplain, Thomas Starkey, as the means by which the Lutheran adiaphorism of Philip Melanchthon became part of state-sponsored English Protestantism from its inception (129). My point is

that, while the term was deployed by Reformers like Calvin, in whose writing Hooker would have encountered it, there was also from the outset a degree of imprecision and lack of agreement about what constituted the category of things to which the term referred. For an account that compares adiaphorism with Machiavellian rhetoric, and emphasizes their similarly ambiguous risks of legitimating license or arbitrary power, see Kahn, *Machiavellian* 132-84.

¹⁴ Hooker's citation of that particular letter by Augustine may seem somewhat tendentious. Epistle 50 is addressed to the leaders of Sufes, a North African community where 60 Christians had been killed in retaliation for the destruction, mandated by law, of a statue of Hercules. Although the letter does not address directly the issue of malefactors who suffer for their actions, the immediately surrounding letters, 49, 51, and 52 all concern the Donatist controversy. Hooker seems to have linked Augustine's denunciation of the violence in Sufes with the other letters which charge the Donatists with the "sacrilege of schism" (Epistle 51). Despite the imprecision of Hooker's citation on this point, his argument more importantly links the allowance of coercion with a rejection of millenarian interpretation, and is thus consistent with Augustine's later response to the Donatists at the deepest theological level.

¹⁵ In *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, Erika Rummel documents in some detail the attacks on his work from those who remained within the Catholic tradition.

¹⁶ For an account of the character of that misrepresentation, see Bennett 7-22. The main problem is that Laudian churchmen used Hooker as though he were an advocate of the divine right of episcopacy and of monarchy, when in fact his belief in the supremacy of law

kept him from advocating the kind of absolutism maintained by Stuart apologists. Bennett rightly points out that, against the nominalist and voluntarist tendency to reduce reason to “ratiocination, or logic” Hooker and Milton share in common a fuller sense of “right reason” as a participation in the eternal law that governs the whole of the created order (7-10).

Although writers who argued for and those who argued against episcopacy both invoked the category of right reason, they also both tended to follow the nominalist and voluntarist reduction of that principle to the status of “a tool for carrying out divine orders” (15). Bennett contends, in effect, that Milton’s later position is largely an application of Hooker’s logic to new political circumstances:

To remain a royalist under the Stuarts was to abandon the historic Christian humanist world view in which there can be no Christian freedom without the possibility of individuals’ rational choice and no purpose for human association--no state or society--that is not centered in the exercise of that Christian freedom. (12)

Thus, although I emphasize here the allowance for religious coercion in Hooker’s thought, I agree with Bennett’s claim that his account is “not philosophically authoritarian in its notion either of episcopacy or of royal supremacy” (9). Bennett admits the same tension that I cite here and describes it in this way:

Hooker’s identification of the positive law of church and commonwealth made it impossible to claim that sectarians should not be brought somehow to conform; but his disbelief in forced assent logically required him to say that the Christian magistrate must bring about the religious understanding of all

citizens by seeing to it that they are rightly instructed until they agree to disagree on anything but the barest of essentials in a broadly tolerant national Christianity. (208)

Of course, if such citizens remain obstinate even after being instructed, coercion remains an option, for the sake of maintaining the external order of worship. Hugh Trevor-Roper attempts to construe Hooker as an advocate of toleration, by citing his general acknowledgment that the “Church of Rome” is “part of the visible Church,” “though a maimed part” (Hooker 3.1.10-11; Trevor-Roper 194). But such a view of Hooker fails to distinguish between toleration and comprehension. Such logic, oriented toward the “visible church,” is perfectly consonant with the justification of coercion based on outward conformity (Le Cler 400-1). Hooker’s point would, moreover, still be consistent with the English practice of coercing Catholics not even on ostensibly religious grounds, but on charges of treason. See note 14 of the next chapter.

¹⁷ For the only two sustained attempts to compare Hooker and Milton directly, see Bennett 6-32, and Stanwood 68-81. Bennett’s analysis focuses on Hooker’s *Laws* and Milton’s *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, as they treat the relationship between liberty and kingship. My own emphasis upon their differences regarding religious coercion is well complemented by Bennett’s emphasis upon the similarities between them regarding the nature of reason. Indeed Bennett’s insistence upon the importance of the Christian Humanism that Hooker and Milton shared in common is analagous to and supports my point regarding the importance of Erasmus. Stanwood’s account focuses on Milton’s antiprelatical tracts and is therefore taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter Two:

Milton's Charitable Reason for Liberty of Conscience

In Milton's polemical prose, we can trace the interaction between his account of reason (as conscience and as understanding), his use of biblical and historical narrative, and his account of the relationship between state power and religious belief. There are instances of nearly the same conceptual relationship in much of Milton's prose. For example, when mounting arguments against the prelates, Milton simply presumes the individual right to freedom of conscience, even as he appeals to right reason as an interpretive guide to the Bible and supports that same argument using historical and biblical narratives ostensibly guided by that account of rationality. Or if he argues explicitly for "liberty," whether concerning marriage laws or printing laws, he does so in a way that draws upon the same set of concepts. For the sake of analysis, the argument here will turn on the examples we find in *Of Reformation* (1641), *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641), *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), and *Of Civil Power* (1659), although the logical relationship I describe can be observed elsewhere in Milton's tracts. The aim here is to describe in some detail how Milton actually deploys that conceptual relationship within his tracts, before we begin to consider what the poetic implications of that logic might be. In this respect, my treatment of Milton's prose differs from those that focus more on the stylistic rather than logical dynamics of his rhetoric.¹ Instead, my goal is to discern the trajectory of the tracts' central arguments, as they reach their limit within the genre of the dialectical pamphlet.

Of Reformation begins with an invocation of the war in heaven described in Revelation 12 and ends by invoking the culmination of that same cosmic struggle in the Last Judgement

(*CPW* 1:524-25; 616-17). By situating his argument in this way, Milton uses the overarching biblical story to locate the prelates clearly on the side of the Antichrist. But that understanding of the opening imagery only becomes available as the argument unfolds. The tract initially presents only a contrast between the “sudden corruption” of the church after the ascension of Christ and the “reformation of the Church in these latter dayes” (519). The ensuing historical account introduces theological distinctions that need to be kept in view in order to follow correctly the logic of the argument that Milton situates within the larger biblical story:

Sad it is to thinke [of the corruption of] that Doctrine of the *Gospel*, planted by teachers Divinely inspir'd, and by them winnow'd, and sifted, from the chaffe of overdated Ceremonies, and refined to such a Spirituall height, and temper of purity, and knowledge of the Creator, that the body, with all the circumstances of time and place, were purifi'd by the affections of the regenerat Soule, and nothing left impure, but sinne; *Faith* needing not the weak, and fallible office of the Senses, to be either the Ushers, or Interpreters, of heavenly Mysteries, save where our Lord himselfe in his Sacraments ordain'd. (519-20)

By contrast, the “new-vomited Paganisme of sensuall Idolatry” resulted from the attempt to ascribe, without scriptural warrant, spiritual importance to physical things or actions, reinstituting a kind of priestly worship (520-22). Thus worship and salvation came to depend upon legalistic formalism, while the sacraments became like pagan magic (522-23). This characterization is consistent with conventional Reformed accounts of the medieval church. Rhetorically, the purpose of the contrast is really to set up the more relevant contrast between what the English church still is and what it should be. It is important, however, not to draw mistaken implications from this passage. Milton's rejection of ceremonies and his insistence on

the independence of the knowledge of faith from the senses must be understood as polemical statements that, while consistent with his other beliefs, do not represent the whole of his thinking. Thus, before describing how Milton's argument unfolds, we need to consider how a potential misunderstanding of this passage could pre-emptively render Milton's whole argument self-contradictory.

Commenting on the above passage, Don Wolfe observes that "even the first page of *Of Reformation* thus shows a striking contradiction between Milton the poet and Milton the religious thinker":

As a poet Milton was constantly aware of the need of images, of dependence upon the magic of color and sound and touch.... Yet in religious practices he rejected the uses of art.... Images he despised as idols, ceremonies as superstitions.

Already with Milton the true Protestant was in effect his own church, rejecting the efficacy of ecclesiastical discipline for his own unaided interpretation of the Scriptures. (*CPW* 1:109)

This passage incorporates a number of commonplace views regarding Milton, and also regarding the Reformation more generally, that influence directly how we understand Milton's central preoccupations.² But there are several respects in which this passage is misleading. How, for example, can such a characterization be reconciled with the fact that Milton obviously viewed the "art" of his poetry as part of his "religious practice," in answer to his calling as a poet? Even if we grant that by "art" Wolfe means the plastic arts, he must see a contradiction where there is none. There is not even a tension, much less a contradiction, between using verbal imagery, whether in poetry or theological prose (as in the immediately following passage of the tract), and the Protestant critique of ceremonial superstition or salvation by works.

At a deeper level, however, to characterize Milton as “rejecting the efficacy of ecclesiastical discipline” also involves a serious misrepresentation. Milton never rejects the idea of church discipline *per se*, but rejects all use of coercion: in effect, removing someone from fellowship is the most severe kind of discipline possible, given the spiritual nature of the church’s real power (*CPW* 1:608). Wolfe’s implicit failure to imagine that ecclesiastical discipline without coercion could still be authentic discipline reveals an inadequate attention to the core of Milton’s argument against the prelates, who had demonstrated their corruption by arguing that such state-sponsored violence was integral to their institutional preservation. Moreover, such a misunderstanding reflects a deeper critical tendency to construe all appeals to objective “truth,” or authority, as necessarily coercive. Because Don Wolfe was the general editor of the Yale University Press edition of Milton’s prose, and editor of the volume in which we find *Of Reformation*, as well as of that tract itself, his introductory assessment may be taken both to embody and to perpetuate a consensus in Milton scholarship. Indeed, the account of radical Reformation belief presumed by Wolfe continues to exert influence on current studies of Milton and needs to be addressed briefly here.³

There are two crucial substantive claims that inform Wolfe’s comments. The first is a belief that the logic of Puritanism, when applied consistently, entails a quasi-platonic denigration of sense perception and of the body generally (cf. Milner 120-22). The problem with such a belief is that it ignores the obvious *a priori* Protestant commitment to the truth of Scripture, both in its status as external authority and in the content of its claims. This is why, even in the passage quoted above, Milton does not reject all sacraments in principle, and why he freely admits their role where warranted by the testimony of Christ in the gospels (520). At a more basic level, in that same passage, Milton does not reject the body but describes its purification

(519) in a manner similar to Philippians 3:20-21. Milton is not describing a Platonic escape from the body, but a Christian redemption of the body. The second belief informing Wolfe's comments actually underwrites the first belief. As Wolfe's last sentence above reveals, according to the episcopal critique (often informed by Hooker), the individualism of dissenting Protestant logic effectively negates the capacity of Scripture to function as an objective constraint on interpretation, resulting ultimately in Milton becoming "his own church," where all biblical interpretation must be his own (*CPW* 1:109). According to such a critique, the radical Protestant emphasis upon the individual and the rejection of ceremonies are both part of the same tendency to locate truth exclusively "inside" the believer, or in the spiritual realm, at the expense of anything sensible, even written Scripture (cf. Fish "Wanting" 42-44). This issue does point to a tension in Milton's writing, which he negotiates differently in different contexts, as we will see, for example, in *Paradise Lost*. But at this point in his career, Milton is satisfied to address such potential problems by insisting on the general accessibility of the plain sense of Scripture. He contends that "that which is most necessary to be known is most easie; and that which is most difficult, so farre expounds it selfe ever, as to tell us how little it imports our *saving knowledge*" (*CPW* 1:566). Thus Milton addresses the problem of how to avoid letting the interpretation of Scripture become an occasion for only self-projection. He may be mistaken to hold such a belief, but, as a logical premise, that belief entails that there is no contradiction between rejecting the soteriological efficacy of ceremonies and using all the colours of the imagination in theological or literary discourse.

Indeed, Wolfe does eventually state explicitly that he thinks Milton's individualist *sola scriptura* approach is simply wrong. But even Wolfe's rejection of the *sola scriptura* principle reveals a misreading of Milton's text. Milton claims, for example, that people of "every age, and

sex” are called to the task of “searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good” (*CPW* 1:566). Wolfe contends that “such an intellectual method, however, as Milton did not realize, led to many contradictions. As Gauden and Hall found in the Scriptures justification for the divine right of Kings, and Roger Williams for toleration even of the hated papists, so Rainsborough was to justify by the Scriptures the democratic suffrage” (111-12). Wolfe’s list of examples reveals that none of these disagreements involved any of the genuinely central Reformed teachings, such as salvation by faith alone, or the priesthood of the believer. Although Milton would disagree with many of these writers on various points, he would still contend that they shared in common a Reformed soteriology derived from the plain sense of Scripture. Milton understood all of the above issues to be relevant to the question of how people should live and order their lives together, but none of them determined the eternal destiny of those on either side of a given question. Wolfe claims that “contrary to Milton’s assertion, the Scriptures were scarcely more plain and easy to follow than the church fathers”:

The Scriptures contained, indeed, so many things that men could find in them justifications for many positions in theology or politics. It was this disintegrating principle that was to split English Protestantism into dozens of sects to justify in Milton’s mind Cromwell’s military dictatorship of 1649 [sic], and to bring Milton in the end to no church but his own conscience. (112)

Put simply, nothing in these claims necessarily contradicts Milton’s point that, with respect to “*saving knowledge*,” “that which is most necessary to be known is most easie” (566). Milton does later seem to sophisticate his biblical hermeneutics, as we shall see in his divorce tracts, but never in a way that impinges on soteriology. There is a key distinction here that many Milton scholars seem to overlook: Milton takes the idea of “saving faith” as the starting point for “faith

seeking understanding,” but the crucial “faith” itself is never subsumed within the process of “seeking understanding.” For example, although Milton is committed to the process of understanding how Scripture relates to political or theological questions, he consistently presumes, for either kind of investigation, a more basic faith in the person and work of Christ as revealed in the Bible. Wolfe’s mistake is to think that a diversity of biblical interpretations on a range of political or theological questions necessarily interferes with that more basic belief. Milton would insist that the “disintegrating principle” among the sects has no direct bearing necessarily upon the eternal destiny of those concerned, as long as they remain committed to *sola scriptura* belief, which, as a matter of course, entails a rejection of episcopacy. It may be that their respective attempts at “seeking understanding” on some particulars have gone amiss, but their “saving knowledge” or faith remains in place.

This distinction, between the biblical knowledge of “saving faith” and the use of Scripture in the quest for understanding that ensues from such faith, is crucial in order to avoid mistakenly ascribing further contradictions to Milton’s position. For example, if we accept that the opening passage from *Of Reformation* (CPW 1:519-20) simply precludes any role for the senses in genuine understanding, then it must contradict directly his own explicit claims in *Of Education*, written three years later. There he claims that “understanding” must be based on “sensible things,” such that there is a progression in knowledge from things visible to “things invisible” (CPW 2:367-69). When compared to the above passage from *Of Reformation*, this passage is all the more striking in its contrast, because it locates that process of understanding within an educational program whose explicit goal is to restore the damage from the consequences of the Fall (366-67). Taken in isolation, this passage could suggest that Milton admits not only a role for the senses, but also a belief in salvation by works. He seems to imply

that education can somehow effect salvation. But Milton is neither embracing a ceremonial view of worship, nor advocating salvation by works. By making the goal of education “to repair the ruins of our first parents” (366-67), Milton refers not to justification but to sanctification. The “highest perfection” at which education aims is a union of “true virtue” (sanctification) with “the heavenly grace of faith” (justification) (367). The sanctification, or good works, includes the process of seeking understanding, which is consequent upon saving knowledge. In effect, *Of Education* presumes that the students concerned will already have saving faith and will be involved in the process of faith seeking understanding, a process which makes free use of sensible analogy. Nevertheless, it could seem that there is a contradiction between the admission of analogy here and the repudiation of any bodily mediation in *Of Reformation*. But in the antiprelatical tract, Milton is concerned to oppose the specific belief that there is some salvific efficacy in bodily actions, or that the gift of saving faith depends necessarily upon the senses. The two tracts thus pose no contradiction: the opening passage from *Of Reformation* concerns the clear proclamation of saving faith (independent of ceremonies or works), while *Of Education* outlines the training for ongoing reflection in response to that saving faith, a reflection which is part of the process of sanctification. In effect, Milton understood “saving knowledge” to be, not the end, but the beginning of the “wars of truth,” in the midst of which a further understanding of truth is sought, found, defended, and incarnated with varying degrees of success, but in which the participants need not be fearful that their eternal destiny hangs upon their own immediate apparent success or failure, so long as they hold to saving faith.⁴

As the title clearly indicates, the aim of the tract is to outline the “Causes that hitherto have hindred” the “Reformation” of church discipline in England (*CPW* 1:517). Milton maintains, in effect, that the reformation of church government, at the very least the abolition of

episcopacy, is an integral expression of the spiritual reformation of the nation. In the same way that justification or genuine saving faith results in some signs of sanctification or changed behaviour, so also at a national level the authenticity of Reformed belief should result in a reformation of the order of church life. In neither case does the consequent necessarily imply the antecedent, but the consequent is not simply optional. In both cases, the latter is normally understood as the fulfillment or completion of the former. Thus, Milton can speak meaningfully of the Reformation movement in England as incomplete and of the crucial importance of these changes in church government, without necessarily implying that the political question bears directly on “saving knowledge.”

After establishing the character of the “Depravities of the [medieval] Church,” Milton proceeds to describe the Reformation by glorious contrast. His characterization of the Reformation also involves an inscription of historical events within an overarching biblical story, in a manner similar (though not identical) to the millenarian tendency of superimposing biblical epochs, especially from the Book of Revelation, onto current events:

I recall to mind at last, after so many darke Ages, wherein the huge
overshadowing traine of *Error* had almost swept all the Starres out of the
Firmament of the *Church*; how the bright and blissful *Reformation* (by Divine
Power) strook through the black and settled Night of *Ignorance* and *Antichristian
Tyranny*.... Then was the Sacred BIBLE sought out of the dusty corners where
prophane Falshood and Neglect had throwne it, the *Schooles* opened, *Divine* and
Humane Learning rak't out of the *embers* of *forgotten Tongues*, and *Princes* and
Cities trooping apace to the new erected Banner of *Salvation*; the *Martyrs*, with
the unresistable *might* of *Weaknesse*, shaking the *Powers* of *Darknesse*, and

scorning the *fiery rage* of the old *red Dragon*. (CPW 1:524-25)

Although Milton's adaptation here is relatively free, the obvious opening and closing invocations of Revelation 12:3-11 allow him to locate the Reformation as an event within the framework of biblical prophecy. The biblical passage describes a war in heaven, fought by the "red dragon," who is identified as Satan, and his angels against "Michael and his angels" (12:7-9). Milton also alludes directly to that same passage in his mention of those "stars" swept from heaven and of those martyrs who help to defeat the dragon (12:4,11). In itself, such invocations are not unusual among those who interpreted the Reformation as an eschatological event. As Janel Mueller points out, what distinguishes *Of Reformation* is not its use of apocalyptic imagery *per se*, but the way in which it critiques an earlier tradition of English apocalypticism (for example, Foxe or Tyndale) that tended to look for help from a "godly prince," who would be, in effect, a "[Protestant] Constantine to turn back the onslaughts of Antichrist and vindicate the blood of the martyrs. Milton would have none of this" (Mueller 23).

But the apocalyptic imagery in this passage is also important for Milton specifically to set the stage for the central question that he suddenly poses to the reader and then sets out to address in the rest of his tract:

The pleasing pursuit of these thoughts hath oft-times led mee into a serious question and debatement with my selfe, how it should come to passe that *England*...should now be last, and most unsettl'd in the enjoyment of that *Peace*, whereof she taught the way to others. (CPW 1:525)

The "peace" to which Milton refers is, of course, the peace of church government. As he later explains, the goal of his tract is "to declare those Causes that hinder the forwarding of *true Discipline* [that is, Presbyterian government]" (528). The first step in his exposition is an

historical account, spanning from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I, in which he describes the different circumstances which had kept episcopal church order in place (528-41). The second, much longer, part of his argument concerns the hindrances “in our Times” (541). Under that heading he lists three topics, but really only two, the first and the last, seem to be worth his attention, if the length of treatment is any indication. He first considers the argument of the “Antiquitarians” who attempt to use the study of church history to argue for the legitimacy of episcopal church government (541-70). Then, in less than a page, Milton dismisses those “Libertines” who argue that the specific discipline of Presbyterianism would be intolerable, because, he contends, such libertines are opposed to all discipline as such (570). Finally, he addresses those he calls “Polititians” (541) who contend that “Church government must be conformable to the civill politie,” and that “no form of Church government is agreeable to monarchy, but that of bishops” (573; 573-613).

Milton uses a noteworthy logic to describe the relationship between Reformed doctrine and Reformed church government:

Albeit in *purity of Doctrine* we agree with our Brethren; yet in Discipline, which is the *execution* and *applying* of *Doctrine* home, and laying the *salve* to the very *Orfice* of the wound...we are no better then a *Schisme*, from all the *Reformation*, and a sore scandall to them. (CPW 1:526)

The reference to “schisme” is a witty reversal of the term’s normal use to deride dissenters. Milton effectively enlarges the context to show that, with respect to the whole Reformation, the prelates are the schismatics, and guilty of the very fault with which they charge dissenters. But the more important element in this passage is the way that Milton ties the issue of church government, by analogy and implication, to the relationship between justification and

sanctification (the living out of belief, or the “applying of doctrine”). Sanctification is a sign of justification, or saving faith, but the latter is not conditional upon the former. In the same way, Milton suggests, a reformation in church government does not obtain but is a necessary sign of a widespread spiritual or inner reformation. Moreover, episcopal practices of coercing consciences and insisting upon specific unbiblical ceremonies under pain of civil force pose an obstacle to the exercise of genuine faith, which presumes freedom. The logic here is crucial to understand; otherwise, the distinction between justification and sanctification can be used to argue, as some of Milton’s contemporaries did, that the question of Church government is indifferent. Thus Milton, against Hooker, implies that dissenters can be genuine martyrs, because their outward actions are a result, though not a condition, of their faithfulness to the truth of the gospel.

Similarly, there is nothing surprising about Milton’s emphasis upon the human part in completing the Reformation. Mueller claims that Milton is offering something exceptional by emphasizing the role of human virtue in precipitating Christ’s return:

From the vantage of native apocalypticism, surely the most radical single passage in Milton’s first tract is the one that expressly sets aside a providential perspective to focus instead on analyzing and rehabilitating human agency: “Yet will I not focus on that which may seeme to be the cause on GODS part; as his judgement on our sinnes, the tryall of his owne, the unmasking of Hypocrites.... But I shall chiefly indeavour to declare those Causes that hinder the forwarding of *true Discipline*, which are among our selves [CPW 1:527-28].” (Mueller 23)

Mueller contends that by focusing on those “causes” “which are among ourselves,” Milton challenges the customary apocalyptic tendency to adopt a “providential perspective.” On the

contrary, it should be emphasized that Milton is here simply following the distinction between justification, accounts of which emphasize a “providential perspective,” and sanctification, which allows for the consideration of human agency. The whole question of church government, both as something understood, and as something enacted without coercion, is part of sanctification, a process in which God has granted humans a legitimate role.

Within this context, further claims need making about Milton’s argument in *Of Reformation*. First, although he clearly sides with the “Presbyterians” at this point in the debate, he will later argue against them as well, when they try to become the new state religion.⁵ The apparent change, however, reveals a deeper consistency in his position, both early and late. What remains the same is Milton’s opposition to the use of civil force in religious matters. As he makes clear in his “tailed” sonnet “On the New Forcers of Conscience,” he later opposes the Presbyterians, not because of their particular structure of church government, but because of their willingness to deploy state power in a way that Milton viewed as antichristian. *Of Reformation*, it should be noted, is really concerned more with the arguments against episcopacy than with those in favor of any alternative. Indeed, he does not here delineate exactly how the “plain sense” of Scripture could actually be used to underwrite a Presbyterian form of government (compare *CPW* 1:758-60). Rather, the appeal to the “plain sense” of Scripture applies only to matters of salvation, in the light of which those passages on church government should be read and interpreted. But the more pressing problem for Milton is how to be rid of a religious establishment that has united itself to political power and uses that power to persecute dissent. Thus, even in Milton’s first tract, the real basis for his particular argument, in this case against episcopacy, is his deeper premise that authentic Christian faith necessarily entails a belief in “liberty” and opposes religious coercion. Milton does not here present an explicit argument in

favor of freedom of conscience, as he will do later in *Civil Power* (1659). Rather, he simply presumes liberty of conscience to be inherent in justice, the violation of which is part of his argument concerning the antichristian nature of episcopacy. This also explains why all of Milton's treatments of Christian "liberty" are, in his view, rooted simply in the Reformed gospel, or the gift of salvation by faith, freely offered and freely accepted.

But this raises a further question. If the doctrine of salvation by faith is really most crucial, why does Milton care about church government at all? Why does he not simply say that the issue is "indifferent"? As we have seen, Richard Hooker made just such a claim to imply that use of state coercion was permitted. At some points, Milton cites and dismisses the attempt to justify religious coercion by appealing to things indifferent (for example, *CPW* 1: 585, 925). At other points, he invokes the term positively to indicate a usage closer to Calvin's (for example, *CPW* 2:563; 1:520). But the key point to grasp is that Milton's own position does not follow Hooker's identification of "matters indifferent" with the whole sphere of "sanctification," as constituted by a field of legal prescription. This is why Milton does not argue here, or later, against the idea of church discipline *per se* (pace Wolfe). Instead, he contends that the most extreme church discipline permitted by Scripture, and the most genuinely effective, is excommunication (*CPW* 1:608). The doctrine of things indifferent, in Milton's account, does not constitute the process of sanctification, but does facilitate that temporal process and therefore precludes any role for coercion.

In *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, Victoria Kahn describes in some detail the Renaissance English debates over "things indifferent" and Milton's relationship to that debate (132-84). According to Kahn, the main problem with appeals to adiaphora is that they involved an ambiguity similar to that which haunted Renaissance accounts of Machiavellian rhetoric: that is,

they could be used as a justification for license or for coercion and *de facto* political power (135-36). Kahn's account focuses primarily on Miltonic texts other than those considered here and is addressed further below in the analysis of *Areopagitica* (in Chapter 4). However, her broader claim is that Milton "dramatizes again and again" the version of "Machiavellian dilemma" that results from his "conflation of truth with the realm of things indifferent" (179).⁶ Such a conflation risks presenting an account of truth that undermines itself by becoming "only rhetorical," or "limited to a contingent configuration of circumstances" (179). In effect, if the power of truth is limited to the power of persuasion, it necessarily becomes rhetorical and thereby a party to the dynamics of "sembling and dissembling" (171). Kahn notes the difference between Milton's appeal to things indifferent, in for example *Areopagitica* (CPW 2: 563), and the contrasting Erastian appeals to adiaphora (*Machiavellian* 173-79). Her account, however, tends to presume that a noncoercive truth cannot be an objective truth, despite apparent allowances to the contrary.⁷ The crucial point here is that Kahn claims that "by making indifference a matter of individual judgment," Milton "[inverts] the usual argument about things indifferent" (173-74). But Milton is really doing little more than offering Calvin's rather than Hooker's adiaphorism. The crucial point is to remember the object of the indifference in Calvin's account: "external" things or actions are indifferent only with respect to justification (Calvin 3.19.2, 7). Then, as a result of that indifference, a person's temporal actions can be truly virtuous (that is part of sanctification) or not, to the extent that those actions are charitable and free expressions of saving faith in God (3.19.4-9). The main potential difficulty arises from the tendency to think that the actions are indifferent with respect to any thing temporal, as though adiaphorism entails that certain actions are indeterminate or inconsequential. Milton's challenge is to show that his arguments for the expansion of the sphere of liberal indifference regarding

religious practice entails not license but an increased opportunity for genuinely responsible and virtuous action in the world.

Earlier I noted Milton's striking deployment of imagery from Revelation 12, but his use of that passage throughout the tract is distinctive in other ways as well. In its description of the war in heaven, Revelation 12 states explicitly that the means by which the red dragon was defeated was "by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death" (Rev. 12:11). Because the word translated "testimony" is the Greek *martyrias* there is a clear sense that the final phrase specifies how those saints effectively "testified" or witnessed—that is, by martyrdom. Thus Milton is very concerned in *Of Reformation* to deny that those who suffered for the sake of episcopacy were authentic martyrs. Once again, Milton's argument depends upon distinctions that are similar to those that Hooker makes, but Milton reverses the implications. Both make the point that suffering, even unjustly, does not make a martyr. To qualify as a martyr one must suffer for the truth of the gospel. But because both dissenters and prelates are effectively suffering for the cause of competing views of church discipline, both sides would seem to be disqualified for martyrdom: the former by Hooker, the latter by Milton. Thus, Milton's adamant refusal to consider the bishops Cranmer, Latimer, or Ridley as true martyrs (*CPW* 1:540) is not a digression. Rather, having invoked the eschatological context for the Reformation struggle, his argument stipulates that they, despite dying as a result of religious persecution, cannot be counted among those "saints" who by virtue of their martyrdom help to defeat the dragon. The distinction is directly relevant to Milton's central argument. For to allow those prelates to be included among the Reformation saints who died in the battle against Satan would allow some legitimate connection between episcopacy and the gospel. Milton is arguing for the complete abandonment of episcopacy because he argues

that the very institution is irredeemably corrupt. At the same time, Milton implies that those dissenters who died for their ecclesial practice could be genuine martyrs because that practice, though indifferent to their salvation, was necessarily a part of their sanctification.

In arguing that bishops, rather than strengthening monarchy, actually undermine royal authority, Milton describes the situation of those who have fled to the “deserts of America” in order to shelter from the “fury of the Bishops” (*CPW* 1:585). Again, the passage involves a direct invocation of Revelation 12, in which the “woman” who represents the church is sheltered from the fury of the dragon by being moved into the “wilderness” (Rev. 12:6, 13-17). In this way, Milton again links the coercive nature of episcopacy with the work of the “dragon” whom he invokes at the outset of his tract. But also within this context Milton picks up on the same episcopal appeal to things “indifferent” noted above:

Behold so many of [Mother England's] children expos'd at once, and thrust from things of dearest necessity, because their conscience could not assent to things which the Bishops thought *indifferent*. What more binding then Conscience? what more free then *indifferency*? cruel then must that *indifferency* needs be, that shall violate the strict necessity of Conscience, merciles, and inhumane that free choyse, and liberty that shall break asunder the bonds of Religion. (*CPW* 1:585, original italics)

Here Milton points out the absurdity of allowing a claim of “indifferency” to underwrite the use of force against those who are acting according to conscience. Notice also that by structuring his claims in this way, Milton continues to link the idea of a regenerate conscience with the actions that compose sanctification. Moreover, such virtuous actions can result in “honours” and “rewards,” in addition to, though not without, the gift of salvation (597; 616).

Within the same apocalyptic register of rhetorical imagery, Milton also repeatedly invokes the ideas of “luke-warmness,” as well as images of vomiting and nakedness, associated with the Laodicean church addressed in Revelation 3 (*CPW* 1:520, 527, 537, 539).⁸ Similarly, we find references to the “Whore” of Babylon (557, 615) who is, in Revelation, “drunken on the blood of the saints” (Rev. 17:6). Milton uses such imagery consistently, and its deployment is more than a rhetorical ornament. The repeated invocations of and allusions to the book of Revelation provide a genuine theological basis for the polemical edge of the argument that runs throughout his historical account. In refuting the claims of “antiquitarians,” his overall argument is twofold: ancient writers either discredit themselves as authorities, or they point to Scripture as the only basis for their own authority. But in the description of how the wealth that resulted from Constantine’s establishment of the church accelerated its “decaying,” Milton specifically notes that, “at this time *Antichrist* began first to put forth his horne” (*CPW* 1:557). The “horne” which is generally understood to represent power, is a standard characteristic of the various “beasts” described in Revelation, whether the ten-horned dragon (Rev. 12:3), or the ten-horned “first beast” (13:1, 12), or the “two-horned” second beast (13:11). By describing the post-Constantinian church in this way, Milton situates the historical event within a mode of biblical prophecy that enables a specific interpretation of the event. He later states explicitly that Constantine’s reign marks the beginning of the bishops’ movement to “draw to themselves a temporall strength and power,” in order to keep themselves from “falling to nothing” once their sensuality had extinguished any remaining spiritual power (*CPW* 1:576-77). Of course, Milton makes that point in trying to show that the bishops’ accruing of temporal power entails a corresponding loss of power for the king (577), and hence that there is no necessary complementarity between monarchy and episcopacy. But Milton’s key point is that such clerical

acquisition of temporal power is inherently antichristian, and he claims that right reason enables such a judgement. Through the use of apocalyptic imagery, the specific points within the argument are connected to the larger eschatological context invoked at the beginning and end of the tract.

Milton plainly uses the Book of Revelation in this tract to situate the present and past historical events within an eschatological context (Loewenstein, *Drama* 9-20). For Milton, however, the connections that he makes between history and the biblical text are a direct result of applying the regenerate conscience of right reason to Scripture. They are neither arbitrary nor the result of simply inheriting a particular Reformed interpretation of Revelation that identifies the Pope as the Antichrist. The logic, in brief, is as follows. Fallen reason, no longer “right,” is normally obscured, in bondage to sensuality and a perverted will, but continues to exist. Repentance and the simple faith in Christ’s redemptive work, the “saving knowledge” derived from *sola scriptura*, results in a regeneration of the conscience or restoration of “right reason.” This regenerate reason is not necessarily an infallible guide in every matter of immediate decision. It does reveal clear laws, however, that involve consequences for good or ill. The process of sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit, including the postconversion study of Scripture, is worked out through the actions guided by the conscience. The attempt to use coercion to subvert the free exercise of conscience is thus inherently antichristian. This claim allows Milton to inscribe the whole of church history, from the time of Constantine to the prelates of his own day, within the eschatological battle between Christ and Antichrist, between the church and the persecuting dragon. At the same time, such an historical account also implies that the pre-Reformation church was hindered by the predominance of unregenerate reasoning, in bondage to the superstition of ceremonies, salvation by works, and sensuality.

Of Reformation embodies Milton's attempt to use right reason, as a moral principle literally in-formed by Scripture, by applying it to biblical and historical narrative, in order to discern the truth regarding church government. Milton does not have any doubt about the disjunction between episcopacy and right reason because the actions of the bishops are, in his view, so obviously antichristian. He takes the argument a step further, however, by contending that the institution of an unelected bishopric, invested with wealth and political power, is inherently corrupting to both the person holding the office and to those under him. In this way, he links the wealth and political power of episcopacy to the life of ease and sensuality that impairs right reason and thus corrupts those who may have been virtuous before becoming bishops. Moreover, by presuming that the state has no business coercing religious belief, he can view the intimacy between prelacy and civil power as simply a contradiction of the gospel, which presumes freedom of conscience in responding to Christ. Thus Milton argues for the "root and branch" removal of episcopacy specifically because church government is not an indifferent matter, but directly pertains to both the proclamation of salvation by faith (justification) and the outworking of that faith (sanctification).

A similar set of logical relationships underlies the other antiprelatical tracts as well. They also draw upon the claim that justification and sanctification are at once distinct, yet inseparable, and to that degree both perspicuous in Scripture. For example, even though *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* is a brief piece of occasional writing, it begins with the same distinction between justification and sanctification, and presumes throughout different aspects of the conceptual relationship that I have outlined. The central question of the tract is whether the terms "episcopacy" and "presbyter" are synonymous, or whether they indicate a hierarchical distinction in favor of the former term, thereby justifying episcopal church government (*CPW* 1:624-25).

The tract aims simply to persuade readers that they cannot depend upon antiquity as a basis for making a distinction which the Bible does not make: “If [Episcopacy, as an order above Presbyter] bee of *Divine* constitution, to satisfie us fully in that, the Scripture only is able, it being the onely Book left us of Divine authority” (625). Milton’s argument, as a matter of course, presumes the distinction between “spiritual knowledge” (justification) and “all good workes” (sanctification) but depends no less upon insisting that the two are inseparable. Indeed, Milton’s central premise is that, notwithstanding the possibility of separating these issues intellectually, the nature of the whole gospel, which includes both aspects, has direct implications for the “good workes” of Church government. Therefore, the biblical equation of “episcopacy” (bishop) with “presbyter” entails a rejection of episcopal arguments that would distinguish between them by appealing to antiquity.

As the tract unfolds, we encounter the familiar story of post-Apostolic clerical corruption as understood in light of biblical prediction in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (*CPW* 1:641, 626). The character of the argument does not allow for the same explicit unfolding of historical narration presented in the earlier tract. But Milton does formulate explicitly his view of the value of studying extra-biblical historical texts:

He that thinks it the part of a well learned man, to have read diligently the ancient stories of the Church, and to be no stranger to the volumes of the Fathers shall have all judicious men consenting with him; not hereby to controule, and new fangle the Scripture, *God* forbid, but to marke how corruption, and *Apostacy* crept in by degrees, and to gather up, where ever we find the remaining sparks of Originall truth.... If wee therefore making first the Gospell our rule, and Oracle shall take the good which wee light on in the Fathers, and set it to oppose the evill

which other men seek from them ... wee shall easily master all superstition, and false doctrine. (*CPW* 1:650)

Milton is not arguing against the study of history but against the use of historical documents as a source for doctrinal authority against that of Scripture. The interaction between biblical narration (“Gospel”) and regenerate reason thus gives rise to the means to assess historical documents, as they pertain to church discipline. In other contexts that historical account is then correlated with aspects of prophetic biblical narrative, but here that overarching story remains implicit.⁹

Given the critical consensus that Milton’s divorce tracts involve an important departure from the hermeneutics of his earlier tracts, it is worth describing in some detail how a specific antiprelatical tract handles the doctrine of *sola scriptura*.¹⁰ The central argument in *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* is limited to one question, regarding the non-distinction between episcopacy and presbyter in the Bible, which Milton presumes to be obviously answered. Because of this limited focus, Stanley Fish contends that Milton’s argument is static, in that it “refuses to move forward, or even take a first step” (“Wanting” 50). Fish picks up, for example, on Milton’s call to Christians to return “to their firme stations under the standards of the Gospel” (*CPW* 1:627), as a description of the tract’s intentional refusal to do anything more than affirm the Bible. But Fish is able to take the passage to imply something static only because he overlooks that the “standards” named are not Platonic rules but battle standards—that is, moving standards, ever advancing in the battle against error. This is similar to the point Milton makes in *The Reason of Church Government*, where he contends that effective spiritual warfare is the proper end of church discipline (*CPW* 1: 759). More importantly, the tract implies a context in which people might be persuaded by appeals to antiquity rather than Scripture and attempts to convince them

otherwise. If *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* is successful, the audience will be moved from Milton's own tract and toward reading, resting in, and being persuaded solely by Scripture itself. The tract thus presumes a temporal process in which the faith of salvation is worked out through action and understanding.¹¹

By obscuring the diachronic context presumed by the tract, Fish distorts the logic of the central argument and fails to consider the role of the reader's memory within that argument. He claims that "Milton's thesis" is "the self-sufficiency of scripture ... a thesis that provides him with the a justification for the 'minimalist' strategy of dismissing extra-scriptural evidence even before it is examined" ("Wanting" 52). But such a description actually reverses the logic in Milton's text. Milton simply presumes the sufficiency of Scripture. The "minimalist strategy" of his argument is offered, not to prove that sufficiency, but to support his minimalist claim that "the pretended *Episcopacy* cannot be deduc't from the *Apostolicall TIMES*" (CPW 1:652). To reach that conclusion, Milton's argument must add to his *sola scriptura* premise, the claim that Church government is part of sanctification, or "good workes" (625), and hence is no less to be guided, in so far as possible, by Scripture. The reversal of Milton's logic is important because it allows Fish to make his point that the success of Milton's strategy "obscures the even more basic strategy that lies behind it":

Milton averts our attention from the fact that we are at the same time being prevented from looking at the scripture itself. ...so intent are we on following the ways in which the Fathers and their texts are being dismissed that we never even notice that the *scripture is nowhere cited*. ("Wanting" 52)

The main problem with such a view is that it ascribes an ontological claim to Milton's momentary rhetorical strategy, as though Milton posed for his readers the eternal choice between

reading his own text *or* reading Scripture. Fish obscures the temporal framework presumed by Milton's tract, in which readers could finish reading the tract and then return to reading the Bible, after being persuaded of the limited efficacy of reading the Fathers. Occluding the temporal dimension of the argument then allows Fish to characterize Milton's view of scriptural "Truth" as an inaccessible Platonist essence:

Unlike any other "word" the scripture (or so is the claim) is self-interpreting (this is just another characterization of its self-sufficiency), which means not only that it needs no interpretation but that *it cannot survive interpretation....* It cannot be read without being turned into something other than what it is. (52)

Fish thus contends that Milton is "aware" of the same sorts of tensions which inform deconstruction, and that his tract therefore tries to say nothing, lest the very assertion of scriptural self-sufficiency become a dangerous supplement to the Bible (44).

But Milton's logic is indeed the reverse of what Fish suggests. Because it presumes and never attempts to prove the all-sufficiency of Scripture, the tract implies that the ongoing interpretation of the Bible, rather than some other authority, is not a threat but is precisely what the process of sanctification involves. The sparing citation of the Bible within the tract is perfectly consonant with the radically limited scope of the claim that he sets out to prove. The single biblical claim that Milton ventures is that in all of Scripture "no where, either by plaine Text, or solid reasoning [can be] found any difference betweene a Bishop, and a Presbyter, save that they be two names to signify the same order" (625). Because that is the only claim he makes from an appeal to Scripture, and the only ultimate claim he makes, the rest of his argument is to show how mistaken his readers would be to accept a contrary view based on extra-biblical sources. In order to make his point, Fish not incidentally invokes the lexicon of deconstruction,

according to which the very act of perception or interpretation is constituted by an “originary violence” that removes the reader from the meaning of the text and is necessarily distorting (52). What Fish’s argument actually shows, however, is not so much the way that Milton’s position anticipates Jacques Derrida, but rather the basic distinction between Milton’s theology and the theology of deconstruction. Milton’s account of his own position presumes, notwithstanding the reality of the fall, an originary peace, rather than an originary violence. We will consider later how Milton deliberates between such apparently incommensurable belief claims in *Paradise Lost*. But there are two salient points already: that Milton’s belief, accepted on its own terms, does not entail a supplementary relation to deconstructive violence; and that Fish’s account is misleading to suggest that Milton attempts to “prove” the ontological sufficiency of the Bible, as though it needed to be understood by humans without recourse to the consciousness of readers. Just as Milton presumes rather than proves the adequate accessibility and sufficiency of the Bible, Fish presumes, rather than proves, an originary interpretive violence. Moreover, it is precisely through the use of Derrida’s terminology that Fish is able to suppress the temporal aspect of Milton’s argument, making it into an ontological claim, as though his readers must forever base the authority of the Bible on Milton’s tract, rather than simply respond, in sequence over time, to the tract’s argument that they go read the Bible and believe it for themselves.

We can see how Fish’s argument requires a distortion of Milton’s position if we observe how he treats a specific passage in the tract. Fish argues that Milton’s view entails a difference between “Time” and “Truth,” such that “Time is the medium of motion and process, of eking out...supplementing,” while Truth “does not need the temporal dimension in order to emerge” (49). Fish sets up this dichotomy between the temporal and the eternal, so that he can later show the impossibility of making any connection between them, so described. But to fit Milton’s

account within this dichotomy requires some revision:

As Milton puts it at the close of this amazing passage, “Truth is the daughter not of Time but of Heaven, only bred up ... in Christian hearts” (*CPW* 1:639 as quoted in “Wanting” 49-50).

But the full passage from Milton suggests, not an incommensurability between temporal and eternal reality, but rather the opposite. Milton is not disparaging “time” as an ontological reality, but criticizing “Time” as a quasi-allegorical figure who represents the unreliability of antiquity. Indeed, Milton is able to make such a contrast between “Time” (antiquity) and “Truth” (Scripture) precisely because both are accessible to humans as alternate sources of authority within the ontological reality of time:

Truth [is] the daughter not of Time, but of Heaven, only bred up heer below in Christian hearts between two grave & holy nurses the Doctrine, and Discipline of the Gospel. (*CPW* 1:639)

By omitting the reference to “heer below,” as well as the emphasis upon temporal process implied by the training motif in the whole passage, Fish mistakenly ascribes to Milton an alien hypostatic division between time and eternal truth. Milton instead contends simply that “the Doctrine, and Discipline of the Gospel” provide all the truth needed by humans to live well within time.

There remains, however, some degree of “slippage” between Milton’s appeal to “reason” as conscience and his appeal to “reason” as a more general intellectual capacity that enables the understanding of the Bible. For example, when he explains, in *Of Reformation*, that some patristic writers, like the Reformers, argue for the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture as it pertains to “saving knowledge,” Milton describes the rational faculty in these terms:

The very essence of Truth is plainnesse, and brightnes; the darknes and crookednesse is our own. The *Wisdom* of God created *understanding*, fit and proportionable to Truth the object, and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our *understanding* have a film of *ignorance* over it, or be blear with gazing on other false glisterings, what is that to Truth? If we will but purge with sovraign eyesalve that intellectual ray which *God* hath planted in us, then we would beleeve the Scriptures protesting their own plainnes, and perspicuity, calling them to be instructed, not only the *wise*, and *learned*, but the *simple*, the *poor*, the *babes*, foretelling an extraordinary effusion of *Gods* Spirit upon every age, and sexe, attributing to all men, and requiring from them the ability of searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good. (CPW 1:566)

This passage is useful as a demonstration of the logic that has been outlined above: here the removal of the film of ignorance corresponds to the regeneration of reason, even as that very transformation issues in a further and ongoing possibility and obligation for faith to seek understanding. Notably, however, the “plainnes and perspicuity” apply specifically to the certainty of the “calling” to search, try, and examine. If all things in Scripture were as perspicuous as “saving knowledge” from which that capacity and imperative apparently derive (566), then there would be no need to examine them further. As the context of this passage makes clear, the purging of the “intellectual ray” does not make everything else in the whole of Scripture immediately self-evident, but does provide the combination of biblical saving truth (that is, charity as constituted by the life of Christ) and regenerated psyche (desire for the good, and so forth) necessary to begin the further searching of Scriptures without futility. The possible

tension arises from the fact that neither the regeneration nor the ensuing process are properly separable from some biblical content. Ostensibly, the content would be different in each case, the former involving a simple apprehension of the work of Christ as it relates to salvation from sin by faith, the latter involving a fuller exposition of how Scripture relates to the Spirit's ongoing transformation of the believer. And in this respect, the role of memory through time is crucial, in that the memory of the saving truth of "gospel" then illuminates the ongoing process of seeking understanding through the rest of Scripture.

But what, then, is the source and relative degree of the "perspicuity" of the Bible concerning "good workes," as distinct from "saving knowledge"? Milton seems to imply two different, though possibly related, answers. First, given the inextricable relationship between saving faith and sanctification, Milton suggests that the biblical clarity with respect to the former can provide clear guidance with respect to the latter. This is the kind of logic that Milton seems to use when arguing against prelacy: given that saving faith presumes a free exercise of the will, the attempt to use coercion in church discipline (as an aspect of good works) clearly violates what is biblically clear regarding how saving knowledge results in sanctification. On the other hand, when making a positive argument about what the Bible does clearly say about church discipline, he seems to claim that "Doctrine and Discipline" are equally clear throughout the Bible. The possible tension is therefore between whether (and how far) Milton ascribes perspicuity to biblical passages concerning sanctification on the very basis of those passages pertaining to the nature of salvation (whose clarity he presumes), or whether he simply believes all aspects of both the "Doctrine and Discipline of the Gospel" to be equally apparent in the Bible. But in neither case does Milton simply assert that all of Scripture is equally clear. Moreover, although Milton, at this point in his career, obviously believes that "Presbyterianism,"

in some sense, is based on clear texts of Scripture, he does not claim for the whole of that system of church government the same perspicuity by which saving knowledge can be discerned in Scripture (compare Simpson, “Sovran” 313-14, 321-22). This point is important because the above passage (*CPW* 1:566) could be misunderstood to imply Milton’s belief in the perspicuity of the Scriptures as a whole, which would imply a logically circular argument.

After his five initial antiprelatical tracts, Milton’s career as a polemicist seems to enter a new phase with the publication of his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. And in some respects, such a view is justified. The work is the first in a new set of tracts on the topic of divorce, in which Milton is at his most personal and, in the view of many, his most tendentious.¹² By considering Milton’s first divorce tract here in some detail, we can test the character of the apparent shift in his thinking. At the same time, we can discern more fully Milton’s view of how “reason” pertains to the ends of biblical interpretation. Although Milton’s writing of the tract seems to have been precipitated by the crisis in his own marriage, there remains also a genuine consistency between his earlier antiprelatical tracts and the arguments of the divorce tracts.¹³ In an immediate sense, having been left by his wife and legally prevented from resolving his difficulty through divorce, his arguments for changes to the divorce laws have an obvious personal urgency.¹⁴ Although Milton’s retrospective account of his work as a controversialist, over a decade later in *Defensio secunda*, involves a degree of inevitable “framing,” he does not altogether strain plausibility when he describes the general topics of his tracts as “religious, domestic, and civil” liberty (*CPW* 4:624). Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of his tracts on “domestic” liberty is that they continue to base their claims upon the very same key concepts and logical relationships that informed the antiprelatical tracts. Yet Stanley Fish and, more recently, Dayton Haskin argue that despite the apparent continuities, the divorce tracts

mark an important break in Milton's career as an interpreter of the Bible.¹⁵

The central challenge that Milton addresses in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* is the relationship between civil marriage laws and biblical interpretation, specifically how to interpret Matthew 19:9 (*CPW* 2:329; compare Matt. 5:32; *CPW* 2:307), which says that "whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." In short, Milton argues that when the passage is understood properly, it does not underwrite a civil law limiting divorce only to instances of fornication: understood properly, that is, in light of Jesus' other statements about the reality and fulfilment of the Mosaic Law, which permitted divorce, the context of his address to the Pharisees, and the rule of charity. Fish contends that despite Milton's repeated appeals to the "plain sense" of Scripture, Milton becomes in the divorce tract "the kind of force against which he inveighed [in *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*], a dangerous supplementer" ("Wanting" 59):

On the one hand he is clearly desirous of loosening the constraints on divorce and he knows that in order to accomplish this he must avail himself of the earlier interpretive skill he had earlier condemned; but on the other hand he is not yet able to accept the conclusion implied by the exercise of those skills, the conclusion that once textual authority no longer constrains the interpretive process, but is a matter of contest *within* that process, authority is ever decentered and never can be securely--once and for all--reclaimed. (61)

The nature of the misunderstanding involved in this passage becomes apparent as soon as we ask, "Textual authority to constrain what kind of interpretation? All kinds?" Although Milton argues that his reading is the correct, "plain" and true "spiritual" meaning of the verse, he does not ascribe to his interpretation the same perspicuity that he attributes to the "Doctrine and

Discipline of the Gospel.” Indeed, his appeal to the rule of charity is an attempt to connect, however dubiously, the nature of the Gospel with his interpretation of this teaching on divorce. But the ability to argue for one as a guide to understanding the other shows that Milton presumes their distinction. The root of the difference between Milton and Fish lies in the latter’s claim that “the ‘all-interpreting rule’ of charity must itself be interpreted in order to be applied, and if it is interpreted once, then it can always be interpreted again” (62). But once again, Fish presumes rather than proves his claim. Milton, by contrast, presumes that the stable content of “saving knowledge” regarding the life and saving work of Christ is adequate to give “charity” a meaning that is not absolutely determinate in every imaginable particular, but sufficiently substantive to provide some interpretive parameters. This is not to deny Fish’s important point that Milton’s divorce tract involves a stunning degree of interpretive ingenuity and special pleading on his part. Milton may be mistaken to deploy the rule of charity in the way that he does, but such a potential abuse can be addressed without claiming that charity is constitutionally unspecifiable (see also Donnelly, *Rhetorical* 60-62). But the key point here is that there is no radical discontinuity between the antiprelatical tracts and the divorce tracts. In both cases, Milton takes the “saving knowledge” of the gospel as his starting point. In both cases he maintains the sufficiency of the Bible for “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). In *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* the rhetorical aim is to dissuade those who might attribute to antiquity an authority comparable to that of the Bible. In *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* Milton’s goal is to show how particular verses should not be interpreted in a way that conflicts with the clear sense of other biblical passages.

This clarified understanding of Milton’s first divorce tract has direct implications for how one views the whole of his development as a biblical interpreter. Dayton Haskin considers in

further detail Milton's deployment of the rule of charity, and similarly contends that there is an important "discontinuity" in Milton's interpretive career, between the antiprelatical tracts and the divorce tracts. Haskin goes so far as to argue for three distinct stages in Milton's thinking about biblical interpretation. At first, Milton accepted "the familiar doctrine that the plain words of the Bible provide the ultimate criterion for judgement in spiritual matters" (Haskin, *Burden* 54-55). In the second "transitional" phase, initiated by the crisis in his marriage in 1643, Milton began "the diligent 'conference of place with place,' whereby difficult texts were to be restored to their original meanings and harmonized according to the overall drift and scope of the whole Bible" (55). This process involved applying to the Bible the "humanist logic of gathering and framing" (55). The third stage, which only developed gradually, led Milton to create "a new hermeneutic" which involved the "redefinition of the analogy of faith" (57).

Haskin provides a useful historical account of the hermeneutic controversy during the Reformation and its aftermath, and the central role played by appeals to the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*). He makes the important point that, although the principle worked well polemically at the outset for Protestants arguing against Catholics, as an alternative to "tradition," it was usually too general to solve later disputes between Protestants (76-83). Haskin's account stands against those, like Fish's, that suggest Milton "gradually 'freed' himself from scriptural authority" (56). The interpretive demands that led Milton to write the divorce tracts allowed him to sustain "his potentially disastrous commitment to live by 'the Bible only.'" Rather, he pursued a more thoroughgoing resolve to become an interpreter of biblical literature," and it was this resolve which eventually led him to his "redefinition of the analogy of faith" (58). How does Milton's formulation differ? In contrast to those Protestants, like William Whittaker, who allowed creeds and "the whole catechism" to shape the rule of faith, Milton, as we might

expect, radicalizes the rule according to *sola scriptura* (77-78, 87). Haskin proves this last point by citing *A Treatise of Civil Power*, which he takes as Milton's "mature expression of the individual interpreter's rights" (87). There is much to recommend Haskin's well-informed account of Milton's development, but there are a few points at which his analysis obscures continuities in Milton's position that are more important than the variations Haskin emphasizes. By considering these continuities in the divorce tracts, we can then see how those principles later inform his writing of *Civil Power*.

In elaborating the first "discontinuity" in Milton's interpretive career, Haskin's overstatement of Milton's position occludes the most central assumption in Milton's argument:

Amidst what we assume to have been pain and disappointment, [Milton] was obliged to question whether "that which is most necessary to be known is most easie" [*CPW* 1.566], and to acknowledge that the Scriptures are not always immediately plain and clearly applicable. (Haskin, *Burden* 59).

The problem is that Milton never claims that Scriptures are "always immediately plain" and only makes the statement about the Bible's clarity after acknowledging that "some Books and especially some places in those Books" "remain clouded" (*CPW* 1.566). Moreover, to construe Milton's shift in rhetorical strategies in this way obscures that fact that a debate over divorce law does not necessarily have implications for one's "saving knowledge," or justification. The need for logical clarity on this point is crucial, because Milton does assume that the saving knowledge of a Christian pertains directly to how one should enact civil divorce laws, but not vice versa. There is some inconsistency on this point on Haskin's part, in that he elsewhere suggests that Milton does distinguish his "eternal destiny" from the question of faith seeking an understanding of divorce (*Burden*, 57-58). Following the logic of his earlier generalization, however, Haskin

later claims that “to take seriously [Milton’s] use of the rhetoric of individual responsibility...is to glimpse a curious heaven peopled only by those who have learning and the leisure to perform Herculean labours [like writing *De Doctrina Christiana*]” (84). Although he quickly qualifies any implications this point might have for Milton’s general view of Christian obligation, the passage shows most clearly that Haskin has confused the process of sanctification with justification, as though the process of faith seeking understanding were a condition for salvation.

Haskin, like Fish, emphasizes the contrast between the earlier tracts’ appeals to the clarity of Scripture, and the divorce tracts’ insistence that wise readers do not accept the “literal” or “carnal” understanding of the Bible, but are actively involved in gathering and comparing various “places” in the text. Both critics cite this passage from the first divorce tract:

There is scarce any one saying in the Gospel, but must be read with limitations and distinctions, to be rightly understood; for Christ gives no full comments or continu’d discourses, but scatters the heavenly grain of his doctrin like pearle heer and there, which requires a skilfull and laborious gatherer; who must compare the words he finds, with other precepts, with the end of every ordinance, and with the general *analogy* of Evangelick doctrine. (CPW 2:338 [1643 ed.]; compare Haskin, *Burden* 64; Fish, “Wanting” 54)

Even allowing for the urgency of his present rhetorical context, the opening lines of this passage might seem especially at odds with his previous claim that “what is most necessary to be known is most easie” (CPW 1:566). But just as “saving knowledge” (566) is cited in the earlier tract as the assumed clear content by which obscure places in Scripture might be understood, so also here the clarity of “Evangelick doctrine” provides the “general analogy” by which the ongoing interpretive work is guided amid his “gathering” from the gospel narratives. The difference is

only one of emphasis. The basic point remains the same in both cases. Thus Milton simply asserts the “rule of faith” as a synonym for “the *analogy* of Evangelick doctrine” which could be understood, somewhat reductively, as “justification by faith.” This is also why appeals to the rule would not likely resolve differences between Protestants but could still be used to distinguish between Catholicism and genuine Protestant belief. Similarly, the logic of Milton’s earlier arguments against prelacy consistently hinge upon denying that prelates are authentic Protestants at all. Haskin’s account obscures both the continuity and simplicity of Milton’s position, by suggesting that he only came later to this rigorously biblicist view of the “rule of faith” after much detailed exegesis. I suggest instead that his early understanding of “the gospel” as an embodiment of charity provided Milton with a lifelong guide throughout his years of “laborious” “gathering” from the Scriptures. During that time, his commitment to the same “gospel” or “saving knowledge” provided both the motivation and the guide for that ongoing investigation.

Because the legal and social context of Milton’s divorce tract is so different from that of readers today, it is easy to misunderstand the nature of his argument. He freely admits that licentious men could (and in Christ’s day did) abuse the legal allowance of divorce. Rather, he insists that the legal jurisdiction should be limited to ensuring that divorces are just and equitable, not whether they should take place at all. The latter decision is a matter of individual conscience (*CPW* 2:343-45). The difficulty for readers today arises from two main potential problems. First, we tend to view conscience as entirely subjective, whereas for Milton, although conscience is certainly “within” the individual, regenerate conscience is literally “in-formed” from without by Scripture and the “law of nature.” Thus the claims of conscience are not enforceable upon others, but they are communicable and capable of persuasive effect upon

others. Second, Milton does not challenge the biblical characterization of divorce as something far from the creator's intention for human happiness. Rather, he simply contends that the coercive power of the state should not be deployed, through law, to keep people bound to marriages that are destructive for either partner. He makes the same point later in *Tetrachordon*. Elaborating Jesus' comment that Moses allowed divorce because of "hardness of heart," Milton points out that such "hardness" is not a reason for abolishing a law: "If therefore we abolish divorce as only suffer'd for hardness of heart, we may as well abolish the whole law of nations, as only suffered for the same cause" (*CPW* 2: 661-62). As with civil law in general, the allowance of divorce is part of an overall means of coping with life in a fallen world. Christians are obviously called to rise above such hardness of heart, but that kind of transformation cannot by its nature be effected by the force of civil law. Thus, a central part of Milton's logic against divorce laws of his time directly parallels his larger argument against the use of coercion on all matters that pertain to religion. Moreover, it is misleading for Haskin to claim that Milton's "emphasis on the need for 'experimental' knowledge of the Scriptures" leads to a kind of "knowledge that cannot be transferred from one person to another" (87-88). Milton's point is rather the opposite: precisely because the knowledge of Scripture can be communicated in a persuasive manner between people, each individual must make the necessary judgements, but no one should attempt to coerce the conscience of another. Milton does insist on the importance of individual experimental knowledge of the Bible, but not because the content of that experience is incommunicable, but precisely because it is communicable, insofar as conscience participates in the "rational" order of nature and of Scripture.

Because the tract invokes both the "*analogy* of Evangelick doctrine" and the "rule of charity," it is worth clarifying how Milton describes the relation between faith and charity.

For every act of true faith...is wrought in us by charity: according to that in the divine hymne of *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. 13. *Charity beleeveth all things*: not as if she were so credulous, which is the exposition hitherto current, for that were a trivial praise, but to teach us that charity is the high governess of our belief, and that wee cannot safely assent to any precept writt'n in the Bible, but as charity commends it to us. (*CPW* 2:340)

A number of implications follow from this passage. Milton effectively subsumes “faith” and hence the “rule of faith” within charity. But it could still be asked, following Fish’s argument, “What then constitutes charity?” The very passage that Milton cites (1 Cor. 13) offers not an exhaustive definition, but an explicit and detailed description of what charity, in a sense, “looks like”—how to recognize it. By listing the virtues of patience, kindness, contentment, humility, and so forth, St. Paul offers a brief characterization of the virtues of Christ. Several implications follow from this. First, at the most immediate level, a doctrine which justifies, for example, envying someone else, or gloating over their sin (1 Cor. 13:4, 6), must be based on a misunderstanding of the Bible, because it would violate charity. Second, at the intellectual level, Milton makes the “rule of charity” synonymous with the “*analogy* of Evangelick doctrine” (*CPW* 2:338). Thus, although charity is irreducibly embodied in different ways through various virtues, it remains consummately intelligible and communicable in “the gospel.” The “Evangelick doctrine” can be reformulated as “Justification by faith,” but that description still depends for its intelligibility on a more basic understanding of the narration of the redemptive work of Christ. This leads to a challenge that Milton’s tracts repeatedly face. The dialectical context of his polemical prose writing would not allow him to narrate the embodiment of charity in a way that could sufficiently address in explicit terms the danger that the “rule of charity”

could be construed as entirely subjective. The third implication is that the nature of charity, which is the essence of the Christian life, precludes coercion. No one, for example, can be “forced” to acquire the genuine virtue of “patience.” Of course, “charity” should not be misunderstood as a license for most actions prohibited by criminal law. Rather, the nature of Christian virtue requires that any coercive attempt to enforce charity, whether through state prescription of Church gatherings or divorce laws, will actually have an effect that is the reverse of that intended.

The central logic in Milton’s earlier tracts in great part anticipates the argument in his later *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes; Showing that it is not Lawful for any Power on Earth to Compel in Matters of Religion* (1659). Indeed the key passages from the tract could serve as a summary of the arguments that have been described above. The same tensions also persist, however. The tract’s first argument (of four) is based on an appeal to the nature of “religion” and begins with a definition of the only two sources of “divine rule or authority” for Protestants. The only external authority “without us warrantable to one another as a common ground” is “holy scripture,” while the only other is the “illumination of the Holy Spirit” within, “so interpreting that scripture as warrantable to ourselves and to such whose consciences we perswade” (*CPW* 7:242). In elaborating this point, Milton emphasizes that a genuine Protestant is one who “prefers scripture before the church, and acknowledges none but the Scripture sole interpreter of itself to the conscience” (243). Thus to force people to “beleeve as the magistrate appoints,” much less the church, against their consciences, is antithetical to the nature of Protestant faith, so defined. Once again, he emphasizes that biblical accounts of church discipline are expressly limited to separation from fellowship (245; 269). Conversely, Catholicism is construed as a “Roman principality,” rather than a genuine spiritual religion, and

is dubbed a “heresie against the scripture” and necessarily excepted from toleration “for just reason of state more then of religion” (254).¹⁶

The tract’s second main point against the use of force in matters of religion is that even if a magistrate were capable to judge in such matters, “he hath no right” (*CPW* 7:255), because the nature of Christ’s authority does not govern by “outward force.” In that context, he maintains that the sum of “euangelic religion” “is told in two words, faith and charitie; or beleef and practise” (255). In short, genuine faith is freely accepted, while authentic charity is necessarily the “fruit of the Spirit” that results from faith (255-56). In this context he cites Galatians 5:22-23 as an elaboration of the meaning of “charity” (similar to the previous citation of 1 Corinthians 13), in order to show the absurdity of trying to coerce people into exhibiting, for example, joy, peace, or patience (*CPW* 7:255-56). Thus the nature of the relationship between justification and sanctification is the crux of his argument against trying to coerce certain actions (good works) that should be the result of saving faith. As a result, his second point also already contains within itself the logic for the other two remaining points of his tract: that coercion in religious causes violates the nature of “Christian libertie”; and that it fails to achieve its own ostensible ends (with respect to God’s glory or the benefitting of others). For example, in addressing the claim that coercion is necessary in order to ensure that “prophane and licentious persons” “not neglect the performance of religious and holy duties,” Milton points out that such a view falsely assumes that such people even can perform those duties (267). At root is simply a reiteration of the Protestant account of the relation between saving faith and works. In effect, to coerce people to follow certain forms of worship ascribes a saving efficacy to works apart from faith and violates the freedom required to make those actions an authentic expression of charity.

One of the most basic premises of Milton’s argument is that the only authoritative guides

for religious practice are Scripture, as an external authority, and the Holy Spirit, as an internal authority. I have yet to encounter a modern interpreter of Milton's text that accepts his claim at face value, rather than immediately redescribing it in the terms of contemporary hermeneutics that would render it incoherent. For example, in his annotations to the Yale edition of *Civil Power*, William Hunter observes that Milton's emphasis upon *sola scriptura*, as interpreted by the Spirit-led conscience, effectively set him in opposition to "all traditions supporting external authority" (242n; 229). But at that point, Hunter, like Fish and Haskin, must simply presume that "Scripture" understood in this way, offers no "external authority," and has already discounted the first of Milton's two most basic premises. It is crucial not to misunderstand Milton's point that Scripture can be the "sole interpreter of itself to the conscience" (243). He is not claiming that Christians can have unmediated access to the truth of the Bible, but insists that, when interpreting a specific passage of the Bible, the conscience needs to be informed solely by Scripture, and specifically the "evangelick doctrine." It is in this way, through the memory of the biblical truth already internalized by the believer, that Scripture can be an "interpreter of itself" over time, not by some immediate illumination that denies even the role of the reader's consciousness in interpreting the text. Here we meet the same problem noted in critical treatments of the earlier tracts, in that the tendency to overlook the presumed diachronic framework obscures the pivotal role of memory in the argument. Milton admits the importance of the interpretive consciousness of the reader, but without denying the mind-independent reality of biblical truth. Of course, Milton's account of biblical interpretation remains individualistic in ways that are potentially problematic. When we allow for the legitimate role of time and memory, however, his view does not necessarily entail solipsism, insofar as his commitment to Scripture as an external authority leads him to consider also the importance of other people and

the whole of the created order. In Scripture Milton affirms an authority that is at once both external and non-coercive, and whose power, consequently, can only be experienced by the individual decision to accord oneself to that truth. As with Milton's adiaphorism, the tendency to mistake Milton's position reveals a failure to imagine an external authority that is nevertheless non-coercive. Thus, while it may seem hermeneutically astute to refuse Milton's premise by insisting that an external authority interpreted by conscience is really not "external" at all, such a view actually mistakes one of the central claims throughout his prose. Moreover, to obscure the consideration of time and memory has implications beyond the understanding of Milton's hermeneutics and, as we shall see, affects how we view his poetry.

This clarification of Milton's position raises immediate questions about how we characterize the "discontinuities" in Milton's interpretive career. According to Haskin, Milton's mature interpretive thinking, which we find in *Civil Power*, "urged that a constituent feature of saving 'faith' was a willingness to rest content with what is plainly revealed, without raising questions for which there are no clear answers" (Haskin, *Burden* 57). But such a view is not necessarily different from the characterization of Milton's very earliest belief that "the plain words of the Bible provide the ultimate criteria for judgement in spiritual matters" (54). And the continuity is more revealing than the alleged disjunctions. Indeed, given Milton's starting point, we might well expect him to formulate of his own "rule of faith" out of "Scripture alone." That undertaking does seem part of his attempt to oppose those Protestants who appealed to the "rule of faith" as a means to impose "a premature unity onto the diverse strands of biblical literature" (83). But Haskin contends that *De Doctrina Christiana* embodies the results of Milton's labour of gathering in response to his interpretive calling (56; 85-87). As I show in the next chapter, it is more likely that Milton abandoned work on the theological treatise precisely because Haskin's

broader claim is correct. The treatise itself risks imposing a premature unity that Milton specifically avoids in his poetry, in order to achieve ends not otherwise possible.

As with his first antiprelatical tract, *Of Civil Power* also invokes an overarching eschatological context, near both the beginning and the end of his tract. Milton quotes from the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13) in developing the first point of his argument and invokes at the end of his tract “that judge whose coming shall be flames of fire” (*CPW* 7:245, 270). In both cases, the biblical story serves to mark the limitations of human judgment and, specifically, human magistrates, by insisting upon the ultimate certainty and fitness of God’s judgment regarding questions of conscience. The tenor of the rhetorical deployment is notably different here from the earlier tracts, in that the eschatological context does not emphasize the location of the immediate parties concerned within that battle between the saints and the Antichrist, but insists instead upon the mixed character of the church before the end of time. In this respect, the invocations of final judgment serve to emphasize by contrast the uncertain present temporal duration before the eschaton. That temporal framework underwrites his distinction between civil and religious power (240), but does not entail a religiously neutral social space. The key distinction is really between modes of power or potential for action (civil or spiritual), both of which are possible within the brief “time” during which civil authorities are allowed to rule, but only one of which will endure beyond the fullness of time. Milton does not develop the larger dimensions of the overarching story that he only intimates at the beginning and end of his tract, partly because of the pointed demands of the controversial pamphlet genre in which he participates. During the time when he wrote the polemical tracts, however, he did begin to experiment with the potential for other discursive genres to handle some of the same issues.

We can begin to get a sense of how Milton attempts to move beyond the limitations of polemical prose if we consider two of the sonnets that he wrote between *Of Reformation* and *Civil Power*. Here we find him working through some of the same issues broached by the tracts, but through the generic means of a lyric form. “On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament” is dated around 1646 and is a “tailed sonnet,” in that, beyond the usual fourteen lines, it has two “tails” of three lines each (Carey, ed. 296). As a particular form, it was associated with Italian satirists (Smart, ed. 127), and the tone of Milton’s poem seems to fit that mode. However, the excessive poetic form in itself, six lines beyond the usual sonnet length, also suggests the later “phylacteries” that Milton hopes will be clipped (line 17). Thematically, in addition to the explicit condemnation of those who would “force our consciences that Christ set free” (line 6), Milton continues to suggest an eschatological context for the events he describes, through the invocation of the “widowed whore” (line 3). The image of phylacteries also represents both a tendency toward a literalist interpretation of the Bible and a sense of legalistic “righteousness” that is merely external. The identification of the Westminster Assembly with the Council of “Trent” (14) is thus consistent with the poem’s overall characterization of the Assembly’s policies as antichristian, insofar as they follow the coercive and money-grubbing state church model. But why use the sonnet genre to present this indictment? Milton uses the traditional characterization of the sonnet form as a love lyric to imply a debasement of the affections--a rejection of the genuine church (or bride) of Christ in favor of a whore.

Similar motifs and images are reworked in Sonnet 18, “On the late Massacre in Piedmont.” Through a series of allusions, Milton describes the persecuted Waldensians in terms that identify them clearly with the martyred “saints” (who are also the Bride) of the Book of

Revelation whose blood is shed by the “triple Tyrant” (the Papacy). The apocalyptic imagery culminates in the prayer that God “sow” “their martyr’d blood and ashes,” so “that from these may grow / A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way / Early may fly the *Babylonian* woe” (lines 10, 12-14) (see also Lieb, *Violence* 29-37; Knott, *Discourses* 165-68). In this way, the death of the Waldensians is inscribed within the eschatological battle described in Revelation 12, where “the dragon” is defeated “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death” (Rev. 12: 11). At the same time, the conventional equation of Rome with Babylon should not obscure the more basic point that Milton is drawing upon a deeper characterization of religious coercion as inherently antichristian. By offering in conclusion the hope that some “may fly the *Babylonian* woe,” he invokes the Augustinian vision of the “two cities” which are defined by their affections (the one by love for God and neighbour, the other by self-love), and also the persistent hope that some might flee from the license and coercion of the “city of man” to discover true liberty and charity, before the time of final judgement. The compression involved in this kind of lyric poetry does not provide the scope for narrating the whole of biblical history, but Milton does adapt the generic opportunities of the sonnet by giving the treatment of human affections an eschatological context with respect to coercion. These short poems thus demonstrate how Milton could use the generic potential of a certain poetic form to engage the understanding and the affections of the reader at the same time that he situates that engagement within an overarching biblical story. The genius of his later work is to elaborate that engagement in such a way that integrates the unfolding narration of charitable human freedom within that larger story.

Notes

¹ For analyses of Milton's controversial prose that emphasize the stylistic aspects of some of the same tracts discussed in this chapter, see: Cable, "Shuffling" 3-33; Corns, *Development*; Egan 47-84; Fish, "Wanting" 41-68; Huntley, "Images" 83-120; Kranidas 153-66; Lieb, "Dynamics" 55-82; Limouze 121-41; Staveland 27-46, 54-65, 94-98; Wittreich, "Crown" 3-54; Woods 193-211. The only book-length monograph devoted entirely to a general account of Milton's prose is Corns, *Milton*. For an account of how the political tracts of Milton and other Puritan political writers deployed specific biblical texts, see Tuttle 63-81. The argument in this chapter does not disregard elements of style. Rather, by acknowledging the inseparability of logic (*inventio* and *dispositio*) from style (*elocutio*), as different aspects of the singular attempt to achieve the rhetorical end of persuasion, I focus here upon the logic of his argument in order to discern ultimately the limitations of certain rhetorical modes. For different treatments of thematic continuities among Milton's mid-century prose writings that are comparable to the present analysis, see Knott 152-68, which focuses on martyrdom, and Guibbory, *Ceremony* 147-56, which attends to the treatment of idolatry in many of the same texts.

² Wolfe's account, which echoes Arthur Barker (38), implies an uncritical acceptance of the biographical tradition descended from John Toland's late seventeenth-century description of Milton's later years. Such a source should, in itself, raise questions about the generalizations that Wolfe makes. Toland describes Milton's later years as a movement toward a kind of ecclesiastical solipsism (Toland 195), but Toland's biography was initially published as a preface to the 1698 edition of Milton's prose works, which were being redeployed for new political purposes. In effect, Toland's account fits Milton too well into the more secular republicanism that Toland is advocating. Nor does such a view explain why Milton was buried within an

Anglican church, at St. Giles, Cripplegate (Parker 1:640), and thus according to Anglican burial rites, rather than in the nearby cemetery at Bunhill Fields where dissenters were usually buried (Hunter, *Visitation* 13-15). Parker's claim that Milton was buried at St. Giles because Milton's father was buried there (Parker 1:640) does not explain how such a burial could have been given to Milton if Toland's account is correct. Toland's characterization was reiterated and further popularized by Samuel Johnson's tendentious biography which claims that "[Milton] grew old without any visible worship," and that finally "omitting public prayers, he omitted all" (Johnson 84). Revealingly, P.G. Stanwood takes Johnson's account as a point of departure in his recent comparison of Milton's ecclesiology with Richard Hooker's (Stanwood 66). Like Wolfe, Stanwood contends that "for [Milton] all formal structures, devices, distinctions, ordinances, and orders of the church were to become irrelevant" (75). As the argument in this chapter shows, to contend that orders of the church are not subject to legal or coercive prescription is not to claim that they are irrelevant to the Christian life—indeed Milton's point is closer to the reverse. For an entire study devoted to Milton's ecclesiology, see Honeygoskey.

³ Below I engage especially Stanley Fish and Dayton Haskin, whose formulations show most clearly the critical attitudes that I cite. Such attitudes are, however, widely shared, as shown by the specific tendency to equate all "external authority" with coercion, so that to deny Milton's endorsement of the latter entails his rejection of the former. Different forms of this kind of premise are evident, for example, in Simpson, "Sovran" 314; Stanwood 75; Kahn 175-79.

⁴ In this respect, Milton's vision of Christian sanctification is similar to the conditions of battle in which the angels find themselves in books 5 and 6 of *Paradise Lost*. In neither case does God deny the actions of rational creatures their proper dignity of having consequences. Nor

does he unduly burden them, however, with responsibility greater than they are capable of bearing. See my analysis of *Paradise Lost* below. Again, Milton uses the same classical Reformed terminology as Hooker, though to much different ends.

⁵ As Ken Simpson points out, the character of Milton's "Presbyterian" position even in the early 1640's, "is general enough to be shared by Congregationalists and 'Independents'" ("Sovran" 314n). See also Bolam and Goring 40; Hunter, *Descent* 93-95; N. Smith 104; Tolmie 116.

⁶ By the phrase "Machiavellian dilemma" Kahn means the "dilemma of innovation in the realm of fortune or action in a realm of indifference" (Machiavellian 174). Kahn's account is evidently informed by the work of J.G.A. Pocock. Theological versions of such a Machiavellian dilemma would, of course, cite providence rather than fortune. Yet it should be noted that Kahn's Machiavellian sense of "indifference" should not be equated with Calvin's concept of *adiaphora*.

⁷ A similar set of problems are evident in Stanwood's claim that "for [Milton] all formal structures, devices, distinctions, ordinances, and order of the church were to become irrelevant, to be relegated to the *adiaphora*, the nonessentials of religion and worship" (75). Stanwood then cites *Areopagitica*'s cry, "give me liberty," before contrasting that position with Hooker and concluding:

The fundamental point is that Milton decries external authority or coercion of any sort.

Milton's fervent dislike of authority is the corollary of his belief in right reason leading to mankind's perfectibility, an ideal that he cherished to the end of his life (75).

Here also, the equation of all kinds of external authority with coercion is related to a

misunderstanding of the doctrine of things indifferent. Indeed Milton's position is closer to the reverse of the final sentence: because he believed in the external authority of a non-coercive truth which right reason was uniquely fitted to apprehend, and because he held no hope for human perfectibility on this side of the eschaton, Milton insisted that the use of coercions is antithetical to the Christian search for truth.

⁸ For an account of how Milton's use of the Laodicean motif differs from Thomas Brightman's, in *A Revelation of the Revelation*, see Mueller 19-23. Exegetes like Brightman, Thomas Goodwin, and Joseph Mede, Milton's tutor at Cambridge, all followed a general scheme of historical interpretation of the book of Revelation which derived ultimately from Franciscus Junius, whose *Notae in Apocalypsim* (1589) were translated and "adapted to become the annotations on *Revelation* in the last Geneva Bible [1599]" (Gribben 6). For an account of the influence of Mede and Brightman upon Milton's apocalypticism, and which is generally compatible with the claims of the present argument, see Loewenstein, *Drama* 8-34.

⁹ By contrast, in *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton explicitly interprets St. John's vision of "the Temple of God" (Rev. 11:1-2) as a prophecy of the restoration of true spiritual worship in the Reformed Church. Picking up on the specific image of John being told to "measure" the temple, Milton asks "What is there in the world that can measure men but discipline?" (*CPW* 1:760). He then explains: "Doctrin indeed is the measure, or at least the reason of the measure, tis true, but unlesse the measure be apply'd to that which it is to measure, how can it actually doe its proper worke" (760-61). Again Milton meditates on a connection between biblical prophecy and Reformation history in such a way that gives rise to an account of how "reason" dictates, by virtue of the relation between Christian faith and practice, the relevance of Scripture to church discipline. For a full account of how the apocalyptic elements

in Milton's early tracts engage his sense of historical development, see Loewenstein, *Drama* 8-34.

¹⁰ Arthur Barker was the first to argue that Milton's domestic crisis and the attendant shift in his writing between his antiprelatical tracts and divorce tracts represents an important break in his career as a biblical interpreter and rhetorician (64-74; 98-120). Besides Fish and Haskin, whose claims are treated directly here, recent studies that adapt and develop Barker's point include Fallon, "Spur" 221; R.K. Kirby 117; Sanchez 1-2, 12.

¹¹ In *Rhetorical Faith* I address some of the theoretical claims that Fish derives from his comparison of *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* with *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (Fish, "Wanting"; Donnelly, *Rhetorical* 56-62); however, that previous engagement of Fish's analysis required that I accept at face value his interpretation of Milton's texts in order to focus on his theoretical claims. By contrast, here I address directly his treatment of Milton's writing.

¹² Critical discussions focused specifically on the divorce tracts include Cable, "Coupling" 143-59; Halkett; Sanchez 1-12; Perlette 195-215; Turner 188-229. These analyses, and those in note 12 below, all treat as a matter of course the tendentious character of Milton's position on divorce.

¹³ For the immediate background to the divorce tracts, see Parker 227-48 and compare. Sirluck's introduction to the Yale prose edition outlines how the biographical questions regarding the date of Milton's marriage and the date of the tract's publication potentially affects the interpretation of both the tract and the event (*CPW* 2:137-40; compare Wright 383-400).

¹⁴ It is commonplace for critics to observe that Milton's divorce tracts presume a hierarchical, if not misogynist, view of sexual relations. See, for example, Aers and Hodge 128-39; Hodgson 134-54; Nyquist 99-127; Turner 215-29. There is no reason to think that Milton's

opinions at the time were different from those offered in the tracts, but neither is his stance surprising, given his rhetorical purpose and intended audience. He could safely presume that his audience of Parliamentarians and Westminster Assembly Divines would hold a decidedly hierarchical view of gender relations, and he freely appeals to that belief in mounting his own argument (for example, *CPW* 2:324-25). In terms of his rhetorical challenge, and the resulting strategy, Milton knows that his central task of persuading a change in divorce laws is controversial enough that he must not only be careful to avoid all charge of uxoriousness, but also turn that set of readerly assumptions to his own best advantage. Whatever his view of sexual relations may have been at that time, the immediate rhetorical context of the divorce tracts offered little place for him to interrogate his readers' presuppositions in that respect. Moreover, as Haskin points out, the "gender bias" of the tracts reflects the fact that Milton simply viewed himself as "the injured party." At the same time, that bias inheres only to his rhetoric and not to the biblical explication which could be equally applied to claims by either gender (Haskin, *Burden* 65).

¹⁵ For the source of this story regarding Milton's interpretive career, and other adaptations of it, which which Haskin and Fish develop most fully, see note 8 above.

¹⁶ Milton's view on this point is not unusual and has precedents from well into the previous century. Indeed, G.R. Elton contends that at no time in the sixteenth century, according to either English civil law or official Church doctrine, was Catholicism condemned as a heresy in Britain (173-74; 180-82). Notwithstanding the repeated Catholic charge of religious persecution, the legal statutes required that they were always prosecuted for treason (181-82).

PART II

RATIONAL WRITING AND READING

The account of Milton's writing thus far has focused on the generally explicit logic of the arguments for religious toleration that we find in his prose. As the critical center of this analysis begins to shift toward the poetry, the next two chapters will take up directly, though in very different ways, the relationship between Milton's prose and the poetry. In one sense, the first of these two chapters is a matter of necessary logistics, as almost any critical treatment of Milton's writing today must, either implicitly or explicitly, take a position with respect to the debate over whether Milton actually authored the theological treatise titled *De Doctrina Christiana*. This chapter offers my own account of why I do not follow the custom of using the treatise as a gloss that would eliminate potential ambiguities in the doctrinal formulations of Milton's poetry, and specifically *Paradise Lost*. At the same time, because the content of *De Doctrina* is ordered according to the principles of Ramist method, this chapter occasions some initial reflections for a broader account of the relation between Ramist logic and Milton's poetry. The next chapter thus addresses directly the question of Milton's relation to Ramist logic as embodied in his *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio*. By starting that analysis with an account of *Areopagitica*, however, the discussion will also move beyond Milton's explicit engagement of "reason" as a topic. By situating the logic text within Milton's political and educational preoccupations of the 1640s, my aim is to describe with new accuracy the kind of educative reading implied by Milton's rhetorical strategies. Thus, the chapters serve different local ends, in that one addresses a fraught debate over textual authorship, while the other addresses questions about reason in education. In both cases, however, besides the background Ramism, the chapters share an ultimate concern with

Milton's belief in the capacity of writing, through different forms, to bear rational truth.

Chapter Three:

The *Teloi* of Genres: *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*

Although a consensus has not yet developed out of the recent debate over Miltonic authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*, the controversy is helpful in sharpening some specific questions about how we read even those works upon which Milton's authorship is agreed. The results of this debate are clearly far-reaching and could lead to a reassessment of over a century of scholarship that has assumed Miltonic authorship of the theological text. Over the last several years (publicly since 1991), William Hunter has been advancing and defending the view that Milton did not author the treatise. In his recent monograph, *Visitation Unimplor'd*, Hunter presents the most complete defense of his position to date.¹ His basic strategy is two-fold: first, he demonstrates how weak the assumption is that Milton did indeed write the tract--this makes the central issue one of offering competing hypotheses to see which best explains the facts (historical and textual); then he examines the character of the differences between *De Doctrina* and the Miltonic canon (prose and poetry) to demonstrate that his hypothesis offers a better explanation of those differences. The nature of the question, as constituted by Hunter's argument, has made it far more difficult for either side to base conclusions on definitive proof, and has left both dependent primarily upon circumstantial evidence. As Paul Sellin points out, attempts "to develop external bibliographical or stylistic criteria" for establishing the provenance of the *De Doctrina* "have not yet reached fruition [see Campbell et al. 104-10]"; however, we can still test the compatibility of the treatise with *Paradise Lost*, especially on

central issues that they share, to see whether their relation supports the skeptical position advanced by William Hunter or leaves the question open (Sellin, "Predestination" 45). Such an approach is, in itself, common enough (among both skeptics and those affirming the attribution), but this debate also reveals some of the pivotal interpretive practices shared by both sides. In particular, when the interlocutors attempt to compare *Paradise Lost* with the treatise, as Sellin does, too little allowance is made for the crucial generic differences between an epic theodicy and a Ramist theological treatise.

It could be argued that *De Doctrina's* Ramist organization of dogma shares in common with the epic's attempt to "justify the ways of God to men" the goal of persuasion. But the differences between their respective means of persuasion also entail a qualitative difference in that belief to which they attempt to persuade their readers. A fair consideration of the two works must keep in view the fact that Milton was aware of the respective generic constraints *and* possibilities of the two works. This invites two considerations: the apparent differences between the two works could be a result of Milton's attempt to exploit their generic differences in support of a larger theological project that encompasses both—a view Hunter finds doubtful in the extreme; or Milton could have begun revising *De Doctrina* for publication, in a manner similar to his recension of Downname's text in the *Artis Logicae*—a possibility suggested by Campbell and others and not precluded by Hunter's argument (*Visitation* 148; compare Corns, *Works* 136-41).

I shall here argue a further specification of the second hypothesis: if Milton had begun revising *De Doctrina* for publication under his own name, he would have abandoned the theological project specifically because he understood the doctrinal implications of re-ordering biblical content according to Ramist method. The problem is that the present

practices of the debate over *De Doctrina* tend to obscure the basic differences in genre between the two works which enable the articulation of such a position. Because I am sufficiently persuaded by Hunter's argument and expect it ultimately to become a widely accepted account of *De Doctrina* (though it may require the passing of an entire generation of Milton scholars), my analysis here will focus on how even such a skeptical position is overly optimistic concerning the ways in which statements from one generic context can be immediately compared with those from another.² We shall first consider how Sellin's argument in support of Hunter's position offers a sharply-focused instance of this central interpretive problem. We can then see how the same difficulty inheres in Hunter's treatment of Miltonic monism and Christology. In doing so, we can begin to understand how keeping in view the different ends of the respective textual genres illumines the debate over *De Doctrina*, but also alerts us to the perils involved in a quest for any kind of demonstrative gloss on the epic. In this way, the investigation will ultimately lead us to consider Milton's handling of the relation between theological intelligibility and biblical narrative form.

Sellin's argument focuses specifically on how *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina* each handle the central issue of predestination and concludes that the deep differences between them "indicate that Hunter has put his finger on a problem that is real" (Sellin, "Predestination" 58). Ultimately Sellin proposes four alternative explanations for the "sharp variance" (52) between the two treatments of predestination:

- (1) Milton authored neither work--an alternative absurd to everyone, presumably;
- (2) Milton authored both the treatise and *Paradise Lost*, but did not put down what he really thought in one or the other of them;
- (3) Milton changed his mind between the times he wrote the two texts;
- (4) the author of

Paradise Lost is not the author of the treatise, as William Hunter maintains.

(58)

Of course, there are other possible explanations, including some partial combination of the various alternatives Sellin proposes (whether partial authorship, partial changes in thinking, and/or incomplete textual revision, and so forth). However, these propositions, as alternatives, logically depend upon the accuracy of Sellin's argument regarding the character of the "deep variance" between the two works. Do the two treatments of predestination indeed "clash irreconcilably" (52)? Certainly the two works are not theologically identical, but that does not constitute their being irreconcilable on this point.

In order to contrast effectively the treatment of predestination in the two works, Sellin, using a paradigm established by the Dutch scholar Klaas Dijk, examines each work in the following terms:

(1) end or purpose of the decree; (2) the position of predestination among the other divine decrees preceding or following it; (3) the object of, or creature subject to the decree; and (4) the nature of the acts of election and reprobation that the decree entails. (Sellin, "Predestination" 48)

In discussing the ends of predestination, Sellin points out that the explicit purpose of the decree in *De Doctrina* is to manifest "the glory of [God's] mercy, grace and wisdom" ("Predestination" 50; see *CPW* 6:175), while the purpose of the decree in *Paradise Lost* is limited to mercy and justice ("Predestination" 51; see *PL* 3.131-4). Although different, none of these terms is necessarily exclusive or contradictory. The deeper problem in Sellin's analysis is that it demands that the terms of the doctrinal treatise be directly and explicitly transposed onto the epic, effectively ignoring the very generic differences that Milton understood and

could exploit. Sellin focuses upon the dialogue between the Father and Son in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost* as the primary proof-text for his discussion of predestination in the poem. In that passage he finds the explicit references to "mercy" and "justice" but ignores the fact that the Father calls the Son "my wisdom" (*PL* 3.170). Wisdom is not explicitly named as an "end" of predestination because wisdom is presently manifest as a character in the drama of the poem in which that predestination is acted out. If the theodicy is finally effective, both the wisdom and the grace of God (as well as the explicitly named justice and mercy) will be manifest in the reader's experience of the poem's drama. Furthermore, although the epic's emphasis upon mercy (which "first and last shall brightest shine" [3.134]) does not directly correlate with the emphasis of the treatise, the difference in emphasis is not irreconcilable. In this one respect at least, there is no necessary contradiction between the two works.

The second and more important point of comparison between the two works is the relative location of the decree of predestination. These differences, Sellin maintains, are "both essential and undeniable" ("Predestination" 52), because the order of decrees will determine the logic upon which a theologian bases the concept of human liberty (55). According to the treatise, election (being general and contingent) is "*ante iacta mundi fundamenta*" (*Works* 14:90)--decreed "before the foundations of the world were laid" (*CPW* 6:168). Sellin calls this a "supralapsarian" view of predestination, because the decree is made before creation and before the fall ("Predestination" 50-51). Because the decree of predestination in *Paradise Lost* appears to come after creation but before the fall, Sellin calls it a "prelapsarian" view of election and argues that it "runs exactly counter" to that of the doctrinal treatise (52). The "sharp variance" between the two accounts of predestination results, therefore, from the fact that the treatise places the divine decree before creation, while the poem places the decree

after creation. As noted, he bases his account of predestination in *Paradise Lost* upon the dialogue between the Father and Son in Book 3. The problem is that the entire speech that Sellin takes to be "*the* divine decree" regarding human and angelic predestination is actually nothing of the kind. Sellin maintains that in lines 56-134 of Book 3 God is "issuing the decree of predestination itself right before our nose" (46). The whole basis for his comparative argument depends on this assertion, because if this particular passage in the epic is not the actual decree of predestination, then the entire poetic side of his comparison is not applicable.

Before God the Father ever speaks, the terms used to describe him make it absolutely clear that his speech is one of providential prescience, not predestination:

God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future he beholds,
Thus to his only Son foreseeing spake. (*PL* 3.77-79)

Throughout the passage, God is not declaring his determination of what shall be (such decrees, conditional or otherwise, are already in place) but his knowledge of what shall be. The problem that Milton faces here is one of how to represent in narrative form the actions of a God who beholds "past, present, future" as a continuous present. How could Milton represent the unspeakably originary character of the predestination decree described in *De Doctrina* within the form of an epic? He could do so by using precisely the kind of narrative structure we find in *Paradise Lost*, where God recounts as knowledge, within the narrative temporal sequence, those decrees he made before the creation of the universe. Thus, although the treatise and the poem differ in form, their treatments of predestination do not necessarily conflict, because God's speech is one of prescience and not predetermination. Ultimately, Sellin's entire comparison of the sequential order of decrees within the two works depends

upon mistakenly treating God's speech in Book 3 of the poem as the decree of predestination itself rather than an articulation of prescience.

The third main point of comparison on which, Sellin argues, "the epic and the treatise clash irreconcilably" ("Predestination" 52) is regarding the creature(s) subject to the predestination decree. The two texts are "utterly different" because where the treatise takes the usual view that humans are the object of the decree, the poem seems to treat both angels and humans as the objects of predestination (52). Sellin rightly points out that lines 111-119 in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost* are concerned with the angelic rather than human fall in relation to free will (46); however, because he again mistakes this speech for a dramatic representation of the decree of predestination itself, he interprets the lines to be a "predestination" of past events (that is, retroactive, and hence, a constitutionally incoherent decree):

They [Ethereal Powers] therefore as to right belong'd,
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;
 As if Predestination over-rul'd
 Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
 Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
 Thir own revolt not I. (*PL* 3.111-117)

Sellin takes this passage as a decree that the angels "have already undergone creation but also effected their own fall" (52), but he overlooks that such a decree (in the past tense) could not itself be the decree of *predestination*. Moreover, the point of this passage is completely independent of whether or not angelic predestination is actually being proposed. The implication is that no matter how angels or humans conceive of divine efficacy within the

universe, whether they call it "fate" or "predestination" or "absolute decree," they cannot rightly deny their own responsibility or blame God for their fall. The qualifier "as if" is pivotal: it allows a recognition of predestination as an aspect of divine efficacy without making any necessary connection between that efficacy and the angelic fall. The passage actually emphasizes that there is *no* sufficient causal relation between the divine capacity for predestination and the fall of "Ethereal Powers." Ultimately, the poem does not state explicitly whether or not angels are an object of predestination, but it clearly does not dictate an affirmative view. Thus the poem does not necessarily conflict with *De Doctrina's* view that humans are the object of the predestination decree, because, although the epic does not rule out the possibility of angelic predestination, this remains only a possibility.

The fourth area in which Sellin contrasts the epic and the treatise regards the actual character of the election and reprobation that the predestination decree involves in each account. He is right to point out that the poem's notion of "peculiar grace" (*PL* 3.183) does not have a direct parallel in *De Doctrina*. To argue, however, that the "mind behind the treatise could not possibly" endorse the Calvinist view of election implicit in the poem (53) is to find mutual exclusion where none exists. Sellin overlooks the fact that such "peculiar grace" does not bear on the pivotal question of salvation or damnation, because that issue is a function of the general and conditional election on which (as he points out) the treatise and the poem agree. Sellin's main point is that the order of these decrees in *Paradise Lost* is precisely the reverse of what it should be if Milton had a genuinely intelligible account of human liberty:

Mere endorsement of "free will" does not in and of itself mean much. What counts is the way one reasons towards it, and the order of decrees has probably

more to do with determining a theologian's stand on human "liberty" than the other way around. (55)

Within the usual terms of Arminian theology there is a specific sequence to the divine decrees: the first decree is the appointment of the Son as mediator; the second is the general decision to receive in grace those who repent, leaving the unrepentant under wrath; the third is to give "the means necessary for repentance and belief sufficiently and powerfully"; finally, "and only then," ensues the decree regarding the eternal destiny of specific persons (54-55). Thus the ingenuity of Arminius' reasoning is that he places these three intermediary decisions between the fall and the decree of election and reprobation (54). All this theological subtlety, however, according to Sellin, was apparently lost on Milton, because in *Paradise Lost* the order of these decisions is in "virtually reverse order to that posed by Arminius" (55). At this point, however, Sellin's argument returns to the mistaken premise that the Father's speech in Book 3 is actually the divine decree of predestination.

Thus Sellin's analysis proceeds through each step of the speeches in Book 3 to show that the decision of predestination to salvation precedes the decree of the means of salvation, which precedes, in turn, the appointment of the Son as mediator (55). One example is sufficient to demonstrate that this last stage of his analysis shares in common the same root interpretive error. The following passage (continuing to line 202 of the poem) Sellin takes to be the "secondary decrees determining the means of carrying out the primary edict" (55):

My word, my wisdom, and effectual might,
 All thou hast spoken as my thoughts are, all
 As my Eternal purpose hath decreed:
 Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will,

Yet not of will in him yet grace in me

Freely voutsaft. (*PL* 3.170-75)

Because the Son has earlier spoken what were already the Father's thoughts, these speeches are plainly not themselves the primordial decrees that they describe. The explicit mention of God's "Eternal purpose" reminds us that these decisions to offer grace (human volition is necessary but not sufficient in itself) were actually made "before the foundations of the earth were laid": that is, constitutionally outside the reach of any conceivable narrative. The thirty lines following the colon in line 172 are then simply a recounting of the means of grace that have already been decreed. The attempt to treat the speeches of the Father in Book 3 as though they were divine decrees, rather than articulations of prescience, leads the argument to mistake the order of discussion in the dialogue for the order of decrees. Therefore, the attempt to assess how *Paradise Lost* treats the order of divine decrees by following the sequence of the Father-Son dialogue narrative in Book 3 is deeply mistaken and can only lead to confusion.

All of this should not be taken to imply that there are no points of disagreement between the poem and the doctrinal treatise. Rather, if we make allowance for the generic differences between an epic theodicy and a Ramist theological treatise, we will find that the poem does not necessarily exclude an interpretation that agrees with the doctrinal work. The poem and the treatise are, therefore, not as "irreconcilable" on the issue of predestination as Sellin argues. But what then is the character of the relation between the two works? We can begin to get a more detailed answer to that question by considering Hunter's arguments and then focusing specifically on his analysis of the materialism and Christology that are often ascribed to Milton and often used to link the poem with the treatise.

The strongest part of Hunter's argument in *Visitation Unimplor'd* is that which draws upon a combination of historical data to show that the circumstantial evidence linking Milton with the specific manuscript treatise is virtually non-existent. At the most basic material level, the history of the manuscript demonstrates that the text originally had no authorial inscription and that Milton's name was a late addition, possibly as late as 1823 (42-48). Hunter's analysis of the early biographers is also compelling. He demonstrates that aside from the anonymous biographer (Cyriack Skinner) who seems familiar solely with chapter 10, only Edward Phillips had any basis other than rumor upon which to base the claim that Milton was composing a "body of divinity" at all (19-25). But even if the existence of such a text is granted there is no concrete basis for identifying it with the *De Doctrina* manuscript. More importantly, Hunter makes a strong case for attributing *De Doctrina* to one of Milton's students. He does so by putting the biographical details in the Preface to the treatise together with Phillips' account of Milton's practice of pedagogical dictation and with the dates of publication for the known source texts of *De Doctrina* (*Visitation* 25-33). In short, if we accept the biographical details of the preface writer as true and applicable to the author of the whole text, then Milton could not have been the author, but one of his students might have been, given the publication dates of the theological compendia upon which the treatise draws and which its author claims to have read as a boy (*adolescens* [*Works* 14:4]). Also valuable to Hunter's argument is his discussion of the authorities that the treatise engages, whether in disagreement or agreement. The tract employs almost exclusively Continental authorities, and even more notable is the omission of any mention of major English writers whom Milton engages on the same topics elsewhere in his prose (*Visitation* 71-74 ff.). Most importantly, Hunter also discusses a series of doctrinal points on which the content of the treatise disagrees

with explicit statements that Milton makes in other prose works (56-70). All of which leads me to agree generally with Hunter that Milton was not likely the original author of the *De Doctrina Christiana* manuscript.

The story is complicated however by two factors. On the one hand, Milton could still have undertaken (as we noted earlier) to revise the manuscript as he did George Downname's logic text and publish it under his own name. Even if we admit such a hypothesis, it seems impossible to know what stage of the revision process the extant manuscript represents. On the other hand, to deny that Milton is the original author of *De Doctrina* does not preclude any of the heterodoxy of the treatise from appearing in *Paradise Lost*. Moreover, when Hunter undertakes to compare the treatise with the epic (rather than just the canonical prose), he meets the same difficulty as Sellin, in not making sufficient allowance for the differences in generic context. Once again, this is not to claim that two works agree completely. Many of Hunter's distinctions are sound, but his specific treatment of the monism and Christology in *Paradise Lost* raises questions about the whole attempt to compare the two works. By looking briefly first at the similarities between the "materialism" articulated in *De Doctrina* and that in *Paradise Lost*, and then at how the narrative form of the Father-Son dialogue in Book 3 of the epic is rooted in biblical precedents, we can see the extent to which the poem's success as a theodicy depends upon maintaining an interpretive openness that imitates scriptural form.

In contrast to the "near-creedal acceptance" of the view that *Paradise Lost* is consistent with the materialist monism of *De Doctrina*, Hunter contends that the poem clearly contradicts the tract's assertion that the originary *ex Deo* matter of the universe was inherently good (*Visitation* 121-25; see *CPW* 6:307-10). Hunter points out that the figure of Chaos (as

depicted in books 2 and 7 of the poem) is evil or, at best, neutral, but that critics, assuming Milton wrote the treatise, have tried various ways of reconciling the two accounts of matter (122-24). Clearly such divergent views of matter would be a problem, and the two works have typically been taken to be in tension on this point. The apparent contradiction disappears, however, if we recall the narrative context in which the figure of Chaos appears and if we allow that Milton's usage in *Paradise Lost* is intentionally precise and accurate. First, we need to remember that the introduction of "Chaos" as a character is consistent with the epic's deployment of allegory elsewhere to portray evil (for example, the allegory of Satan, Sin and Death), specifically to depict the privation of being (Fallon, *Milton* 180-90).³ Chaos is the personification of a principle, the opposite of which is the goodness of order. The key point here is that "Chaos" in itself is simply not "matter." Insofar as the originary matter exists at all, it is, in a minimal sense, good. Although matter is apparently made subject to the rule of Chaos, in so far as it still is matter, it is good, does not participate in the ontic privation of Chaos, and cannot be identified with its evil (much like the way the subjects of a corrupt monarch can remain virtuous themselves). Hunter's claim that the epic and treatise offer opposing views of matter is based on the mistaken premise that the allegorically depicted principle of Chaos represents in itself the *ex Deo* substance of the universe, rather than the condition to which that substance (*materia prima*) was initially subjected.

In considering Milton's materialism, one of the central points to keep in mind is that neither *Paradise Lost* nor *De Doctrina* equates "matter" (*materia*) with "body" (*corpus*). The distinction is important because although the epic presents a vision of the universe in which all existents are differentiated by God out of the "one first matter" (*PL* 5.472), it still assumes a distinction between those things which are corporeal (body) and those which are spiritual.

Despite Milton's precision on this point (at least in *Paradise Lost*), the tendency of some readers to equate matter with body has led them to render Milton's position incoherent, by implying that although Milton believes everything to be corporeal, he still employs the distinction between corporeal and spiritual substances. Once the incoherence is introduced, critics can work around it by formulating new terms, as, for example, Stephen Fallon does by suggesting that Milton shares with Thomas Hobbes a belief in the corporeality of spirit (Fallon, *Milton* 127).⁴ When the distinction between matter and body is maintained, however, not only is there precise agreement between the theological treatise and the poem, but the materialism in the epic is articulated by means of a close proximity to biblical idiom.

In discussing the treatise's handling of materialism there are two main passages to consider: the description of the human spirit (*CPW* 6:319), and the account of first matter's procession from God before its differentiation into existents (6: 305-11). Regarding the first issue the treatise states:

The idea that the spirit of man is separate from his body, so that it may exist somewhere in isolation, complete and intelligent, is nowhere to be found in scripture, and is plainly at odds with nature and reason. (6:319)

By denying the separability of the body and spirit in the constitution of a given human being, this passage clearly rejects what could be described as traditional "anthropological dualism."

It is important to note, however, what this passage is not saying. The statement does not demand that the soul or spirit be "corporeal": to insist upon the inseparability of two things does not dictate an insistence upon their identity. Even if the above passage is taken as an outright denial of the existence of a human "spirit" in itself, the anthropological corporealism is not applied to the entire universe; the treatise goes on later to defend a precise

understanding of the human soul as well as "spiritual" substance. In discussing the human soul, the treatise states that "all form--and the human soul is a kind of form--is produced by the power of matter [*ex potentia materiae*]" (CPW 6:322; 325). This is not to say that matter *per se* has any power, because matter is "only a passive principle" (6:307); rather, forms are produced "as a result of that power [*potentia*] which God had implanted in matter" (6:325). Because of the inseparability of matter and form (since they compose an "essence" that is not divisible except by an abstraction), all forms necessarily consist of matter (6:308): hence the name "first matter."⁵ Therefore, individual beings, whether corporeal (for example, humans) or spiritual (for example, angels), are differentiated out of the potential of matter, according to their respective material forms determined by God. Thus *De Doctrina* does maintain that, in a qualified sense, all forms consist of "matter," but that does not necessitate that forms (or souls) are corporeal (sensible) unless the equation between matter and body is already (incorrectly) assumed. The denial of the division between body and soul in human beings is based on the insistence that the soul is the "form" of the whole embodied human being produced out of the potential of matter (*ex potentia materiae*) (CPW 6:317-18; 322); it never says *ex potentia corporis*. But this entire account is rendered incoherent if "matter" is taken to be synonymous with "body."

A further key passage in the *De Doctrina* that might lead some readers to equate matter and body is Book 1.7, where the author begins his argument for the *ex Deo* status of first matter and then describes the production of corporeal substance out of spiritual substance (CPW 6: 305-11). Here the progression of the passage is crucial. In the first stage, Milton argues that "matter" comes from God and must therefore be incorruptible (6:309). He then argues that a "corporeal substance" can be derived from a "spiritual substance":

But, you will say, *body* cannot emanate from *spirit*. My reply is, much less can it emanate from nothing. Moreover, spirit being the more excellent substance, virtually, as they say, and eminently contains within itself the inferior substance; in the same way as the spiritual and rational faculty contains the corporeal, that is the sentient and vegetative faculty. (*CPW* 6:309 emphasis added)

The confusion arises from mistakenly transposing the terms of this passage onto the former one (or vice versa) instead of recognizing them as distinct steps in the argument. The mistaken transposition leads to the conclusion that the “spiritual substance” in the latter passage corresponds to “God” in the first one, while “corporeal substance” corresponds to “matter.” As the first sentence in the above block quotation demonstrates, however, the “more excellent substance” under discussion is “spiritual” while the “inferior” one is “corporeal” (not “material”).

Moreover, by articulating a kind of materialist monism that nevertheless maintains the distinction between spiritual and corporeal substances, *De Doctrina* offers a unique intellectual foundation for a theodicy which fits with *Paradise Lost*. The usage in the treatise is quite precise: only in reference to original creation does it use *materia*, while only in the latter discussion of substances does it employ *corpus* (*Works* 15:18-27). In the very assertion that matter *per se* is “incorruptible,” *De Doctrina* distinguishes it from body, which is necessarily corruptible: “it is not the matter nor the form [of a given being] that sins” (*CPW* 6:309). Thus the goodness of matter is separated from the origin of evil. The corruptibility that is a function of entering a “mutable state” requires individuation in which matter and form are inseparable (6:309). The mutability of all individuated beings then accounts for

corruptibility by distinguishing bodies (that is, human persons whose "form" is their soul) from the incorruptible matter that emanates from God. Once a given human being is differentiated out of matter (given a form)--that is, made to exist--that person is both corporeal and free to sin, but both of those aspects of mutability result from individuation, not from the incorruptible first matter. The shift within the passage from the terms "God" and "matter" to "spiritual substance" and "corporeal substance" in Chapter 7 (6:305-11) thus does not indicate a respective correspondence, as some have been led to think by assuming "matter" to equal "corporeal substance" (see Fallon, *Milton* 102). Instead, the argument has actually begun to employ "spiritual substance" or "God's own substance" (not "essence" [Hunter, "Further Definitions" 19-21]) to indicate the incorruptible *materia prima*, as distinct from *corpus*. That this monist *ex Deo* account of creation maintains the matter-body distinction is therefore pivotal in maintaining that God, the immediate source of matter, is not the cause of evil, a basic precondition for theodicy.

The monism of *Paradise Lost* turns on the distinction between "sensible" (corporeal) and "extended," and implies that spiritual beings are the latter but not necessarily the former. To propose that Milton equates matter with body makes the epic unnecessarily self-contradictory. To suppose that everything made of first matter is corporeal implies that indeed everything is corporeal, and renders the poem incoherent whenever it employs the distinction between corporeal and non-corporeal substances (for example, *PL* 5.413 or 4.584-5). The key passage here is Raphael's materialist account of creation in Book 5, a passage commonly cited on this issue but which Hunter dismisses as only "superficially" similar to the materialism of the treatise (*Visitation* 131):

O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom

All things proceed, and up to him return,
 If not deprav'd from good, created all
 Such to perfection, one first matter all,
 Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
 Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
 But the more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
 As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending
 Each in thir several Spheres assign'd,
 Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
 Proportion'd to each kind. (*PL* 5.469-79)

The main problem that Hunter sees in this account of matter is that it does not fit with the two-stage account given in the creation narrative (7.210-42), where chaos is first circumscribed and stilled by the Son before being indued with forms. In effect, the problem for Hunter is that Raphael "does not mention [matter's] earlier existence as undivided chaos--indeed, he does not mention chaos at all" (*Visitation* 128). Once again, there is no problem if we recall that chaos is not matter. Raphael's silence regarding chaos is no longer puzzling: the angel is describing the operation of matter within creation, not chaos; the plenitude of being, not the principle of its privation (when limited to *potentia*). Here "corporeal" and "incorporeal" (*PL* 5.407-14) both designate "degrees / Of substance" (5.473-74), which are formed out of the "one first matter." The account ensures that a given being is not reducible to prime matter because that existent is only consequent upon matter being "indu'd" with form. The hope that Adam's substance could change from body to spirit is coherent only in a context where the difference between them is strictly maintained within a material continuum.

In explaining to Adam what humans should properly deduce from the motion of the celestial spheres, Raphael comments:

The swiftness of those Circles attribute,
Though numberless, to his Omnipotence,
That to corporeal substances could add
Speed almost Spiritual. (*PL* 8.100-110)

This passage exemplifies the interpretive openness that operates throughout the poem. The mention of “corporeal” and “spiritual” substances is actually incidental to Raphael’s injunction to Adam, but given the discussion of “one first matter” in Book 5, it is clear the distinction between corporeal and spiritual is a difference that does not entail a different “matter.” Both are extended, but necessarily sensible to humans in all respects. At the same time, the passage remains susceptible to a dualist interpretation, and does not require a materialist reading in its immediate context. Hunter objects precisely to those who would ascribe to Milton such an apparently secret duplicity that the materialism of the epic could only be discerned after the publication of *De Doctrina* (*Visitation* 114). Regarding, for example, Raphael’s comment about taking the lesser part of a day to travel from heaven to earth (*PL* 8.110-14), Hunter could point out that insofar as angels are said to “visit” the earth at all, whether in *Paradise Lost* or in any biblical narrative, there is an unavoidable spatial dimension implied in a literal reading of such accounts. In one sense, “the distance inexpressible” between heaven and earth, though traversible by an angel, clearly places the dimensions of the material continuum beyond human comprehension. More importantly, in the seventeenth century, the implied spatiality of Raphael’s account would not have been taken to imply materialist monism any more than would biblical narratives that mention the

visitation of angels “coming from heaven.”

Where Hunter sees a specious ascription of duplicity, I find that Milton’s subtlety is the ultimate vindication of his materialism. Milton is no less ambiguous about the relation between corporeal and spiritual reality than the Bible itself. The radical adherence of his poem to the consistency of scripture implicitly indicts his readers’ failure to discern the same monism in the biblical narratives. We have not yet addressed Hunter’s central objection on this point, but shall do so once we now consider the epic’s handling of Christology.

The treatment of God as a character--specifically in the Father-Son dialogue of Book 3--offers a pivotal instance where theological issues are presented in a way that allows but does not necessitate interpretive agreement with *De Doctrina*. There is obviously a certain amount of flexibility in depicting the actions of created beings like angels, but a theodic narrative involves itself in a complex set of potential problems when it attempts to treat the immutable God as a character. Completely aside from the artistic challenge, how does Milton avoid contravening the advice that Raphael gives to Adam?:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;

Heav’n is for thee too high

To know what passes there; be lowly wise:

Think only what concerns thee and thy being;

Dream not of other Worlds. (*PL* 8.167-68; 172-75)

Milton himself raises the issue of the propriety of his treatment of God in the invocation to Book 3, when he asks, “May I express thee unblamed?” (3.3); however, he still continues to

ask that he might be able to "see" "things invisible to mortal sight" (3.55). The attempt to communicate this vision, Wendell Berry argues, is the central problem of the poem, because it forces Milton to "bring God on stage in person, not as inscrutable mystery and power, visible blindingly, but as a heroic king conversing in Homeric dialogue with the Son" (Berry 105). In effect, by "aspiring to 'see' the one God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Milton falls onto Olympus" (105; compare Lewis, *Preface* 132-33). Thus the poem's primary weakness, according to Berry, is that by using the epic voice to treat God as a character, the narrative violates its own principle of created hierarchical order, as pronounced by Raphael. However, if we look more closely at Raphael's comments and the scene in heaven in Book 3, we can see whether Milton does actually violate Raphael's advice.

By bringing together biblical narrative with the form of classical epic, Milton places within the fabric of his work a tension that had animated much of western literature up to his time:

The world of Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be historically true reality--it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of all mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it. The Scripture stories do not, like Homer's, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us--they seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels.

Let no one object that this goes too far, that not the stories, but the religious doctrine, raises the claim of absolute authority; because the stories are not, like

Homer's, narrated "reality." Doctrine and promise are incarnate in them and inseparable from them; for that very reason they are fraught with "background" and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning. (Auerbach 15)

By contrasting the way in which the obscurities of biblical narrative intimate the character of "a hidden God" (15) with the Homeric need to "externalize" (11) all thought, Auerbach emphasizes not only the differences in form between biblical and classical narrative, but also the unavoidably theological implications that follow from those differences in form. This makes the character of Milton's undertaking all the more daunting: how can he maintain his commitment to the theological integrity of the biblical narrative if he is using the epic form and the omniscient Homeric voice to shape that story?

The primary means by which Milton does this is through typological interpretation of the Bible. Figural interpretation depends upon the view that both a type (for example, Isaac) and its fulfillment (Christ) have the status of concrete historical persons, but that their unity inheres in the eternal "divine plan" (Auerbach 555). In this way, typology affords an opportunity to make the story of revealed faith intelligible while still maintaining the historical status of the events recounted in the biblical narrative. Although such "figural realism" has its roots in patristic writers like Augustine, Jerome and Tertullian (196), that tradition of interpretation was mediated to Milton through Renaissance humanist biblical scholarship. In contrast to its deployment of allegory to portray ontic privation, *Paradise Lost* draws upon a figural or typological reading of Scripture to present biblical narrative in a way that is consistent with the externalized elaboration of epic style.⁶ Milton is not simply reshaping a biblical narrative into a classical form and ethos; he is, in a crucial sense, converting the epic genre itself by relocating it within the biblical metanarrative and shaping it

according to a Christian heroism defined by that narrative.

The other major characteristic of *Paradise Lost* that both allows and instigates this combination of forms is the central concern with theodicy; as such, the theodic parameters of the work are limited precisely to humans, to "thee and thy being." As Dennis Danielson points out, the goal of the poem is to justify the ways of God specifically "*to men*" (Danielson 130). Milton could justifiably maintain that the conversation we overhear in heaven between the Father and the Son tells us nothing that we could not already find in Scripture. The purpose of the dialogue is to initiate the debate concerning human freedom that continues throughout the poem (108). The theological difficulty that this passage creates results not so much from any explicit theological content, but from the dramatic form itself. The difficulty is not the Father's defence of free will but that he feels compelled to tell the pre-incarnate Son his plans at all, as though the Son does not already know (*PL* 3.173-216).

If a reader begins with the orthodox assumption that any extra-incarnational relation between the Father and the Son would be hidden and internal to the God-head, then the dialogue clearly presents some difficulty. At the same time, the Father does address the Son explicitly as "My word, my wisdom, and effectual might" (8.170) and states that the Son has spoken the Father's own thoughts even in asking the questions that he does (8.171). Here we find a clear interpretive opportunity, despite the dramatic structure, to understand that the dialogue is already, in a sense, internal to God. This does not imply that the dialogue is a sham conversation like Satan's mock parliament in Book 2, but that the conversation is intended primarily for the benefit of those listening. It is entirely consistent with the character of the orthodox God-head that the Father would reveal himself to his creatures (in this case angels) precisely through his Son in relationship to himself. Milton affirms the standard

orthodox view that the Son is not simply "wise" but is indeed the "wisdom of God" himself. Thus, the apparent difficulties created by the dramatic form of the dialogue, regarding the Son's knowledge, can be interpreted as consistent with orthodoxy or with a more heterodox subordinationism.

We can see a more precise instance of the same kind of subtle monist consistency when the poem mentions the Father-Son relationship directly. When the narrative voice says that, in the Son, the "Father shone / Substantially expressed" (*PL* 3.139-40), the poem is consistent with the materialism of *De Doctrina* in exactly those terms that still leave the text susceptible to a Trinitarian (as well as dualist) reading. Because, according to *De Doctrina*, the Son is created (*CPW* 6:205-12), he is also a substantial differentiation within matter. Although the Son is the supreme spiritual created being, the fact that he is created means that he is only the "Son" of God in the sense that he is the most perfect substantial expression (among many) of God's image (out of the potential of matter). At the same time, the usual theological equation of "essence" with "substance" allows orthodox readers to interpret these lines to imply that the Son shares the Father's essence (which *De Doctrina* denies because it defines the term "essence" as identical to "individual"). The pivotal distinction in the poem depends upon whether we understand the adverbial modifier "substantially" as synonymous with or distinct from "essentially." If we believe that Milton's position is similar to the one offered in *De Doctrina*, then we can see how the poem accords with a subordinationist view of the Son; however, the poem itself is also open to an orthodox reading.

Hunter takes up this same set of issues in discussing one of the most common points of connection scholars make between the theological treatise and the Miltonic prose canon, where *Artis Logicae* directly echoes *De Doctrina* and seems to make the same point. The

author of the theological treatise ultimately bases his argument against the Trinity upon the insistence that both “person” and “essence” are numerically distinct--that is, equatable with individuated being (*CPW* 6.216). In the *Artis Logicae* Milton makes a similar point, that “things which differ in number also differ in essence, and never do things differ in number without also differing in essence” (*CPW* 8.233). It thus seems that Milton in this passage of *Artis Logicae* lays the foundation for *De Doctrina*’s anti-trinitarianism and then emphasizes the connection between the two works by adding and italicizing a phrase not found in the source logic texts: “*Here let the Theologians take notice.*” Hunter cites the essay by Thomas Scott-Craig as one of the better analyses making this apparent connection between the two works (*Visitation* 115). Following the lead of Bishop Burgess, however, Hunter maintains that the passage in the logic text actually implies the opposite of what it is customarily taken to imply, because Milton (unlike the author of *De Doctrina*) goes on to distinguish between two different senses of the term “essence.” Thus Milton’s warning is that theologians should not confuse the two senses of the term or reduce them to one. Hunter quotes and emends the passage from *Artis Logicae* as follows:

The essence of anything is partly common [that is, what constitutes in this case the members of the Godhead] and partly proper [that is, what individuates them]; matter [or better, substance] constitutes the common essence [of the Trinity] and form the proper [essence of each of its three members]. (*CPW* 8:234 as quoted in *Visitation* 115-16)

Hunter rightly points out that the anti-Trinitarian arguments of *De Doctrina* depend upon limiting “essence” to indicate individuation exclusively (116). However, the reason why Hunter can take this passage from *Artis Logicae* as an argument *supporting* the Trinity is

because he has already rejected the ascription of materialism to Milton. The passage quoted above could just as easily be rephrased to demonstrate that Milton makes the distinction between "proper essence" and "common essence," not in order to support trinitarian definitions, but to support the *De Doctrina*'s distinction between God's individual essence (identified as the Father) and the "substance" or *ex Deo* matter out of which all things (including the Son) are created. Such a reading follows because: 1) even the logic treatise specifically refers to common essence as "matter" (*De Doctrina*'s term of choice); 2) proper essence is referred to as "form" and corresponds directly to those forms with which first matter is "indu'd" in the epic (5.473).

As we now consider the form of the Father-Son dialogue in heaven in more detail, two important points are worth noting. First, the Bible does not provide much explicit information about the pre-incarnational existence of the Son of God. Second, given the characterization of the Son in the gospels, the orthodox insistence upon the differences in "person" between Father and Son, and the logical necessities of a narrative presentation, Milton's portrayal does not exceed the biblical limits of artistic license. The subtlety of Milton's presentation of the Son in *Paradise Lost* is that although it is literally consistent with the subordinationism presented in *De Doctrina*, the poetic portrayal does not necessitate such a reading. More importantly, the poem does not presume to depict events in heaven without some biblical precedent. Aside from the numerous "throne room" scenes transcribed from various visions of heaven (for example, Isaiah 6 or Ezekiel 1), the three biblical passages that bear most directly upon the question of Milton's artistic license are Revelation 5, Zechariah 3:1-10 and Job 1 and 2.

Although none of these biblical scenes is identical to that presented in Book 3 of

Paradise Lost, each of them contains formal elements that Milton clearly incorporated into his own account of the heavenly dialogue. In his edition of *Paradise Lost*, Merritt Hughes provides (as does Alastair Fowler in his edition) a gloss on the words, "And silence was in Heav'n" (3.218), by citing Revelation 8:1, which mentions the half-hour silence that followed the opening of the "seventh seal." The correspondence between the two occurrences of silence seems obvious enough; but in Revelation 5 we find the biblical precedent for the specific dramatic dynamics that precede the silence in Milton's poem. In the biblical passage, before even the first seal of the prophecy is ever opened the question is asked in heaven, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll [beside the throne]?" (Rev. 5:2):

But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev. 5:3-5)

Although it is an angel in this story, rather than God the Father, who asks the pivotal question, the dynamics of the drama are similar to those in *Paradise Lost* (3.217-26). The challenge is pronounced and only the Son (or Lamb) is able to answer the challenge because he is willing to sacrifice himself for humanity. Of course, there are a number of key differences between this scene in Revelation and Milton's presentation in *Paradise Lost*. First, the throne of God the Father is also that of the Lamb in Revelation--differences between Father and Son are minimized by the dramatic structure. The same one on the throne who is clearly God, "the Alpha and the Omega," "the Almighty" (1:8), "the first and the last" (1:18), is also Christ who says, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" (1:18). Second, as a result of this

unity, God the Father never appears as a character separate from the Son through whom he has chosen exclusively to reveal himself. Third, the narrative voice in Revelation is in the first person so that the vision of God's throne is not treated from the perspective of an epic voice. If we look at the passages in Job and Zechariah, however, we can see that each of these points of difference also has a biblical precedent.

In the Job and Zechariah passages, the central human characters (Job and the high priest Joshua respectively) are normally understood as types of Christ. In both cases Satan appears as a dramatic character who comes before the throne of God to accuse the central figure. Zechariah's account is important because typologically it emphasizes the role of "Joshua" ("Jesus" in Greek) as a supernatural high-priest who represents the sinful chosen Nation (by wearing rags) before God the Father. For later interpreters, the direct connection with Christ as high-priest is unavoidable (as in Hebrews 2:17-3:1, 4:14-5:10), so that what may be a "vision" for Zechariah becomes a reality for Christians. In Zechariah's story, the rags are replaced so that Joshua can stand before God in pure white clothes (Zech. 3:3-5); however, the important point for Milton's purposes is that here we find two of the persons of the (orthodox) God-head effectively presented as dramatic characters face to face, an encounter that Christians claim to be made actual (in some sense) by Christ. Still, Zechariah's vision is just that: a vision recounted in a first person narrative voice which would not for a moment presume to treat God as simply "one character among many" within its story. The biblical precedent for that kind of treatment of God is the initial framing story (rather than the conclusion) of the book of Job.

The book of Job, like Zechariah, presents a Satan figure in dramatic action before the throne of God in heaven. The main difference between them is that, in Job, God the Father

interacts with the Satan character (initially at least) as if the plot were not of his design. More importantly, God is treated by a third-person omniscient narrator. The pivotal question is how Milton would have interpreted the book of Job. As Barbara Lewalski demonstrates in her study of *Paradise Regained*, Milton was familiar not only with the patristic tradition of treating Job as an epic, but also with the humanist practice of treating Job typologically (Lewalski, *Brief* 7-9, 103). Because typological interpretation maintains the historical status of the "type" (in this case Job) as well as its fulfillment (Christ), Milton remains well within the limits of standard Protestant hermeneutics in holding that the framing narrative in Job consists of historical events. On this basis, Milton had a firm biblical precedent for presenting the dialogue and dramatic events at the very throne of God using the externalized verisimilitude of epic (in contrast to the metaphysical realism of allegoresis) and thus for treating God as a character within an epic narrative.⁵ Ultimately, we find in *Paradise Lost* a poem that is simultaneously susceptible to the materialism and subordinationism presented in the *De Doctrina* and that does so by retaining a rigorous consistency with the biblical precedent for representing divine action.

In discussing how different critics have tried to find the subordinationism of *De Doctrina* in *Paradise Lost*, Hunter points out that the passages in the epic that seem to support such a reading are actually based on biblical passages that orthodox readers always had to interpret in ways that might seem forced to theologically naive readers today (*Visitation* 113-14). The obvious implication is that Milton would not have expected his readers to discern heterodoxy in the poem unless they were already liable to interpret the Bible in such a way. Thus, against the arguments of Lewalski, who maintains the importance of *De Doctrina* in helping scholars to discern the peculiar and, as it were, secret meaning that Milton gives to the

relevant scripture texts, Hunter insists that “it is incredible that [Milton] could disguise such heterodoxy so well that generations of readers were duped until the treatise was recovered” (114). As Hunter rightly points out, if we begin with the assumption of Miltonic authorship of the treatise and suspend the usual orthodox ways of reading the relevant passages of the epic (or the Bible), we can get a rather doubtful picture of Milton’s ingenuity:

One can make [Milton] out to be an extraordinarily subtle or devious author who had such double meanings in mind, though his “fit audience,” who could understand his hidden messages [in the epic], would indeed be very few until the recovered [*De Doctrina*] manuscript set them straight. (114)

It should be noted that because there are good reasons why many of Milton’s “fit” anti-trinitarian readers in the Restoration would not have thought it wise, safe, or even possible, to publish their views, the existing textual record (or at least the well-known one) may be misleading.⁷ There is, however, an alternative to seeing Milton as such an esoteric writer, if we consider more closely how the epic handles the relation between the Father and the Son. Even if we do not ascribe to Milton the outright anti-Trinitarianism of the theological treatise, Milton’s explicit statement elsewhere--that differences over such a point of doctrine do not constitute heresy (for example, *CPW* 8.423-5)--demonstrates that he could choose to present his epic in such a way that that particular dispute is effectively rendered moot. Even if Milton did believe in the doctrine of the Trinity (as Hunter quite justifiably maintains), he insisted on the right of others to disagree with him on that point. Regardless of the authorship of the treatise, based on Milton’s possession of the manuscript and his known heterodox associations,⁶ Milton clearly had friends who were anti-Trinitarians. For that reason, we need not attribute to him some strategy of extraordinary duplicity or devious subtlety in his writing

of the epic. Milton knew both the Bible and Trinitarian hermeneutics well enough to know that all he needed was to remain rigorously consistent with biblical literary form, as well as content, in order for the resulting poem to preserve an interpretive openness that neither precluded a trinitarian reading, nor provided such a reading the certitude to make it a defining article of faith. Thus, even if we grant that we cannot know how much of *De Doctrina* is Milton's or was influenced directly by him, we can still maintain that *Paradise Lost* is written in such a way that neither precludes nor dictates a trinitarian reading.

We are now in a position to return to the question of the epic's success as a theodicy (in view of its generic *telos*), in order to see how these various elements shape our perception of Milton's lowly-wise undertaking to "justify the ways of God to men." Central to the success of the poem's stated intentions is the issue of human freedom. In order to maintain both the justice of the consequences of the human Fall and the blameless position of God in relation to the Fall, Milton must maintain that the human will (at least in the unfallen state) is free. Dennis Danielson outlines how *Paradise Lost* is located in relation to various other positions in the debate over free will and determinism. Besides the libertarians and the determinists, there were the "compatibilists" who maintained that "free will does not preclude determinism and vice versa" (Danielson, *Milton's* 132). Danielson points out that, although Milton is an anti-compatibilist (libertarian), many critics have mistakenly imposed a compatibilist view onto *Paradise Lost*, resulting in a "serious misjudgement of his theodicy" (142). If we consider just briefly some aspects of the compatibilist and anti-compatibilist positions we can begin to see how an accurate apprehension of the materialism in the epic bears upon the poem's theodic objectives.

Between the compatibilism that characterized many Calvinist accounts of

postlapsarian existence and the libertarian view, the central points of difference hinged upon the issues of necessary versus sufficient causation and internal versus external freedom:

The compatibilist will hold Jones responsible for a given action because Jones could have *acted otherwise*, had he chosen to do so; the incompatibilist (or libertarian) holds Jones responsible because he could have *chosen otherwise*. The compatibilist believes that one can ask, and in principle answer, the question why Jones chose as he did--believes, in other words, that there is a sufficient cause for Jones's choice. The libertarian sees that belief as begging the question, for given a sufficient cause of Jones's choice, it follows that Jones could not have acted otherwise. (133)

The libertarian will certainly recognize the role of causes that are necessary but not sufficient to produce a given decision, but those causes could never constitute a complete explanation for a truly free decision. At the same time, in order to maintain that "things *could* be other than they are," compatibilism must distinguish between "acting" and "choosing"; thus "freedom" is defined in terms of physical constraint while still maintaining psychological determinism (133-35). However, the central problem for compatibilist theodicy is that if it admits determinism to be true, the causal matrix cannot avoid making God the inevitable author of evil (135-37).

In order for the distinction between "acting" and "choosing" to be effective as a defense of free will, the compatibilist argument must imply some kind of anthropological dualism that allows for the operation of two independent causal matrices. A dualist account is the only way to maintain that a given psychological choice is determined while the action itself remains unconstrained. By contrast, in *Paradise Lost* the "one first matter" is the basis

for prelapsarian liberty:

One Almighty is, from whom
 All things proceed, and up to him return,
 If not deprav'd from good, created all
 Such to perfection, one first matter all,
 Indu'd with various forms. (5.469-73)

In opposition to the mechanist corporeal monism of someone like Hobbes, the intrinsically moral and conditional character of first matter (note the explicit, "if not") results ultimately from its status as a gratuitous, substantial but non-essential, *ex Deo* creation. (Although initially subject to Chaos in its state as *potentia*, matter still derives ultimately from God rather than from Chaos.) At the same time, that freedom is part of what constitutes the rational order of creation. In maintaining the mutual dependence of "Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)" (3.108), Milton attempts to avoid the extremes of both irrational voluntarism and deterministic rationalism. Prelapsarian creation therefore consisted not of a tension between freedom and rational order, but of a complementary fulfillment of rational causation and free choice in one another (bifurcation of human will and reason being a consequence of the fall). This account fits precisely with the libertarianism of *De Doctrina*, where each event "is the result of particular causes which, by [God's] decree, work quite freely" (*CPW* 6:164). The key point is that this connection between the monism and the anti-compatibilism of *Paradise Lost* will be missed if the reader attempts a dualist reading of the poem. If the "one first matter" is taken to imply a neoplatonic ontology, the ensuing dualism will then allow for a compatibilist reading of the main argument. The reader can then maintain the central objection against compatibilist theodicy and dismiss the poem as a failure

because it seems that God is still the ultimate cause of evil. Thus the poem's success in justifying the ways of God to men is inextricably connected not only to the libertarian account of human freedom, but also to the conditional monism upon which the latter depends.

If we now recall Paul Sellin's earlier criticism of *Paradise Lost*, we can see that, in effect, he attributes to the poem (and the treatise) a compatibilist position. He does this by first minimizing the distinction between "predestination" and "determinism" (even though Milton's view of election is both conditional and general), and then implying that, although Milton claims to believe in freedom of the will, his account of predestination is deterministic. This interpretation (as noted earlier) is substantiated by Sellin's problematic analysis of Book 3 of the poem, yet the simple fact that such a compatibilist account renders the very idea of theodicy incoherent is apparently no cause for concern. If the poem's self-declared objectives are pre-emptively dismissed by the theological assumptions ascribed to the work, is it not fair to ask whether that ascription is accurate?

In arguing as strongly as I have for the monism and subordinationism in *Paradise Lost*, my intention has not been to discount the many other points of disagreement between the epic and *De Doctrina* regarding, for example, Christology. Nor is my intention to dismiss Hunter's broader claim that Milton is not the original author of the treatise. At the outset of this chapter, I pointed out two possible ways in which the differences between the two works could be explained, suggesting that Milton may have either attempted to exploit the generic differences to support a larger theological project, or he could have abandoned his revision of *De Doctrina* because he understood the broader theological implications of substituting the form of Ramist dialectic for the form of biblical narrative. The latter possibility fits well with the few commonly established facts regarding the *De Doctrina* manuscript upon which Hunter

and the report by Campbell concur (*Visitation* 148). However, the two possibilities are not, in fact, mutually exclusive. Milton could have begun intending to accomplish the former but may have finally resigned himself to the latter. This hypothesis would explain both the points of unique congruence and the important differences between *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina*.

Hunter is certainly correct to point out that much of what could be cited as evidence to support common authorship of the two works is simply a result of both drawing upon the Bible and/or the commonplaces of Reformation theology (50). This is why those arguing for Miltonic authorship of the treatise need to focus their arguments on specific points of unique heterodoxy upon which the treatise and the canon agree, while Hunter bases his argument on those points of explicit disagreement which cannot be explained away. However, the initial fact of such generally similar theological sources for the particular two works raises an even deeper question central to much Reformation writing. Regardless of what we believe about their author(s), if both *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina* issue from within a theological ethos of *sola scriptura* (or even *sola conscientia*), why was either work written? What could either text claim to be offering that was not already present in the Bible (or conscience)? Even as the author of *De Doctrina* claims to be submitting entirely and solely to the authority of Scripture, his very writing of such a text simultaneously judges the logical arrangement of Scripture to be in need of some correction. Clearly, few people would have been more sensitive than Milton to the theological implications that follow from a Ramist ordering of biblical content that effectively deletes narrative. But how does Milton in *Paradise Lost* avoid involving himself in a similar presumption to improve upon Scripture? In brief, Milton shares with the author of the treatise a conscious antecedent submission to the authority of the scriptural text and a desire not to improve upon Scripture, but rather to understand it in

relation to their present situation. There is one crucial difference between them, however.

Milton's sense of the truth of the biblical text includes submission to its literary form.

Although the epic involves numerous crucial elaborations and generic re-orderings of the biblical text, there persists a clear sense that Milton understands precisely the point made by Auerbach (page 129 above) regarding the inextricable relation between biblical narrative form and doctrinal content. Milton's elaboration of biblical narrative does potentially result in some important doctrinal implications, but the challenge for a writer like Milton, having such a rigorously biblicist orientation, is to make those embellishments so deeply scriptural in form and content that they are consistent with the "spirit," or *telos*, of the biblical metanarrative even in their substructure. This kind of teleonomic consistency with scriptural form is not even possible within the genre of a Ramist theological treatise, regardless of who the author may be, and I think Milton came to understand this limitation. It is therefore especially revealing that readers on both sides of the debate over the authorship of *De Doctrina* share in common a tendency to treat statements from the epic as if they were Ramist logical axioms.⁸ One possible objection to the account that I have just given is that Milton clearly had no qualms about attaching his name to the explicitly Ramist *Artis Logicae*. If so, why would he come to think so differently about employing Ramist method in theology, which simply amounts to an application of the kind of logic that he advocated? In the next chapter, we will look at *Artis Logicae* in detail and consider more directly Milton's precise relation to Ramism. But the idea that Milton would have indeed tried to apply the principles of his own logic text fits perfectly with the account that I am proposing. Only after he had undertaken to revise *De Doctrina* (almost certainly the work initially of another writer) as an application of Ramist logic did he come to see the severity of the limitations imposed upon the biblical texts by

stripping them from their narrative embedding.

What then are some of the consequences of taking this skeptical position regarding the authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*? The implications unfold in two different ways, each of which bears differently upon how we go about substantiating claims regarding Milton's poetry. First, work based on the assumed canonicity of *De Doctrina* should be re-evaluated. For example, if a specific interpretation of Milton's poetry depends exclusively upon the theological treatise as a source of evidence, that interpretation needs to be substantiated from a broader base of evidence. Even if we grant that Milton was revising the treatise, we cannot know the state of revision with respect to the particular passage cited. Accounts of Milton's theology should thus limit citations of *De Doctrina* to parallel examples in other prose works. A second, and more important, implication is that the attempt to decode the axiomatic theology out of Milton's poetry is likely to result in an account of the poetry that obscures its point. This is why it is equally important to avoid presuming that none of the heterodox elements of *De Doctrina* inform his poetry. In effect, the point of a given poem, its very purpose, could be to engage questions raised by Scripture in precisely such a way that would be precluded by the modes of theoretical theology. This is not to suggest that Milton disregarded such theologizing or thought it was unimportant. Rather, he understood its limitations and potential dangers, specifically with respect to Christian faithfulness to the whole of biblical truth, and he sought to move beyond it, as an exclusive mode of biblical apprehension.

Notes

¹ With the likes of Maurice Kelly (“Provenance”), Christopher Hill (“Professor”) and Barbara Lewalski (“Milton and *De Doctrina*”) arrayed against him, it may seem to some that William Hunter’s arguments will soon go away. However, a clear evaluation of his position will likely develop only after his analyses have been carefully considered by an generation of Milton scholars who do not have the same level of personal investment in attributing the treatise to Milton. Indeed there are no disinterested participants in the debate. Chistopher Hill tries to dismiss the question by suggesting that Hunter is among those who are “more comfortable” with an orthodox Milton (“Professor” 165; compare Honeygoskey 9-11). But Hill overlooks the fact that Hunter’s own substantial body of scholarship (over several decades) regarding Milton’s theology was written with the assumption that Milton authored *De Doctrina*. When Hunter first presented his argument and pointed out that “all criticism of [Milton’s] works based on the assumption that he did [author the treatise] should be rethought” (“Provenance” 130), he clearly understood that such a rethinking must include his own work. In his essay, “John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on Predestination,” Paul Sellin argues in support of Hunter’s position. He advances further claims in “The Reference to John Milton’s *Tetrachordon* in *De Doctrina Christiana*,” which Lewalski engages in her essay cited above. Most recently Hunter and Sellin have published “Responses” and “Further Responses,” respectively, in answer to some of the objections raised against their position. A version of this chapter has been published in *Milton Studies*. I am grateful to Albert Labriola and William Hunter for their editorial help.

² My analysis here focuses upon the arguments of Sellin and Hunter because I find the ultimate direction of their position more credible. However, let me emphasize that both sides

of this debate share in common the root interpretive problem that I am addressing. In fact, the opposing arguments are typically no less prone to the same difficulties that I point out here, but they suffer from even more basic logical errors and weaknesses. Unlike those of Sellin or Hunter, the arguments of their opponents cannot be remedied by qualification or nuance. For instance, to prove that both *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* advocate an Arminian view of predestination does not, in itself, demonstrate that Milton wrote the treatise. It shows only a correlation that would exist between any two consistently Arminian works. At best, such proof can only (as Sellin points out) leave the question open. See, for example, Stephen Fallon's essay, "Milton's Arminianism and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*." Despite its exceptionally lucid exposition of the Arminianism in both works, and of Reformation theology more broadly, Fallon's essay never addresses the real crux of the debate over the authorship of the treatise—that is, the points of disagreement between the treatise and Milton's prose (for which see Hunter, *Visitation* 60-70; 90-98). Claims like Fallon's could be successful only as part of a much larger project based on what would amount to an argument from overwhelming circumstantial evidence. But even that kind of undertaking (as we find in Christopher Hill's essay, "Provenance") cannot succeed unless it first addresses the points of substantial inconsistency raised by Hunter. Otherwise, no amount of circumstantial correlation would ever prove conclusive.

Also important to emphasize at this point is that there is no logically necessary connection between taking a skeptical view regarding Miltonic authorship of the treatise and the attempt by some to normalize Milton's heterodox theology. Unfortunately, Hunter generally frames his argument in such a way that directly links the two issues (*Visitation* 8-9). Similarly, counter-arguments by Christopher Hill, among others, mistakenly mirror that same

connection ("Professor" 165-93). In following the lead of Christopher Hill, those, like John Rumrich and Joseph Wittreich, who attempt to elaborate an account of Milton's heretical views continue to assume the unnecessary connection made by Hunter and Hill (Dobranski and Rumrich; Rumrich, "Arianism"; Wittreich, "Transgressive"). In each of these more recent cases, the attitude toward the debate over *De Doctrina* reveals a failure to imagine that it is possible to insist upon Milton's (relative) heterodoxy while nevertheless remaining skeptical about the authorship of the treatise. But as each of those arguments inadvertently demonstrates, the evidence of Milton's heterodoxy is not limited to *De Doctrina*.

³ John Rumrich, in *Milton Unbound*, also picks up on Fallon's observation regarding Milton's use of allegory to display ontic privation (126-28; 179); however, Rumrich develops that point in importantly different directions from those indicated here. Rumrich's account of Chaos is often effective in countering some of the customary critical assumptions regarding Milton's materialism; he points out, for example, the qualitative differences between the Satanic and Divine attempts to impose order on Chaos (124-27). However, his attempt to emphasize the role of Chaos as a quasi-hermaphroditic "feminine otherness" internal to God (145) is misleading for two reasons. First, his emphasis upon the "goodness" of Chaos obscures the fact that *Paradise Lost* clearly follows the biblical account of nature, by implying that creation is unambiguously good in a way that Chaos is not. Second, by insisting that God, rather than creation itself, is the opposing counterpart of Chaos (140-45), Rumrich risks imposing upon the epic a quasi-gnostic dualism that is ethically inconsistent with the rest of the poem. For further discussion of Chaos in *Paradise Lost*, see also Catherine Gimelli Martin's "Fire, Ice and Epic Entropy." Both Rumrich and Martin describe Milton's emphasis upon indeterminacy in ways that are generally consonant with the present argument. At the

same time, the distinction I make here between matter and Chaos must not be misunderstood as one more example of what Martin calls the "critical tradition that unself-reflexively associates disorder with evil" ("Fire" 107). Rather, I submit that Milton, while affirming the goodness of matter *per se*, would nevertheless insist that chaos (the principle allegorically presented as the character "Chaos") is, in itself, literally not-a-thing—it is ontologically only a state of pure *potentia*. Thus, while absolute chaos does, in this sense, stand completely apart from issues of moral good and evil, there remains within Milton's cosmology and ontology a clear link between a given rational creature's evil choices and a movement toward the chaos of unbeing—which is simply to say that Milton viewed sin as a kind of self-destruction. Both Rumrich and Martin, despite the great subtlety and learning that they bring to their consideration of Chaos, tend to obscure this moral dynamic, which I take to be central to the epic.

The essay by Martin cited above presents part of the argument that she unfolds more fully in her recent book, *The Ruins of Allegory*. I concur with her attempt to distinguish Milton's aesthetic and philosophic position from the ascendant "neoclassical rationalism" of the Restoration (*Ruins* 11; see also 178-79). However, the extent of Martin's emphasis upon Chaos tends toward a serious distortion of the epic. For example, she maintains that "Chaos also provides an imaginative bridge between the realms of physical and metaphysical causality" (165). In effect, Martin, like Rumrich, seems to substitute a gnostic Chaos for a Christian *Logos*. Similarly, although she does distinguish between the good of the created indeterminacy and the evil of Satan's chaotic self-consumption (165), she fails to consider the necessary basis for that very distinction. Only by presuming that *caritas*, not chaos, is the ultimate basis of creaturely freedom and ontic reality can Milton distinguish intelligibly

between the two kinds of indeterminacy. Within Milton's cosmology, "reason also is choice" (*PL* 3.108), not because chaotic indeterminacy is the root of goodness, as Martin implies, but because true *caritas* entails for rational creatures the indeterminacy of genuine freedom.

⁴ For a more direct treatment of Fallon's arguments, see my essay, "'Matter' versus Body: The Character of Milton's Monism." My account of Milton's materialism in what follows here incorporates part of that earlier analysis. In *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost*, Jason Rosenblatt describes how Milton's monism was shaped by rabbinic sources largely mediated through the scholarship of John Selden (Rosenblatt 71-137).

⁵ Hunter insists that the *Artis Logicae* is irrelevant on this point because it "discusses the material causes of things but does not argue the question of how matter originates" (*Visitation* 122); however, I submit that (notwithstanding the accuracy of Hunter's claim) the author of *De Doctrina* in the passage cited here directly echoes the logic text's treatment of the relation between form and matter, something even Hunter might expect from one of Milton's former students. Again, regardless of whether Milton is the original author of the theological work, the echoes of the logic text are clearly relevant to the argument of the doctrinal treatise. Even if we take such a view, however, it remains a point in question whether Milton would have agreed with the author of *De Doctrina* in applying the terms of causation from *Artis Logicae* to an account of originary first matter. This is precisely why I maintain that the epic narrative voice handles the chaotic state of first matter in the indirect (allegorical) way that it does, while Raphael's direct description is necessarily silent regarding the *potentia* of Chaos. In his recent essay, "Responses," Hunter again insists that Raphael's "Scale of Nature" speech does not apply to pre-creation chaos because "such unity must be restricted to the created cosmos" (33). But that is precisely my point: to be created at all is to exist—Raphael's

concern is with things that are. Hence he makes no mention of the pre-ontological status of matter. Thus the treatment of first matter in *Paradise Lost* does not explicitly contradict the treatise, so much as question the degree to which the condition of matter in a state of complete chaos can be intelligibly discussed using direct terms.

⁶ Although the distinction that I make here between allegory and typology should not be hypostasized or pushed too far, it is important to an understanding of the poem. For example, I would not follow Hunter's choice of terms when he describes the three-day War in Heaven as a recounting of the Friday to Easter sequence in "allegorical fashion" (108). My own account of the War in Heaven, and typology, is offered more fully below in chapters on *Paradise Lost*, but here it should be noted that, strictly speaking, the allegorical encounter between Satan, Sin and Death is a narrative means to represent a process of genuine ontic privation. Rather than simply being susceptible to allegorical interpretation, the personification of Sin and Death draws attention to the narrative's status as an allegory (explicitly foregrounding its own status as a mode of indirection). In contrast, the War in Heaven implicitly claims to offer by analogy an account of the spiritual dynamics that guide and shape the biblical metanarrative which connects all types to their fulfillment, in both the incarnation and the eschaton. The allegory of privation represents an experience of the unreality of evil, while the supra-typological narrative attempts to intimate the fullness of being.

⁷ Indeed, some recent critical attention is devoted specifically to the recovery of that less well-known textual record of those who claimed to discern the Arianism of *Paradise Lost* long before the discovery of *De Doctrina*. See Rumrich's "Milton's Arianism" and Michael E. Bauman's "Heresy in Paradise and the Ghost of Readers Past." For a broader consideration of

the possibilities concerning Milton's association with some of the most heterodox elements on the far left wing of the Reformation see Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*.

⁸ The irony is particularly striking with respect to the scholarly accounts of Milton's "materialism," which I engaged earlier in this chapter. The various critical discussions of the relation between "matter," "form," "substance," "essence," and so forth, engage the same kind of vocabulary that Milton uses in his Fourth Prolusion, where he argues that "in the destruction of any substance there can be no resolution into first matter" (*CPW* 1:249). As Thomas Hartman has shown, the philosophical content of this prolusion, although shaped for Milton's rhetorical purpose, is effectively cribbed more or less directly from the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* of Francisco Suarez (Hartman 59-82). More importantly, the whole point of summarizing the scholastic treatment of this question was to be able to frame it in such a way that he could then point out how boring it is (79-81; *CPW* 1:254; 256). Thus "within the total framework of the speech, the philosophical portions are meant to be satirical. They are brought forward both to fill a college requirement and as examples of the kind of thing Milton wanted to condemn: the scholastic method of philosophy" (Hartman 81). In response, one might ask, "What other means could be used to treat such issues?" In effect, Milton seems to have opted for the indirect means of a biblical epic. Thus critical treatments of Milton's materialism in *Paradise Lost* involve recasting his poetry into a mode of discourse that Milton himself deployed only satirically.

Chapter Four:

Remembering the Reasonable End of True Reading

The previous chapter left unresolved the question of Milton's relationship to Ramism, and the larger question of how the biblicism of *Paradise Lost* relates to religious toleration. This chapter will address the former question, while the following chapter takes up the latter. Yet even here the implications of the analysis for understanding Milton's poetry will begin to appear. The claims of this chapter unfold in two stages, as it compares Milton's most frequently read prose work, *Areopagitica*, with one of his most seldom read prose works, *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio*. The first stage considers the central logic of the argument in *Areopagitica*, as it relates to the tracts discussed in Chapter 2, and shows how its account of "triall" "by what is contrary" (CPW 2:515) involves a process of "educative reading" that is consistent with the earlier tracts. The second stage of the chapter will show how that account of educative reading entails a view of truth and reason that is consistent with *Artis Logicae*. In this way, we can begin to see how Milton resisted the reductive tendencies of Ramism, at the same time that we clarify the goal of that educative reading process which he proposes in the tract.

The first task, however, is to explain why these two works merit combined consideration. In short, the accounts of reason presented in the two works illuminate each other, as they correct and clarify together what each might suggest alone. Although Milton published his introductory logic text only in 1672, strong evidence supports the consensus that *Artis Logicae* was written between 1641-47, and specifically 1645-47 (Ong, CPW 8:145). Given, among other things, the schedule of instruction that Milton proposes in *Of Education*

(1644), he would have needed the material of his logic text for his own instruction of his nephews around 1645-47 (145). The timing here is especially striking, given that *Areopagitica* was published in 1644. On the face of it, the two texts could hardly be more different. Much of the difference can, of course, be explained by the differing purposes and intended audiences for each work. After all, why should there be any similarity between an introductory logic text intended for adolescent boys, and a political tract ostensibly addressed to parliament? Beyond the fact that Milton wrote them during the same period in his life, they both apparently engage the concept of reason, explicitly and implicitly. But there the similarity seems to end. Instead, the very differences in their treatment of reason could be cited to argue against any comparison of the two works. In *Artis Logicae* we encounter reason as a tool of pedagogical efficiency, the apparent rationality of clear and distinct ideas without ambiguity. In *Areopagitica* we meet a rhetorical style that seems to make the most of indeterminacy and metaphorical obscurity. Indeed, the very people who would have agreed with both the pedagogy of the logic text and the political orientation of *Areopagitica*, members of the Hartlib circle, may have found the rhetoric of the tract off-putting. In the words of one anonymous letter to Samuel Hartlib, Milton was “rather too satirical throughout [*Areopagitica*]...and because of his all too highflown style in many places quite obscure” (Norbrook, *Writing* 124). In short, “Milton’s high style did not appeal to a circle whose view of language and communication was mainly utilitarian” (125). If the tract and the logic text are understood in isolation from one another, Milton can be seen as holding two strikingly different accounts of reason in 1640’s. He can be viewed alternately as a rhetorical master of indeterminacy or as a systematizer of biblical texts according to the bifurcating method of Ramist dialectic. Although Milton may not have finished revising the Ramist treatise *De*

Doctrina Christiana, he certainly published *Artis Logicae*. The question of Milton's relation to Ramist logic can, therefore, only be addressed adequately by considering the logic text in some detail, rather than simply observing that he wrote such a work. But first, an account of *Areopagitica* will help to clarify how Milton views the concept of reason within the process of education which then provides the context for the logic text.

Because of the singular and sustained critical attention that *Areopagitica* has received, some initial consideration of that critical treatment is appropriate here. *Areopagitica* is "widely regarded as one of the constitutive texts of modern liberalism," and consequently "has become a contested site in a larger dispute about liberal values" (Dzelzainis, "*Areopagitica*" 151). Among those opposing the previous liberal account, there is little positive consensus as to what Milton is actually attempting in the tract. As Abbe Blum points out, "Milton is variously seen as a canny tactician who moderates his stance on toleration in order to convey the appearance of solidarity with those who could repeal the 1643 Licensing Act":

[Or Milton is viewed as] a brilliant moral instructor who employs irony to move ethically upright, intellectually superior readers (who as kindred liberal Christians will affirm his rhetorical prowess); a conservative party-line Protestant spokesman for intolerance who constructs a conditional restricted freedom tailored for the elect. Most recently *Areopagitica*'s seeming contradictions have been interpreted as Milton's "manifesto for indeterminacy," a conversion of various factions' disagreements into a nonoppositional celebration of intellectual energy, and finally and quite differently, as the product of a self-validating monistic ethos which registers the tensions deriving from a bourgeois problematic. (Blum 77)

Although revisionist readings of *Areopagitica* are now numerous and vary greatly in their approaches and conclusions, they remain in general agreement upon at least one point: their rejection of the traditional view that Milton's tract is a manifesto for "freedom of speech" and liberal toleration (for example, Fish, "Driving" 234-35; Illo 3-10; Kolbrener "Partial" 59-64; Norbrook, *Writing* 119-120; N. Smith 103-7). There also seems to be a consensus that the tract's "potency" "stems from Milton's constant disruption of his own lines of argument, his own sequences of images, and its own rhetorical forms" (Dzelzainis, "*Areopagitica*" 151). The meaning of that disruptive quality relates, as we shall see, to a further characteristic of the tract that is widely recognized: the central role for the concept of "trial" "by what is contrary" (Loewenstein, "Dynamics" 77, *Drama* 35; Fish "Driving" 242; Kahn, *Machiavellian* 175; compare Haskin, *Burden* 185-86, 217-19).

Ernest Sirluck initiated the most important and widely acknowledged challenge to the liberal account of the *Areopagitica*, by showing the importance of Milton's anticipated audience(s). Amid the political uncertainties of 1643-44, Milton was attempting, through persuasion, to split the majority Presbyterian vote in Parliament in order to defeat the Licensing Act, by convincing a sufficient number of Erastians to side with the Independents against those Presbyterians who supported the *jure divino* policy of the Westminster Assembly (Sirluck, *CPW* 2:176-77).¹ Given such an intended audience, it is not surprising that Milton's attempted appeal to a group of Erastians on their own terms might entail some conflict with his own implicit yet recurrent position. Commentators are, of course, careful to observe that Milton does not in any of his tracts advocate "free speech," as it is commonly understood today, for example, with respect to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Illo 12-17, Fish, "Driving" 234-36; Kolbrener, "Partial" 59-64). But the apparent stance

offered in the tract is complicated not simply by the differences between Milton's Christian humanist view of "liberty" based on truth and that of modern liberalism. His attempt to accommodate the anxieties of Erastian Parliamentarians is also potentially at odds with his own view of toleration. For a balanced understanding of Milton's position, it is crucial to keep this double distinction in view.

Within *Areopagitica*, Milton proposes a structure which he generally follows, though with some apparent digression, by citing four arguments against the licensing of printing:

First the inventors of [licensing] bee those whom ye will be loath to own; next what is to be thought in general of reading, whatever sort the Books be; and that this Order avails nothing to the suppressing of scandalous, seditious, and libellous Books, which were mainly intended to be suppress. Last, that it will be primely to the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of Truth, not only by the disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindering and cropping the discovery that might bee yet further made both in religious and civill Wisdome. (491-92)

The various arguments tend to imply one another. For example, the latter two claims depend upon a view of truth developed in the second argument regarding the nature of reading.

Similarly, both the first and second arguments depend upon an account of the relation between "right reason," or conscience, and coercion. By considering first, what *Areopagitica* shares with Milton's other tracts, we can then consider the unique account of reading which he develops from that basis.

As with the tracts considered earlier (Chapter 2), the argument of *Areopagitica* invokes an eschatological context. The consequences of doing so are twofold. First, he offers

a brief historical narration, similar to the opening narration in *Of Reformation*, which attempts to link licensing with the corruption of the medieval church:

After which time [800 A.D.] the Popes of *Rome* engrossing what they pleas'd of Politicall rule into their owne hands, extended their dominion over mens eyes, as they had before over their judgements, burning and prohibiting to be read what they fansied not. (501-2)

Within Milton's account, such practice then became "stricter policy" at the first signs of the Reformation, in the writings of Wyclif and Husse (502), and culminated in the work of the Council of Trent and the Spanish Inquisition (502-3). By describing pre-publication licensing as part of the antichristian practice of religious coercion, he invokes the cosmic battle between the saints and the Antichrist. This larger narrative context then underwrites his argument that unlicensed printing would allow England to continue the process of Reformation and avoid returning to the bondage of pre-Reformed legalism and superstition. Indeed, a later passage in *Areopagitica* invokes the names of the same Reformers in a manner that directly echoes a similar passage in *Of Reformation* (CPW 1: 524-25):

And had it not bin the obstinat perversnes of our Prelats against the divine and admirable spirit of Wicklef, to suppresse him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Husse and Jerom [of Prague], no nor the name of Luther, or of Calvin had bin ever known: the glory of reforming al our neighbours had bin completely ours. But now, as our obdurat Clergy have with violence demean'd the matter, we become hitherto the latest and backwardest Schollers, of whom God offer'd to have made us the teachers (CPW 2:552-53)

As with the other tracts, Milton situates Reformation history within the story of the battle against antichristian tyranny. His central challenge in *Areopagitica* is then to locate the licensing of printing within that apocalyptic history, depicting it as a tool used only by the dragon.² Thus he describes licensing as a practice issuing “from the most Antichristian Council, and the most Tyrannous Inquisition that ever inquired” (505). The final paragraph of the tract puns on the name of the licensing authority under Laud, by describing the “Star-chamber” as “now fall’n from the Starres with *Lucifer*” (569-70). Although there are multiple biblical references to Satan falling (for example Isaiah 14:12, Luke 10:18), only the war in heaven described in Revelation 12 refers to “stars” falling with him. Thus Milton once again insists upon locating the licensing of printing on only one side of that cosmic battle between the saints and the dragon

The second consequence from invoking an eschatological context is to emphasize the ongoing nature of that Reformation, and the generally incomplete character of the human apprehension of truth within the *saeculum*, before the end of time: “we have not yet found [all the parts of Truth’s beautiful form], Lord’s and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second coming” (*CPW* 2:549). The penultimate paragraph invokes images of final judgment, at which point the worthless “*wood and hay and stubble*” are finally, and not until then, separated from things of eternal worth (564; compare I Corinthians 3:10-13). The theme is continued by reference to parables on the same topic, specifically with a view to their ecclesiological implications: “it is not possible for man to sever the wheat from the tares, the good fish from the other frie; that must be the Angels Ministry at the end of mortal things” (564-65). From this limitation upon human understanding, Milton argues “that many be tolerated, rather than compell’d” for the sake of the “*wood and hay and stubble*” of “externall

formality” (565; 564) Milton’s point is similar to his later argument in *Civil Power* (1659), where the eschatological context argues against the legitimacy of the magistrate in judging matters spiritual (*CPW* 7:240, 245, 270). In *Areopagitica* Milton cannot, as a matter of course, make such a direct claim in attempting to appeal to Erastians. In effect, he must avoid arguing explicitly, as he does in *Of Reformation* (*CPW* 1:845), that the magistrate should not have the responsibility of determining “what constitutes true religion” (Burt 26). Nigel Smith contends that “the primary argument of *Areopagitica* is concerned not with toleration at all, but with the necessity of freedom of the press for the better circulation of knowledge, so that the reformed ‘truth’ may be reconstituted” (105). But to describe the argument in such a way obscures the fact that, in Milton’s account, the nature of the human encounter with theological “truth” precludes the use of force. The ingenuity of his rhetorical strategy, therefore, is to assure Erastians that the state has a legitimate interest in religion, without necessarily reminding them that genuine religion precludes the use of coercion. The role of the state in Milton’s tract is thus “not to dictate faith, but to establish the preconditions for true, explicit faith” (Burt 28). David Loewenstein accurately observes that “the apocalyptic rhetoric” of *Areopagitica* “has been mollified to allow for a vision subtler and more generous than that of his earlier radical polemics” (*Drama* 49). A good part of that mollification results from his different sense of target audience for the later tract.

Also consistent with the arguments in the other tracts is *Areopagitica*’s emphasis upon the individual conscience, or reason. In considering, for example, the best way for the state to encourage virtue, Milton dismisses the attempt to control various kinds of moral behaviour, as modeled in various “Eutopian polities” (*CPW* 2:526). Instead he argues that the “governing wisdom of a State” depends on “those unwritt’n, or at least unconstraining laws of vertuous

education, religious and civill nurture ... the bonds and ligaments of the Commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every writt'n Statute" (526). As a result, "the great art lyes to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things perswasion only is to work" (527). The state depends upon the exercise of virtue by its citizenry and is permitted to use coercion in protecting them from one another and from other states, but the exercise of that virtue upon which the state depends more generally, cannot by its nature be compelled. Thus he points out that to make every action subject to "prescription and compulsion" implies a folly comparable to the wish that God had never given Adam the freedom to fall. Milton then offers the famous phrase, "for reason is but choosing" (527), within the context of explaining that the exercise of virtue presumes freedom from coercion. His point is the same here as in his earlier account of the connection between sanctification and charity: truly virtuous actions which constitute the outworking of genuine faith must be freely chosen. Moreover, his argument suggests an increasingly clarified sense of location within an overarching biblical story that extends from Eden to the last judgment, the narrative which, in *Of Education*, Milton refers to as "the story of Scripture" (CPW 2:387).

Between those two poles of the biblical story Milton contends that "Good and evill we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably," because as a result of the fall, humans are limited to "knowing good by evill" (514). In this way, he begins to modify the antinomian misunderstanding of his earlier claim that "to the pure all things are pure" (512; Titus 1:15). Instead, by observing that no one is actually pure, he argues that virtue is constituted through a process of educative reading: "Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and triall is by what is contrary" (515).

There are different ways to understand what constitutes the means and ends of such “triall,” but the central importance of the concept with the argument of the tract remains undeniable. Knowledge in *Areopagitica* is “dialectical; it proceeds by contraries” (Kahn, *Machiavellian* 175; Loewenstein, *Drama* 35-50). Within its account of the reading process, the tract not only proposes that knowledge is derived through an encounter with falsehood, but also embodies the opportunity for such a process (Fish, “Driving” 241-47; Norbrook, *Writing* 124-37; compare Cable, *Carnal* 117-43). The process is effected through a series of images, analogies and metaphors which are deployed to represent truth in different ways, but none of which is allowed to be accepted as final. Whether Truth is described as “Marchandize” (*CPW* 2:548), as a body (549), as a warrior (562-63), as or as a “cropp” (558), the tract consistently disallows resting in any particular analogy. There is, however, as we shall see, an important difference between foregrounding the limitations of every analogy or metaphor intended to apprehend theological truth and abandoning altogether the idea of mind-independent truth.

Because *Areopagitica* is thus concerned primarily with a search for truth, the debates over the larger meaning of the tract often hinge upon the supposed location of that truth—that is, whether the argument locates truth in books, or in people, or somewhere else. One of the most commonly cited passages in the tract involves the apparent characterization of books as a repository for truth:

As good almost kill a Man as kill a good book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye...a good Booke is a pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm’d and treasur’d up on purpose to a life beyond life.... [To destroy a good book] ends not in the slaying of an

elemental life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason
it selfe, slaies an immortality rather than a life. (*CPW* 2:492-93)

These lines are commonly quoted to support the liberal view of the tract as an unequivocal endorsement of liberal free speech. Stanley Fish quotes the passage at length, before pointing out that its imagery is “decidedly *unMiltonic*” for two reasons:

First because it locates value and truth in a physical object [a book], and second because the reverence it apparently recommends toward that object is dangerously close, if not identical with, worship. The passage seems, in a word, to encourage idolatry, and that of course is exactly the purpose to which it has been often put when it has been cited as a central “scripture” in the “religion” of the book (the religion, that is, of humanism). This, however, is not Milton’s religion. The center of his theology is the doctrine of the inner light and his entire career can be viewed as an exercise in vigilance in which he repeatedly detects in this or that political or social or ecclesiastical program one more attempt to substitute for the authority of the inner light the false authority of some external and imposed rule. (Fish, “Driving” 236)

The last sentence indicates that Fish once again presumes that all “external” truth is also “imposed,” and thus suggests a misunderstanding of the nature of Milton’s distinction between claims to objective truth that do and those that do not legitimate religious coercion. Nevertheless, Fish proceeds through the rest of *Areopagitica* to show how Milton renders the categories of “good” books versus “bad” books irrelevant because “a wise man like a good refiner can gather gold out of the drossiest volume,” while “a fool will be a fool with the best book, yea or without book” (*CPW* 2:521). The apparent shift in emphasis throughout the tract

is away from external objects and toward the inner condition of the reader: “Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercis’d in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so” (527). Ultimately, in Fish’s account, “the argument against licensing, which has always been read as an argument *for* books, is really an argument that renders books beside the point” (Fish, “Driving” 238; compare 246). At that point, however, the sense that something is missing from Fish’s analysis becomes especially acute. A tract subtitled, “For the Liberty of unlicenc’d Printing,” would certainly be at odds with its own explicit purposes if it argued that books were simply irrelevant. If books, as objects external to the self, are completely unrelated to the constitution of virtue, then their licensing or unlicensing would not be an issue, and *Areopagitica* would not have been written.

The ultimate source of this misunderstanding of the tract becomes apparent if we return to consider the passage quoted above (that is, *CPW* 2:492-93). First, it is important to ask what purpose is served by the obviously paradoxical concept of “slaying an immortality.” In what sense could something immortal remain so while also being effectively “dead”? Fish simply reasserts what the paradox obviously presumes—that Truth is immortal—in order to argue that Milton explodes entirely the assumptions which enable the opposite side of the paradox—that books contain truth. But to resolve the paradox in this way not only argues against the existence of the tract’s own ostensible purpose, but also disregards the tension which enabled the paradox to be constituted at all. As suggested by the qualifications, “almost” and “as it were,” when Milton ascribes “life” to books at all, he engages in a self-consciously tendentious analogy between the “reason” embodied in books and the “reason” which is the divine image in humans (492). The creator-creature analogy is reiterated by

attributing to books “the breath of reason” (493; compare Genesis 1:27, 2:7). Although books are obviously inanimate physical objects, they “are not absolute dead things” in the sense that they enable, through the eye, the learning of one rational mind to be communicated to that of another. Hence to kill reason “in the eye” is not literally to kill reason, which is obviously immortal and exists apart from such things, but to “kill” that opportunity for the intellectual truth communicated in the book to be encountered there by others, making it thus “dead” to them.

Milton does certainly complicate his account of truth, as the argument of *Areopagitica* develops, but he never abandons the premises that make possible the initial paradox in the alleged risk of “slaying an immortality.” Rather, the possibility that one mind could communicate immortal, though partial, truth to others by means of a book provides the imperative that underlies the longest argument of the tract: licensing will result in the “stop of Truth” (*CPW* 2:491). Because, as a matter of biblical consistency, Milton is not satisfied with an account of truth that is limited to intellectual apprehension, he will later attempt to broaden his readers’ sense of truth, partially through the multiplication of analogies. But he never disregards the role of understanding within that fuller account. The enlarged sense of truth is evident in the claim that “A man may be a heretick in the truth; and if he beleieve things only because his pastor says so, or the [Westminster] Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie” (543). The all-important modifying phrase, “without knowing other reason,” makes two points clear: first, Milton is contrasting the external authority of other people (not Scripture) with the inner authority of individual knowledge, not arguing for indeterminacy; second, the “other reason[s]” that guarantee such knowledge (in the case of theology) would obviously be found

in Scripture. That Milton admits the poor use that “a fool will [make] of sacred Scripture” (*CPW* 2:521) does not alter his claim that objective truth is still discernible there by others who are less foolish. Milton’s point is not, as Fish would have it, that “a truth that has not been internalized is no longer the truth” (“Driving” 245) but rather, that a truth that has not been internalized is without effect in one’s life, though nevertheless true in itself. Once again, we need to recall Milton’s intended Erastian audience. Milton seems to have understood that if the tract were susceptible to an antinomian reading, he would fail to persuade such readers. His aim instead is to draw out the implications of the Erastian belief in the primacy of law—a belief consummately exemplified in the work of the parliamentarian John Selden, whom he names in the tract (*CPW* 2:513; N. Smith 106-111). Milton’s challenge is to show how such a belief in the primacy of law actually precludes the coercive practice of licensing books, when rightly understood.

Because *Areopagitica* also engages the topic of adiaphora as it contends for a fuller understanding of “Truth,” Victoria Kahn cites the tract as a locus of Machiavellian tensions³:

Milton does not argue that rhetorical decorum dictates the one right course of action. Rather, rhetorical indeterminacy is emphasized even to the point of being, at times, conflated with truth itself. In moving away from the contemplation of truth as fixed and absolute to a conception of “knowledge in the making,” Milton preserves the judgment and agency of the individual believer, but at the cost of engaging the Machiavellian dilemma of innovation in the realm of fortune [or Providence] or action in a realm of indifference.

(174)

But “knowledge in the making” is still for Milton not yet truth, even if that process is necessary to the constitution of true virtue. Although effort is often required in order to distinguish between truth and falsehood, with respect to theological claims there is, in Milton’s account, no doubt that an argument for religious coercion reveals a false belief, owing to the nature of Christian saving faith and sanctification. This clarity on Milton’s part must be kept in mind in order to avoid ascribing ambiguity to the tract where there is none:

For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licencings to make her victorious, those are the shifts and the defenses that error uses against her power: give her but room, & do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old *Proteus* did, who spake oracles only when he was caught & bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes, except her own. (*CPW* 2:562-63)

Kahn claims that in this passage “the personification of truth raises the problem of antinomianism it was designed to address... For once truth is personified—one might say, once truth enters the realm of representation—it engages the Machiavellian dilemma of how to distinguish between the force of truth and the force of its fraudulent representation” (177). Although the passage from the tract does indicate the potential for truth, in a sense, to become untrue, within the realm of representation, the more important point for Milton is that the attempt to use coercion is precisely what will make the truth into a lie. In the immediately following passage, at the word “yet,” the topic does shift to the consideration that truth “may have more shapes then one” (*CPW* 2:563); however, those possible shapes are not to be confused with the shape of a lie which coercion gives to truth.

The argument's subsequent shift in focus leads to the one occasion in *Areopagitica* where Milton actually uses the word "indifferent":

What else is all that rank of things indifferent, wherein Truth may be on this side, or on the other, without being unlike herself. What but a vain shadow else is the abolition of *those ordinances, that hand writing sayl'd to the crosse* [Colossians 2:14], what great purchase is this Christian liberty which *Paul* so often boasts of. His doctrine is, that he who eats or eats not, regards a day, or regards it not, may doe either to the Lord [Romans 14:1-13]. How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief strong hold of our hypocrisie to be ever judging one another. (CPW 2:563)

In effect, Milton adopts neither the usual Puritan view that nothing is indifferent, nor the Erastian view that makes the realm of indifference a sphere that permits coercion (Kahn, *Machiavellian* 173). Instead, Milton takes the Calvinist position that certain things not pertaining to salvation or not explicitly commanded for Christians in the Bible are indifferent, without discounting the importance of civil law, which allows coercion, or moral virtue (sanctification), which does not (Calvin 3.19.2-9).⁴ Thus, the figure of Proteus in the passage quoted previously above (CPW 2:562-63) is not identified with the the realm of things indifferent, but with the lie that results from trying to join doctrinal truth with coercive control, which includes the licensing of printing (compare Kahn, *Machiavellian* 178).

Moreover, Milton's argument does not entail a "conflation of truth with the realm of things indifferent." Instead, the above passage shows how Milton deploys "conscience" as a participation in the truth of creation (as an ontic logos) which guides the use of "things

indifferent” in which truth is discerned with less certainty. The use of such “things,” whether food or books, does not entail subjectivism or an excuse for debauchery, because Milton continues to presume a conception of right reason, or conscience, which is understood to participate in the objective reality of the created order. This is why, for example, in his earlier use of the food-book analogy, he insists that the virtue of temperance, which is discernible through conscience, applies equally to both eating and reading (*CPW* 2: 512-13). Similarly, when Milton argues that a state is held together, not by the threat of coercive civil laws, but by “those unwritt’n or at least unconstraining laws of vertuous education” (526), he is not adopting a subjectivist position. As the mention of Plato in that context makes clear, Milton is referring to the soul which has been educated, in accord with an objective order, to practice the virtues of courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice. Milton’s repeated appeals to conscience thus do not imply, for example, that gluttony, in any form, is anything other than sin. Such a sin is indeed judged through its objective consequences, yet precisely that kind of action is not susceptible to treatment by civil law. Thus the famous phrase, “reason is but choosing” (527) does not entail that all available alternatives at a given juncture are equally choiceworthy. The nature of the regenerate freedom so constituted inheres in the reality of choosing among the various forms of truth or falsehood, and in the insistence that choice is not simply a matter of whim, but is meaningful and has real consequences.

Because of the tendency to emphasize Milton’s depiction of “truth” as a process, or “trial,” it is important to understand that he also includes determinate doctrinal content within his account of truth:

’Tis not deny’d, but gladly confest, we are to send our thanks and vows to
heav’n, louder then most of Nations, for that great measure of truth which we

enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the Pope, with his
 appertinences the Prelats: but he who thinks we are to pitch our tents here and
 have attain'd the utmost prospect of reformation, that the mortall glasse
 wherein we contemplate, can shew us, till we come to *beatific* vision, that man
 by this very opinion, declares that he is yet farre short of Truth. (CPW 2:548-
 49)

The overall trajectory of the passage emphasizes the ongoing and incomplete character of temporal understanding. But it is not less crucial to realize that Milton appeals to his readers' knowledge of the great area of common doctrinal ground between Catholics and Protestants, as well as to the Protestant belief in having discerned a clearer view of that truth. But the key point here is that the tract depends upon an obvious sense of "truth," not as simply process, but also as doctrinal content that can be intellectually "held" by an individual in such a way that may or may not accord with the nature of that truth.

At the same time, Milton's insistence upon a partial, though cumulative, view of truth in understanding does not imply indeterminacy or despair. A further key passage on this point is Milton's oft-cited invocation of the myth of Osiris:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a
 perfect shape to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him
 were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as the story
 goes of the *Aegyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with good
Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and
 scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of
 Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that *Isis* made for the

mangl'd body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Master's second coming. (*CPW* 2:549)

This passage similarly concludes with an emphasis upon the ongoing nature of the search for truth guided by right reason, though it never denies that real progress is possible. The passage is strange, however, because of the way that it adapts the commonplace biblical precedents for the images that it uses. "Truth indeed came once into the world," but biblically that truth is Christ himself (John 14:6). Amid the shifting signification of the images, the important point is to discern the textualist sense of truth that informs the use of "body." Milton's allegory entails a "lost body" of apostolic teaching that can only be reassembled by searching Scripture and reordering it into a doctrinal corpus (Schullenberger 277). The "pieces," which are taken from Scripture, like justification by faith, are certain, though partial. This is why he can mention that portion of truth which English Protestants hold in common with the Pope—doctrine they derived in common from Scripture. At the time of writing *Areopagitica* in 1644, Milton was apparently still open to undertaking a project like *De Doctrina Christiana*, which attempts to offer such an approximation of apostolic teaching through the doctrinal arrangement of Scripture. The larger claim of this study is that Milton eventually abandoned that view of the relationship between Scripture and Ramist logic. He chose instead to focus on the logic of scriptural narration because he found it the best way, not only to approximate apostolic teaching, but also to encourage the engagement of that truth by the whole person. We can already see in *Artis Logicae* Milton's doubts regarding some of the most characteristic aspects of Ramism.

As mentioned, *Artis Logicae* was composed during the same period as *Areopagitica* and *Of Education*. The place of the logic text within Milton's thinking is suggested by two aspects of his thought: the theological importance of education; the importance of logic to theology. As he states in *Of Education*:

The end of learning then, is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly graces of faith makes up the highest perfection. (*CPW* 2:366-7)

Milton's humanism did not entail perfectibility, but did allow for the possibility of genuine human improvement. Often only the first fragments of the above sentence are quoted, but the full passage makes explicit the core elements that Milton takes to be the means by which an oft-cited "repairing" must be effected. To the extent that Milton adopts Ramist principles, the objective knowledge of God could be constituted, in part, by the application of that logic to Scripture.

The second aspect of Milton's thought that suggests his belief in the value of the logic text is the central role of logic in theology. This point is important because the common perception, based, for example, on his comments in Prolusion 7 (*CPW* 1:300-1), is that Milton typically downplayed the importance of logic. However, in *Of Education*, the key restrictions on the study of logic are that it not be introduced too early (*CPW* 2:382; 396; 401-2), because the overall progression is from sensible to intelligible truth, and that its study be useful (402). Given Milton's view of the ultimate end of education, nothing could be more practical to him than the application of logic to theology. Accordingly, he cites two main problems with the

customary use of logic in education. It introduces highly abstract thinking that is often either irrelevant or premature, and it is typically used to introduce doctrinal falsehoods that distort Scripture. Because of the latter problem in particular, Milton saw that correct reasoning was crucial to accurate theology. In the Preface to *Artis Logicae* Milton specifically denounces those who use logic to justify what he views as bad theology:

I have even more decidedly made up my mind not to stuff in random rules which come from theologians rather than from logic; for theologians produce rules about God, about divine substances, and about sacraments right out of the middle of logic as though these rules had been provided for their own use.

(*CPW* 8:211)

Again, this passage could be misread to suggest that Milton sees theology and logic as having no relation at all; however, his point is that only when the arts of logic and theology are properly distinguished can the former be allowed to assist the latter in the discovery of truth. This point becomes clear in the chapter “On Form,” where Milton concludes:

Therefore, things which differ in number also differ in essence, and never do things differ in number without also differing in essence. *Here let the Theologians take notice.* (233 original emphasis)

Milton draws attention here to the fact that a logical axiom has theological implications, in this case apparently for the doctrine of the Trinity. In his annotation to this passage, Walter Ong charges Milton with “violating his own rule in his Preface” (Ong, *CPW* 8:233n), but such an indictment is based on a misunderstanding. Milton’s prefatory comment does not insist that logic has no bearing on theology, but that logical categories for judging truth should not be specially shaped to accommodate a doctrinal position that would otherwise be deemed

illogical. In Chapter 3 above, clear similarities were observed between the logic text and the arguments deployed in *De Doctrina Christiana* against the doctrine of the Trinity. Once again, this derivation may indicate a part of the treatise Milton authored, or may indicate the influence of Milton's logic upon a former student who wrote the treatise. But the crucial question here is whether Milton viewed that correct deployment of logic as an integral part of that ability to "know God aright" which is the end of his virtue-driven educational program. Because it was written, not as a polemic against advanced metaphysicians, but as an introductory text, *Artis Logicae* must negotiate continuously between the limitations of addressing such an audience of novices and the need to provide a sufficiently subtle treatment of the issues so as not to compromise Milton's own commitment to the truth. Keeping in mind the differences between the intended audiences of *Areopagitica* and *Artis Logicae*, the texts can nevertheless provide mutual elucidation because of the direct connection that Milton makes between reason, virtue, theology and education.

In order to consider how *Artis Logicae* alters the antecedent Ramist texts from which it draws, we need to establish briefly the character of those antecedents and of Ramism in general. The first thing to be observed about Ramism is that "its central element is a logic or dialectic which cannot be taken very seriously by any competent logician": that is, like most Renaissance logics, it is "a residual logic, a selection of items from an earlier, more complex and sensitive science" (Ong, *Ramus* 7). As a result, the real importance of Ramism for the study of intellectual history is less in its dubious claims as a logical system and more in its influential consequences as a widely held "cluster of mental habits evolving within a centuries-old educational tradition" (8):

Ramist dialectic represented a drive toward thinking not only of the universe but of thought itself in terms of spatial models apprehended by sight. In this context, the notion of knowledge as word, and the personalist orientation of cognition and of the universe which this notion implies is due to atrophy.

Dialogue itself will drop more than ever out of dialectic. Persons, who alone speak (and in whom alone knowledge and science exist), will be eclipsed insofar as the world is thought of as an assemblage of the sort of things which vision apprehends--objects or surfaces. (9)

The core of Ong's critique of Ramism is based on the claim that "all intellectual cognition must be treated by analogy with sensory cognition" (*Ramus* 107), which presumes that the terms used to describe intellectual cognition cannot avoid dependence upon some metaphoric origin. In contrast to the Aristotelian view, where human knowledge is constituted by an interpersonal "saying" or "enunciation" that "is itself conceived of in a visual-aural tension" (108), Ramism privileged to an unprecedented degree the spatial metaphors of sight. The deeper problem, in Ong's view, is that Ramism encouraged practitioners to forget altogether the metaphoric origin of the terms of intellectual cognition and thereby to treat as objective 'truth itself' what was really only a less-balanced, exclusively visual-spatial, metaphor (107-9). This visualist orientation of Ramism gives rise to the depersonalized account of knowledge and the ensuing view of the world as "objects." Thus the broader movement towards an instrumental view of reason is intimately connected with the Ramist tendency to obscure the analogic origin of its own terms. But what does this mean for a Ramist like Milton who was so obviously aware of the metaphoric basis for Ramist terms of cognition?

By comparing the text of the *Artis Logicae* with those works from which Milton drew, we can get some sense of how he altered the Ramist tradition while participating in it. There are at least four known antecedent logic texts upon which Milton drew: *Commentarii in P. Rami... Dialecticam* (1605), by George Downame; *Dialecticae Libri Duo* (1572), by Peter Ramus (Ong, *CPW* 8:184; 186)⁵; *The Logician's School-Master* (1629), by Alexander Richardson; and *Systema Logica Tribis Libris Adornatum...* (1613), by Bartholomew Keckermann (Weiss 3-4). The influence of the last work is especially noteworthy, in that Keckermann was “not a Ramist at all, but may be loosely said to represent the Aristotelian tradition in logic at the turn of the seventeenth century” (4). In fact, George Downame, the author of Milton’s main source text, is also called an “Aristotelian Ramist” (Scott-Craig 3), and, in this respect, it could be argued that Milton viewed his work as simply a more consistently Aristotelian (and, of course, true) adaptation of Ramism than Downame’s commentary. The Aristotelian influence has apparently led P. Duhamel to argue that Milton was not really a Ramist at all (Duhamel 1041-46). Brian Weiss points out that the foundation of Duhamel’s argument, which basically involves tracking every instance of the use of syllogisms in all Milton’s major prose, is flawed because it depends on a mistaken understanding of the Ramist technical term “argument,” as though Milton’s use of syllogisms indicated that he was not a true Ramist (Weiss 59-62).⁶ Notwithstanding his disagreement, Weiss too emphasizes that Milton’s Ramism was shaped in some respects by Aristotelian logic, mostly through Keckermann (Weiss 39).

In *Artis Logicae*, Milton makes no attempt to conceal the fact that his own work is effectively a transcription of the usual (overly-sparse) Ramist text combined with the “commentaries by others” (*CPW* 8:209). The main “innovation” that he therefore claims for

his own work is one of textual formatting, in that he has simply “woven” (210) the commentary into the main text. With respect to the issue of textual derivation, however, the direct transcription of textual passages from earlier works is actually integral to the Ramist project:

Ramist assumptions about the nature of a liberal art or of the axioms that compose it encourage the scholar to imitate work that has already been done in the field. The axioms are considered established. The scholar adds further remarks and clarification, making allowance for the fact that the pure axiom, although instantly recognizable as true, is not so easily applied to practical affairs of the imperfect intellect. So although there is an abundant outpouring of Ramist logic textbooks, they should all be similar in structure, and competitive only with respect to the usefulness and accessibility of the explanations. (Weiss 154)

Thus, in so far as the *Artis Logicae* is Ramist at all, it will follow those organizational principles, yet in Milton’s adaptation of the commentaries he may give the structure-determining axioms themselves a different shape.

It is therefore surprising that Milton does not hesitate to alter even the first and most basic axiom when he states: “Logic is the art of reasoning well [*ars bene ratiocinandi*]” (*CPW* 8:216). In this opening line of the treatise Milton has altered the key term in the Ramist source text, which reads: “the art of discoursing well” [*ars bene disserendi*] (Ong, *CPW* 8:217n). Rather than interpret this alteration as a break with Ramism, however, Ong argues that Milton’s revision shows him to be only more consistent with the general tendency of

Ramism, and is therefore effectively more Ramist than even Ramus, by taking his thought to its logical extreme:

Despite its formal base, logic tended to be defined before the age of print in terms of communication between persons [as part of the rhetorical curriculum], as Ramus defined it, following Cicero: it was *ars disserendi*, the art of discourse. The definition of logic as the art of thinking, with the implication that thinking was independent of discourse, became a favorite only after print had had its effect. (155)

In this respect, Milton's use of *ratiocinandi* rather than *disserendi* "situates him farther out than Ramus had been along the trajectory moving logic from an art of communication to an art of presumably solipsistic thought" (155). As noted, Ong views this depersonalization of knowledge as part of the Ramist tendency to mistake its spatial-visual metaphors for the realities of human cognition, leading ultimately to the instrumental view of a rational subject mastering (visual) objects in the world. However, it is precisely in this respect that it becomes difficult to imagine that Milton's intellectual commitment to Ramism is very deep, given what we know about Milton's use of language elsewhere. How could Milton, who otherwise uses etymological puns and metaphors with such subtlety, not discern the root epistemic problems in the Ramist handling of language? If we consider the text more closely, we can see that Milton is, in fact, aware of these tensions, and that his position in the *Artis Logicae* is consistent with *Areopagitica*.

The key assumption in Ong's gloss on this textual revision is to think that Milton means by the term *ratio* something much more reductive than *disserere*. Indeed, that seems to be the case within the immediate context of the distinction that Milton makes. Milton argues

that logic is properly concerned with *ratiocinandi*, rather than *disserendi*, because the latter refers only to “the art of questioning and answering, that is, of debating” (*CPW* 8:218). But here we find that Milton is simply insisting that logic involves *more* than debating, so that to restrict logic to *disserere* “is too narrow” (218). The deeper problem that Ong finds implied by Milton’s definition of logic is that it seems to make reason language-independent. Toward the very end of his Preface to *Artis Logicae*, Milton recounts the different ends of the respective liberal arts:

The general matter of the general arts is either reason or speech. For these arts are employed either in refining reason in order to argue well, or in refining speech, and is either in order to speak well, as in the case of grammar, or in order to express oneself well, as in the case of rhetoric. But of all the arts the first and most general is logic, next grammar, and finally rhetoric, since reason can be used, and even used extensively without speech, but speech cannot be used at all without logic. (*CPW* 8:216)

To this passage Ong attaches the following note:

Milton appears to take the view, common enough in his time and still common today, that thinking goes on independently of language, which is thus taken to be something added to thought, the words somehow being considered to be attached to the completed thought afterward when one wishes to manifest it to someone else. This view does not deal with certain truths about language today widely discussed in phenomenological treatments. (Ong, *CPW* 8:216n)

Once again, Ong’s gloss depends upon a view that Milton means by *ratio* some kind of “thinking” that has content apart from language. He takes this view, even though Milton

explicitly traces the etymology of “logic” to *logos* which he then defines as “a Greek word meaning reason [*ratio*]” (CPW 8:217). Although the *Artis Logicae* is only a text book, Milton could reasonably expect that most of the young readers knew that *logos* is also the Greek term translated as “Word” used in John 1:1. Indeed the schedule proposed in *Of Education* has the students likely reading the New Testament in Greek before they ever start the study of logic (CPW 2:396-402). Milton certainly would have understood the importance of Erasmus’s decision to translate the *logos* of John 1:1 as *sermo*, rather than *ratio*. In one sense, by tracing *ratio* to *logos*, Milton is simply following, as a matter of course, an etymological commonplace that would distinguish the art of logic from that of theology. But Milton would not have pointed out the connection between *ratio* and *logos* if he advocated a reductive instrumental rationality. How then is Milton actually using the term *ratio*? He is drawing upon a platonic sense of *logos* that is primarily ontic and which it is the virtue of the human soul to imitate. We have already observed how *Areopagitica* draws upon such a concept of “ontic-logos,” an ordering principle, independent of human language, that enables the existence and intelligibility of the universe including the human soul and its discursive practices (Taylor 120-26). In general terms, it involves the adaptation of the hellenic *logos*, which is the source of all being, so that it is also identified as the central character of the gospel narratives who dwelt in the flesh among people. This same *ratio*, according to Milton, is the root of human freedom “for reason is but choosing” (CPW 2:527). The fact that this last phrase from *Areopagitica* (and echoed in *Paradise Lost* [3.108]) is taken from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (compare 3.2; 3.22; 2.23; 2.12) demonstrates how thoroughly Milton had integrated the Christian and classical senses of the term *logos*.

Of Education demonstrates the similarities in Milton's mind between his ethically-driven movement from sensible to the intelligible truth, and the larger process of sanctification which a regenerate conscience makes possible. The progressive post-redemptive reordering of *recta ratio* is therefore not simply subjective because that ordering entails, in some sense, a restoration of the freedom to participate in the *ratio* of ontic-logos that informs all creation. Here we find also the link between the moral dimensions of ratio and the notion of "liberty," as Milton repeatedly invokes it throughout *Areopagitica*. He can legitimately elide the political and theological senses of the term liberty because *ratio* as ontic-logos entails a principle of order that traverse the realms of soul, polis, and cosmos.⁷

As a result of his Christian adaptation of the classical ontic-logos, Milton guards against the Ramist tendency to occlude the metaphoric basis for terms of cognition:

quicquid enim est, aut esse fingitur, subjectum est Logicae, ut supra demonstravimus. Argumentum autem proprie neque vox est neque res; sed affectio quaedam rei ad argumentum; quae *ratio* dici postest ut supra.

Tractat igitur Logica neque voces, neque res. Voces quidem, quamquam & sine vocibus potest ratiocinari, tamen, quoties opus est, distinctas & tantum non ambiguas, non improprias, ab ipso usu loquendi videtur jure sane postulare: res ipsa artib. quasque suis relinquit; arguendi duntaxat inter se quam habeant affectionem sive rationem considerat.

Ratio autem dicitur, voce a Mathematicis petita, qua terminorum proportionalium inter se certa habitudo significatur. (*Works* 11:24-6, original emphasis)

For the subject of Logic is whatever exists or is claimed to exist, as was shown above. But an argument properly speaking, is neither a word nor a thing, but a certain relevance of a thing to arguing; it can be called a *reason*, as above.

Logic therefore treats neither of words nor of things. Although it is possible to reason without words, nevertheless logic seems quite justified, but the very convention of speech, in requiring that whenever words must be used they be distinct and thus unambiguous, and not inappropriate. Things themselves logic leaves to their several arts, considering only the relevance or *ratio* to arguing which they have among themselves.

Ratio, borrowed from mathematics, is a word by which is signified a certain relation of terms proportional to each other. (*CPW* 8: 220-21)

Milton is clearly not using “reason” here to indicate the human faculty of reason or an ontic-logos. Rather, he tries to suggest how the technical term derives ultimately from the much broader meanings. Initially this might seem like a classic instance of the very problem that Ong has cited; it seems to assume that “thinking goes on independently of language.” If we look at this passage more closely, however, we can see that Milton’s emphasis attempts to avoid precisely the mistaken notion that words are somehow “attached to a completed thought afterward.” As noted, the root problem of Ramism is that it treats literally the terms of cognition whose metaphoric origin have been ignored; however, Milton avoids this tendency because he does not mean by “reason” some “content” apart from language. Milton is simply indicating that other things besides speech are rationally ordered (for example, sculpture or architecture). This is clearly Milton’s purpose in his mention of mathematical *ratio* in the last sentence—a sentence that does not appear in Downname’s commentary. Generally,

Downname's treatment of the matter seems much more susceptible to circularity than Milton's. Downname states frequently that arguments are not things in themselves, but as he continues to explain his point he inevitably re-implies the "necessity of things" despite his attempt to limit *ratio* to their relations (24-25). Milton removes this confusion; nevertheless, by introducing that final sentence regarding mathematical *ratio*, his treatment of the term also becomes potentially more ambiguous than Downname's.

If we return to the above quoted passage from Milton's text (*CPW* 8:220-21), we find that a form of the word *ratio* is used once in each of the three paragraphs. The sense of the Latin passage is slightly altered, however, by the choices in the translation and type-set: in the Latin (1672 and Columbia edition), the italics in the first and last instance of *ratio* emphasize a connection between them as the same root term; in the translation this connection is downplayed because the first instance is translated but the last two are not. The Yale translation also adds italics for the "*ratio*" in the second paragraph. The translated version emphasizes the connection between the last two instances of *ratio*, at the same time that it leaves them in their Latin form, suggesting a shift in meaning (perhaps toward the more "mathematical" sense of its English cognate) away from the first instance of *ratio* that is translated "*reason*." The translation itself is justifiable as the only means to indicate an apparent shift in usage for this term that has such wide lexical range (Gilbert's translation in the Columbia edition is the same); however, the choice also serves to obscure something that would be more obvious to the reader of the Latin text. By emphasizing the literal correspondence between the "*ratio*" that is "a certain relevance of a thing to arguing" and the "*ratio*" that is "borrowed from mathematics," the Latin text emphasizes the metaphoric origin of the very term that constitutes the art of logic. The Latin suggests, in a way that is obscured

by the translation, that the mathematical sense of *ratio* as “a certain relation of terms proportional to each other,” is the original meaning from which the logical sense, “relevance of a thing to arguing,” has been transposed. The phrase, “as above,” or *ut supra*, that ends the first paragraph, also links that instance of *ratio* to the earlier passage in which he comments that reasons “are more often called arguments” (*CPW* 8: 219). An argument (and hence a *ratio*) is further described as that which “explains and proves on what grounds it is first judged that one thing follows or does not follow from another” (220). What then exactly is the relation (*ratio*?) or relevance of the mathematical sense of *ratio* to the logical sense? The relationship is never really clarified, but at the very least it points out the derivative character of the logical sense of, *ratio*, and shows that Milton does not follow the Ramist tendency to obscure the metaphoric origin for terms of cognition.⁸

In *Artis Logicae*, Milton makes it clear that he values Ramist “method” primarily for its pedagogical effectiveness in helping to organize a known body of material for teaching, rather than for its claims to induct a practitioner into all truth about reality. In contrast to the usual Ramist insistence that there is only one correct “method,” which involves moving from universals to singulars, Milton notes that the Ramist approach is only one possible “method of teaching” among others:

From this [definition of method as a movement from universals to singulars] it is understood that it is here a question of method of handing on (*tradendi*) or teaching, rightly called analytic, and not one of invention [*inventio*, discovery]. For the method of invention, which by Plato is called synthetic, proceeds from singulars, which are prior in time and present themselves first to the senses, and by whose induction general notions are gathered. (*CPW* 8:391-92)

Invention, or discovery, seems to be used here in two senses: to indicate the usual means by which the faculty of reason apprehends reality in the world, but also to indicate a specific mode of teaching deployed by Plato. *Of Education* cites just such a synthetic method as that which is “necessarily follow’d in all discreet teaching” (*CPW* 2:369). There is no contradiction here, as the educational treatise specifically indicates that logic would only be taught in the later years, once the students have been sufficiently prepared for the demands of abstract thinking (374-75; 401). In effect, the synthetic method is used at the start because the movement from particulars to universals seems to fit more readily the human process of discovery apart from any formal instruction. This shows that Milton does not make any necessary connection between Ramist method and the way in which the faculty of reason engages the created order. In effect, the synthetic method is closer to the experience of reading, where various parts are construed together in order to apprehend abstract wholes. At the same time, as the preface makes clear, because logic is an art “employed to help nature,” it is not necessary for “those whose native ability is active and strong [to] torture themselves” doing analytic exercises (*CPW* 8:211). Once again, the phrasing presumes a clear distinction between the faculty of reason broadly understood and the technical use of “reason” described within the ensuing logic text. Milton maintains that the faculty can be aided by the technical instruction, but the latter is not necessarily required for the perfection of the human aptitude. Consistent with his resistance to mistaking metaphors for reality, Milton also insists that the mode of “place” [*locus*] is a concern of physics rather than “dialectic” (*CPW* 8:243). He thus also restricts the customary claims of Ramist dialectic to encompass all reality (Duhamel 1038; Weiss 102-4). Milton clearly does not participate in the Ramist tendency to mistake logical method for the structure of reality. He implies that although the same faculty of reason

engaged by training in logic ultimately participates in a created order informed by an ontic-logos, neither the psyche nor the cosmos has any necessary relation to the method of Ramism. Nevertheless, Milton does allow that the method can be useful for teaching at a certain level of abstraction.

In his essay “From Epithet to Logic: Miltonic Epic and the Closure of Existence,” Walter Ong contends that “Ramist logic is particularly significant because of its juncture in Milton’s own sensibility with the epic tradition” (190). In effect, Ong shows that the use of epithets in *Paradise Lost* reflects Milton’s participation in the “noetic economy” of a print culture, rather than an oral culture (191-203). Such a claim is generally accurate and is also evident in the “internalization of action” and the individualism that we find in *Paradise Lost* (211). However, the connection between Ramist logic and the characteristics of Milton’s self-conscious literary epic inheres only in their mutual participation in the emergent typographic culture. Ong’s claims regarding *Paradise Lost* do not depend on any specific claim regarding Ramism or even about the specific use of logic in the poem.⁹ Rather, the development of Ramism is simply part of the larger story of typographic culture in which Milton’s epic shares. Nevertheless, that story does lead Ong to venture a characterization of *Paradise Lost* which is misleading in important ways and which involves assumptions that will be addressed in the next chapter:

Milton lived in the the middle years of the age of theodicy, which logicized even divine Providence. Leibnitz’s *Théodicée* ... was to climax the age in 1710, undoing the Book of Job and showing how God himself operated according to logical laws, which Aristotle had providentially discovered and Ramus had streamlined. For Ramus had been convinced a century and a half

earlier that all creation was logical. (209)

There is, of course, a crucial difference between a belief that the universe is uniquely fitted for apprehension by human understanding and a belief that every causal relationship is susceptible to explicit and direct logical analysis. And contrary to Ong's suggestion, Milton never attempts to write an axiomatic deductive theodicy according to Ramist method. As the next chapter demonstrates, Milton's choice not to do so, and to deploy instead the mode of biblical epic that we find in *Paradise Lost* reveals the vast difference between Ong's account of Ramism and Milton's poetic practice.

Regarding Milton's general view of education and educative reading, two further points are in order. The observations are, in one sense, so obvious that they barely merit mention, except that some typical misunderstandings of Milton require that these claims be made. First, although the larger trajectory of Ramism, as part of print culture more generally, resulted in a diminished importance for the role of memory in western intellectual culture (Ong, *Ramus* 157), that change must not be projected backwards. Despite the acknowledged implications of Ramism in this regard, Milton obviously participated deeply in the residual belief that the extensive cultivation of memory was part of education. Although he usually simply presumes such a view, in *Of Education* he does note in passing that the study of Demosthenes, Cicero, Euripides, and Sophocles should result in some of their speeches being "got by memory" (*CPW* 2:401). Interestingly, only after the previous memory work and extensive study in philosophy, biblical studies, and rhetoric are the students then permitted to study logic "so much as is useful" (402). Despite the tendencies of Ramism with respect to memory, Milton presumes rather than argues the need for a cultivated memory.

The other important point to emphasize is the belief on Milton's part that people are

capable of learning truth from one another. Despite Milton's most radical formulations of Protestant individualism and despite his own aptitude for self-teaching, he maintains that not all knowledge, not even all religious knowledge, originates exclusively in the regenerate conscience. This should be obvious, given Milton's profession as a teacher and author of *Of Education*, but his own self-presentation as a solitary prophet has tended to perpetuate the misunderstanding that Milton held to a quasi-Cartesian kind of individualism (a mistaken view once held by the present writer [*Rhetorical* 49-57]). The pivotal mistake is to think that a consistent, or even extreme, formulation of the Protestant emphasis upon individual accountability necessarily entails a solipsistic epistemology and ecclesiology. Even within the argument of *Areopagitica*, which might seem so individualistic because of its emphasis upon conscience, Milton presents an image of scholarly investigation as part of friendship: "when a man writes to the world, he summons up all his reason and deliberation to assist him; he searches, meditates, is industrious, and likely consults and confers with his judicious friends" (532).¹⁰ The entire argument of *Areopagitica* presumes that people are able to learn truth from one another that they could not discover for themselves within the same amount of time, if at all. This point would not need stating, except that Milton is typically characterized as the advocate of a solipsistic "church of one." The very concept of "educative reading," as it operates not only in *Areopagitica* but also in Milton's poetry, presumes that the discovery of truth is a shared undertaking guided by conscience. As we shall see, both the implied community of readers and their sense of remembrance within the reading experience are important to an accurate assessment of *Paradise Lost*.¹¹

From this characterization of truth and reason in *Areopagitica* and *Artis Logicae* follow several implications regarding the process of educative reading that we can expect to

find as we consider *Paradise Lost*. His attempt to bring readers to an encounter with truth likely embodies some of the same tensions observed here. On the one hand, Milton's concern is with education in virtue—that is, with moral training that first instils a freely chosen love for the good and the beautiful before it can be understood. He may also therefore prod his readers so that no one remains at least comfortable as a nominal heretic in the truth. On the other hand, Milton's emphasis upon the process which allows the constitution of virtue does not imply that he views truth simply as a volitional function devoid of intellectual content. Rather, the individual encounter with truth is ongoing and incomplete, at the same time that it requires a consistent engagement of the will in order to live out that knowledge. As a result, because reasoning involves choice, Milton will arrange the intellectual engagement within his poetry in such a way that provokes a decision on the part of his readers. At the same time, the presumed importance of memory in understanding means that Milton could write with the expectation that those who read the epic more than once would remember elements of the previous readings. In writing *Paradise Lost*, Milton could therefore trust that his readers would eventually be able to read the beginning of the poem with a concrete sense of how it anticipates the middle and the end, and vice versa. At the same time, because the educative engagement of the memory, will, and understanding are located within a world of consequences, the freedom in those interpretive choices are not indeterminate or indifferent, as though the end to which one's reasoning progressed was irrelevant to the steps by which it did so. Instead, given the opportunity for regenerate human reason to participate in the ontic-logos of creation, in the same way that it interprets texts, like the Bible or *Paradise Lost*, Milton can emphasize the continuity between interpretive choices and consequences in the world.

Notes

¹ At the more rhetorical level, part of the tract's implied sense of audience expectation depends on whether one construes the allusive Greek title and cover page as inviting an emphasis upon the ambiguous political situation of Isocrates or whether that classical parallel is complicated further by the analagous situation of St. Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-22). Compare Burt 23-28; Dowling 49-66; Illo 4; Norbrook, *Writing* 125-32. Milton seems to identify England as a New Athens, rather than a New Jerusalem, but the apparent double identification of himself with both Isocrates and St. Paul also ambiguously locates the implied audience.

² For a comparable analysis of the eschatological aspects of *Areopagitica*, with a different emphasis from that here, see Loewenstein, *Drama* 36-41, 48-50; and compare 8-34. Loewenstein also considers the tract's presentation of trial "by what is contrary" in order to argue for "Milton's poetics of history embracing the conflicts and contradictions of a dynamic, revolutionary process" (36)

³ The larger purpose of Kahn's analysis is to show that Milton's treatment of things indifferent in *Areopagitica* reflects a general "general" Machiavellism in Milton's thinking that later becomes a "specific and republican" Machiavellism. (171)

⁴ This does not imply that Calvin advocated religious toleration—as is well demonstrated by his execution of Michael Servetus for heresy (Wilbur 49-75; Carey, *CPW* 6:55). My point is simply that, although Milton deploys a generally Calvinist kind of adiaphorism, Calvin would not have deployed the concept of adiaphora in order to defend his

own use of religious coercion. At the same time, it should be noted that Kahn acknowledges Milton's affirmation of Truth as both "absolute," yet not coercive (176). Nevertheless, the details of Kahn's analysis tend to obscure that consideration, because of the emphasis upon the coercive potential for Machiavellian rhetoric.

⁵ In making my own comparisons at some points between Milton's text and those of Downname or Ramus, I was limited to the earliest British edition (1669) which is available in the Short Title Catalogue microfilm collection. However, the particular pages that I used from that 1669 edition of the joint Downname-Ramus text have been compared with the earlier continental editions to verify that the text is indeed the same. I am grateful to Nicholas von Maltzahn for taking the time to compare the relevant pages from the earlier continental editions of Ramus and Downname in the Bodleian Library.

⁶ In Ramism, the term "argument" [*argumentum*] is a technical term, representing predication, which was viewed as "the lowest order" of discourse, and which "has nothing to do with polemic" (Weiss 7). It would probably be more accurate (in relation to usage today) to use the term "predication" for the technical Ramist sense of *argumentum*; however, as Weiss points out, "a Ramist would tend not to speak of 'predication' as this word is associated with Aristotelian predicaments" (7n). An *argumentum* thus "refers to the relationship between a *subject* (thing of which something can be predicated) and an adjunct (the predication)" (7). Milton will later outline four "modes" of subjection, or four ways in which a subject can "argue" an attribute (*CPW* 8:242-4). In this technical sense, a statement like, "man is mortal" entails an "argument," in that "man" "argues" (predicates) a relation between itself and the adjunct "mortality" (Weiss 7). When Milton states that something "argues"

another thing, he claims that there is a relation such that the existence of the subject “argues” (in the manner of one of the four modes) the existence of the adjunct.

⁷ Although one should not press these points too far, the connection between reason and freedom may also appear obliquely in the structure of *Artis Logicae*. By collapsing the last four chapters on “method” in Ramus’s text into one chapter in *Artis Logicae*, Milton changes the total number to fifty. Ong acknowledges William Hunter’s observation that this change results in a correspondence between the total number of chapters in *Artis Logicae* and *De Doctrina Christiana* (Ong, *CPW* 8:390n). Ong points out that, in relation to any of Milton’s source texts, this rearrangement is clearly Milton’s own doing. Yet he concludes that “the editors do not know what to make of the correspondence” (390n). Although I put no faith in numerological arguments, because the number fifty is the number of Jubilee, it seems a not unlikely reiteration of the connection between reason, truth, and freedom. The number of Jubilee, the return to one after the completion of seven sevens, represents freedom from slavery and debt in the Hebrew Bible, and freedom from sin in the gospels, and may indicate here also freedom from some Ramist excesses.

⁸ The observation that the term *ratio* is derived from mathematics is not in itself as important as the fact that Milton chooses to make that point in the midst of clarifying (in only Book 2 of his text) what exactly he means by “logic.” Keckermann makes a similar point regarding the connection between mathematics and his own use of syllogism (Keckermann 416; Weiss 56). Weiss points to this passage as an indication of the “standards of certainty that Keckermann has in mind” (56), and the same could be said for Milton, who may have been prompted by Keckermann’s text. Keckermann’s observation is buried well inside his

text (416 pages), however, and is not flagged as indicating something integral to the definition of logic, as it is in Milton's text.

⁹ For a specific attempt, with some success, to apply directly the logical the terms of *Artis Logicae* to an analysis of *Paradise Lost*, see Howard 149-73. As I show in the next chapter, the problem with such an approach to the poem is that it does not address the question of why Milton did not simply write a Ramist treatise on God's justice.

¹⁰ For accounts of Milton's intellectual and social life that attempt to redress the traditional individualist emphasis, see Dobranski, *Authorship*; C. Hill, *Milton*.

¹¹ This is not to deny that Milton participated in beliefs regarding print culture and individualism that have contributed to our present cultural tendencies toward ahistoricism and unfettered egoism. But those problems became the problems of western intellectual life only when the accumulated residual influences of cultivated memory and community were largely eroded. Milton still apparently benefited greatly from that residual influence, despite the implications of his conscious beliefs. Thus, without denying a causal connection, the tendency to obscure the role of memory and community in Milton's writing results in part from failing to observed that his problems were not ours.

PART III:
NARRATING CHARITY

Chapter Five:

The Logic of Scriptural Imagination in *Paradise Lost*

Paradise Lost is both a biblical epic and a theodicy. As the former, it integrates elements of biblical and classical narrative strategies; as the latter it undertakes to demonstrate, at the very least, that belief in the existence of an all-powerful and wholly good creator-God is not logically precluded by acknowledging the existence of evil in the world. There is no immediately apparent reason, however, why these two undertakings should coincide. Milton's theodic objectives in *Paradise Lost* are, of course, more specific and more substantial than a bare claim of logical consistency (Danielson, *Milton's* 7).¹ He is not satisfied with an assertion of mere possibility entailed by the freedom of his claims from logical contradiction. Milton's audacity lies in trying to show that the specifically biblical account of God's ways, and of the reasons for the present state of the world, is actually true, in a way that competing accounts are not. But there still remains the question, "Why should Milton choose the specific genre of a biblical epic as the means to carry out his demonstration of God's justice?" The question is especially pertinent, given Milton's previous career as a polemical prose tract writer and the author of a Ramist logic text. Why did he not simply write a tract, "On the Justification of God's Ways"?² The point of integration between Milton's narrative strategy and the theodic *telos* of his epic is rooted in his view of reason, a

view that is at once both wider and deeper than anything reducible solely to a function of relations between propositions.³

But if Milton, as a Christian, accepts the claims of the Bible on faith, why write a theodicy at all, much less one in the shape of a biblical epic? Because every attempt at Christian fidelity requires some degree of reflection upon the claims of Scripture (however mediated), Christian practice necessarily presumes a specific view of the relation between human reason and biblical revelation. The extent to which the character of that relation can be articulated explicitly (in terms of accessible presuppositions) is difficult to establish with certainty or precision. At the same time, any explicit account of reason, Christian or not, involves a practice that entails specific origins and ends for human rationality. As a result, the question is not uniquely Christian, because the intelligibility of such accounts cannot avoid implying a metanarrative of some kind. But what then is the source for these various competing metanarratives, if not revelation, and how could they ever be evaluated in relation to one another or the biblical metanarrative? Because so much of its dramatic action involves the interplay between individual reason and competing narratives (revealed and otherwise), *Paradise Lost* addresses these very questions in multiform ways, direct and indirect.

The analysis here unfolds in four stages, each focusing on a specific part of the epic and each bearing differently upon the poem's treatment of the relation between reason, narrative, and religious toleration. The first stage offers a close reading of Raphael's account of the war in heaven, in order to establish how exactly *Paradise Lost* embodies a biblically inter-textual practice. I focus on that part of the epic (as an extreme case) specifically because it may well seem to be that part of the story furthest removed from any substantial biblical basis and to involve the greatest accommodations to the demands of the epic genre and ethos.

My objective is to show how Milton's use of typology enables a unity in the stylistic and theodic dimensions of his poem in a way that broaches the question of competing metanarratives. The next section continues the analysis of the war in heaven, but focuses specifically upon how the adaptation and dilation of biblical narratives broaches the treatment of reason in relation to revelation. The third stage of the argument focuses on Books 9 and 10 of the poem. This analysis advances the discussion of theodicy and narrative indirection, but does so through consideration of how Milton's treatments of allegoresis and gender address questions of representation and knowledge. Based on that account of how Milton handles the tension between poetic means and ends, the final section considers how books 11 and 12 of the epic attempt to pose for English Protestant readers an unavoidable choice between accepting religious toleration or denying their own faith.

5.1 Typology, Ontology and Theodicy in Raphael's War Story

In considering the narrative strategies available to a biblical epic, it is helpful to recall Auerbach's account (discussed briefly in chapter 3) of the central stylistic differences between biblical narrative and Homeric epic. He observes that in the former we find "certain parts brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the unexpressed 'background' quality, multiplicity of meanings," as well as a sense of "the historically becoming." By contrast, in the epic narrative, we meet "fully externalized

description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings,” and very little sense of “historical development” or “psychological perspective” (Auerbach 23). Moreover, he argues that the differences between the two modes of representation are rooted in the differing claims that the two texts make upon their readers. Rather than try to “flatter” or “enchant” readers, as Homer’s stories do, biblical stories “incarnate” “doctrine and promise” in such a way that the “world” they depict is “not satisfied with claiming to be historically true reality—it insists that it is the only real world” (14-15). The paradox is that the stories offering the less determinate and more obscure narrations end up making the greatest claims upon the lives of readers. Ultimately, by contrasting the capacity of biblical narrative technique to intimate the character of “a hidden God” (15) with the Homeric tendency to “externalize thoughts” (11), Auerbach emphasizes the differences in form between biblical and Homeric styles, and also the unavoidably theological implications that follow from those differences in form.

Given this relation between literary form and theological content, how is Milton able to restructure the biblical story according to the demands of the epic genre without fundamentally distorting the content that he takes as his ostensible authority? I began to answer this question in Chapter 3, arguing that he does so through a rigorously biblicist narrative strategy shaped by typological coherence. In effect, even where, in keeping with the demands of epic style, Milton elaborates the surface detail of his narrative—whether through detailed description, extended simile, or elaborate explanatory dialogue—he does so in a way that is biblically consistent and allusive in the form and content of its minutiae, and/or subsumed within the biblical metanarrative that the poem is in the very process of recapitulating.⁴ Moreover, rather than simply using biblical intertextuality to achieve a

uniform externalization consistent with epic determinacy, the typological use of Scripture enables Milton to preserve the interpretive openness of the biblical narrative, even while increasing its density of surface detail, its specificity, and its intelligibility. Milton often achieves the foregrounding and “illumination” of the epic style by juxtaposing normally distant elements of scriptural narrative and imagery. This he does in such a way that they contribute to a mutual interpretation within the trajectory of that larger narrative--the story whose origin (*arche*) and end (*telos*) is *caritas*.⁵ *Paradise Lost* retells that biblical story in such a way, then, that the epic elaborations are consistent, in form and/or detail, with what is either certain or possible within the larger biblical story. This chapter argues, moreover, that this reconciliation of biblical and epic styles is not, for Milton, an end in itself, but is integral to the poem’s larger theodic objectives. For example, Milton uses this strategy to illumine for his readers what would otherwise be an obscure “gap” in the biblical story between the end of Genesis chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3. The implied overall experience of the poem moves from that concrete imagining of possibilities toward a more positive demonstration of why the biblical story offers the most adequate account of the origin of evil and its ultimate defeat. By tracing that development within the epic, we can also understand how Milton’s biblicism becomes integral to his emphasis upon *caritas* over coercion.

With respect to the epic’s logical claims, Milton’s dilation of the biblical story emphasizes God’s justice in allowing Adam and Eve the freedom to fall. He does so by arranging that, before they are ever tempted, they are sufficiently instructed and warned about the dangers that they face. God sends the angel Raphael to “converse with Adam” (*PL* 5.230), “as friend with friend” (229), so that he “may advise him of his happy state” (234) and “warn him to beware” (237):

...Tell him withal
 His danger, and from whom, what enemy
 Late fall'n himself from Heaven, is plotting now
 The fall of others from like state of bliss;
 By violence, no, for that will be withstood,
 But by deceit and lies; this let him know,
 Lest willfully transgressing he pretend
 Surprisal, unadmonisht, unforewarn'd. (5.238-45)

In sending Raphael for this purpose, the narrator observes that God “fulfilled / All justice” (5.246-47). This states the rationale for the process of prelapsarian education that takes up Books 5 through 8 of the poem (the central third of the whole epic). Viewed according to the sequence of events described within the first three chapters of Genesis, however, the entirety of those Books’ events occur precisely within the ‘gap’ in the biblical story, between chapters 2 and 3. These Books provide a striking example of epic elaboration, as they supply many details of what daily life might have been like in the garden of Eden. Rather than devolving into simple speculation, however, the main narratives in Books 5 to 8 are largely a composite of other biblical passages.

The stories comprised in Raphael’s educational curriculum can be summarized as: 1) “pre-terrestrial history,” 2) “pre-human history,” and 3) Adam’s “post-creation history.” The last of these accounts is given by Adam rather than Raphael, but is no less crucial to the education process guided by Raphael. Moreover, by situating all three of these stories within a dramatic context—Raphael’s “pre-human history” echoes Genesis 1 (six days of creation), while Adam’s recollections since his creation echo Genesis 2—Milton incidentally suggests

the historical source of the differences between the two biblical accounts of creation. Most importantly, the events of Books 7 and 8—far from being idle speculation about what Adam and Eve did during the temporal gap between chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis—actually relocate the contents of Genesis 1 and 2 within a rationale for demonstrating God’s justice in preparing Adam and Eve against temptation.

Also placed within this narrative framework is Raphael’s lengthy account of how Satan and his companions fell from bliss--the “pre-terrestrial history.” At one level, the apparent biblical sources for the main narration of Books 5 and 6 would be the various references to Satan “falling” (for example, 2 Peter 2:4; Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:18; Rev. 20:1-2; Jude 6), but especially Revelation 12:7-9 which mentions a “war” in heaven. However, the amount of space given to the Satanic plotting and to the battle in heaven may seem out of all proportion to the relatively few passages in Scripture. Does the elaboration of the war in heaven result primarily from an accommodation to the traditional epic focus on the great deeds of battle? I shall argue instead that there is a deeper sense in which all of the main actions recounted by Raphael in the latter part of Book 5 also constitute a narrated reading of Psalm 2.

In thinking about how Milton undertakes such an intertextual reading of that Psalm, we need to keep in view two crucial elements of the epic context. First, with respect to the poem’s larger theodic objectives, not only does Raphael’s story provide Adam and Eve with an understanding of their enemy, but it also provides the closest glimpse that we, as readers, ever get of the ultimate origin of evil in Satan, at that moment when he “thought himself impair’d” (5.665). Second, within the immediate context of his story, Raphael explicitly foregrounds the status of his entire narration as one based on analogy, enabled, as he says, by

“lik’ning spiritual to corporal forms” (5.574). In effect, the epic makes an implicit statement about the capacities of human reason and spiritual truth which Milton makes explicitly in his tract, *Of Education*:

But because our understanding cannot in this body find it selfe but on
sensible things, nor arrive so cleerly to the knowledge of God and things
invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same
method is necessarily to be follow’d in all discreet teaching. (*CPW* 2:367-9)

Milton’s basic point here, as in the poem, is not, in itself, unusual and is shared to some degree by nearly all Christian accounts of theological apprehension. However, Milton situates the doctrine of analogy within a retelling of the Fall that recapitulates within itself the whole of the biblical metanarrative. He thus illuminates the doctrine of analogy itself. And in this case, the illumination is accomplished through connecting the doctrine of analogy with an intertextual reading of Psalm 2.

After Raphael has introduced his story, the first event that he describes is the Father’s announcement:

This day I have begot whom I declare
My only Son, and on this holy Hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand; your Head I him appoint;
And by myself have sworn to him shall bow
All knees in Heav’n, and shall confess him Lord. (5.603-8)

As a transparent paraphrase of Psalm 2:7, one of the key functions of this passage is to foreground the series of further intertextual connections to the Psalm in the rest of Raphael’s

story.⁶ The passage supplies a dramatized interpretation of the Psalm. The biblical passage itself then provides an implicit typological context for the rest of the epic plot into which the psalmic text has been woven.

Milton's paraphrase here transforms retroactively the passage that precedes it. The specific statement that "*this day* I have begot.../ My only Son" (6.603-4; italics added), gives a new importance to the temporal setting that Raphael has already given his story. Taken alone, a phrase like "on a day" is far too vague to constitute any kind of allusion. Indeed, within its immediate context, the phrase seems only to offer occasion for a parenthetical explanation of temporal accommodation, as the story begins:

As yet this World was not...
 ...when on a day
 (For Time, though in Eternity, appli'd
 To motion, measures all things durable
 By present, past and future) on such a day
 As Heav'n's great Year brings forth.... (5.577; 579-83)

As soon as we meet the obvious paraphrase of Psalm 2:7 a few lines later, however, we realize exactly what "day" was earlier being indicated, and its significance. In terms of the implied chronology of events depicted in the poem, this day is the first (Fowler 444), and as such suggests where to locate the character and basis of human understanding (that is, the Son) with respect to God's infinitude. Milton accommodates the Platonic understanding of eternity, but only by changing it to allow for motion in eternity (Fowler ed., *PL* 5.579-82n). But what enables and requires Milton to reject the static character of a Platonic eternity is his understanding of the biblical account of the Son's actions before the creation of the world.

The overall effect of this link, through the previous mention of “day,” is to foreground the analogical status of those events that are interposed with direct and indirect allusions to the rest of Psalm 2. The events recounted by Raphael include the beginning of Satan’s plot, his deceptive withdrawal of his angelic troops to the “northern” part of Heaven where he persuades them to join his rebellion, and finally the story of Abdiel, the one angel who speaks openly against the plot before leaving the camp. These events then set the stage for Raphael’s account of the war itself in Book 6.

Milton’s own translation of Psalm 2 is less compact than the Authorized version. However, his parenthetical insertion of the words “though ye rebel” strengthens the connection between this biblical text and the story of the angels’ fall from heaven (compare Dahlberg 23-24):

Why do the Gentiles tumult, and the nations
 Muse a vain thing, the kings of the earth upstand
 With power, and princes in their congregations
 Lay deep their plots together through each land,
 Against the Lord and his Messiah dear
 Let us break off, say they, by strength of hand
 Their bonds, and cast from us, no more to wear,
 Their twisted cords: he who in heaven doth dwell
 Shall laugh, the Lord shall scoff them, then severe
 Speak to them in his wrath, and in his fell
 And fierce ire trouble them; but I saith he
 Anointed have my king (though ye rebel)

On Sion my holy hill. A firm decree
 I will declare; the Lord to me hath said
 Thou art my Son I have begotten thee
 This day; ask of me, and the grant is made;
 As thy possession I on thee bestow
 The heathen, and as thy conquest to be swayed
 Earth's utmost bounds: them shalt thou bring full low
 With iron sceptre bruised, and them disperse
 Like to a potter's vessel shivered so.
 And now be wise at length ye kings averse
 Be taught ye judges of the earth; with fear
 Jehovah serve, and let your joy converse
 With trembling; kiss the Son lest he appear
 In anger and ye perish in the way
 If once his wrath take fire like fuel sere.
 Happy all those who have in him their stay.

(Psalm 2, Carey, ed. 402-3)

For the sake of comparison, the twelve verses of the Psalm can be grouped into five moments of dramatic development, each of which finds treatment in this part of the poem: 1) the hatching of a plot to subvert the Son's Kingship (vss. 1-3); 2) Divine laughter at the plot (vs. 4); 3) the announcement of Sonship and Kingship (anointing) (vss. 5-8); 4) the promise of judgement by means of the "iron rod" (vs. 9); 5) a final warning that implicitly offers the temporary option of return to fellowship with God (vss. 10-12). There are allusions to Psalm

2 throughout the epic (for example, the “iron rod” is mentioned several times). In Raphael’s narration, however, there is an exceptional integrity to the allusions when taken together. The only difference is the sequential order of the five dramatic moments. By beginning the story with the announcement of divine Sonship and Kingship, the epic places first in sequence what, in the Psalm, comes third (in the middle). Only later, when Satan shares his (initially) secret rejection of the Messiah with his “unwary” “Associate” (*PL* 5.695-6), do we find a direct parallel to the opening verses of the Psalm that describe the plot to subvert the divine Kingship (*PL* 5.666-717). That parallel is then followed by a dialogue between the Father and Son that explicitly mentions the “derision” (5.736) of God’s laughter at such plotting.

The sequence of the last two moments is also changed in the epic, so that Abdiel’s initial speech of opposition to Satan’s revolt echoes the Psalm’s final warning:

Cease then this impious rage,
And tempt not these; but hast’n to appease
Th’ incensed Father, and th’ incensed Son,
While Pardon may be found in time besought. (5.485-8)

To those familiar with Psalm 2:12, the evident allusion here is instructive. In isolation, the Psalmist’s admonition to “kiss the Son, lest he be angry” (AV) could be misconstrued as monarchical peevishness. But Milton’s dramatized setting for the allusion is especially striking, in that it provides the moment depicted in the Psalm with an explicit justness and intelligibility that remains only implicit in the biblical version. Only later in the poem, when it is finally clear to Abdiel that he is alone in his fidelity and must leave the group, does he then pronounce judgement on the others, specifically mentioning the “Iron rod” that they shall feel, having rejecting the “Golden Sceptre” (5.886-88). In this way, Milton elucidates the

Psalm by reversing the sequence of its last two moments.

Milton's re-ordering of the Psalmic events is crucial to the larger objectives of his poem, especially when he gives first place to the announcement of the Son's anointing. This central difference in sequence between the biblical order of the Psalm's components and Milton's arrangement of them is important because it entails a substantial difference in the implied causal relation between the events described. One of the characteristics shared by the Authorized Version and recent translations, as well as Milton's own translation of the Psalm, is a sense that the announcement of the Son's Kingship is a *response to* the subversive plot.⁷ But in the epic version, the sequence of events implies that Satan's plot, indeed his individual choice of rebellion, is a response to the Father's announcement. Rather than contradicting the Psalm, however, Milton's resequencing of events allows him to foreground something only implicit in the biblical text. Although the Psalmist suggests that the divine pronouncement itself is a response to the plot, the earlier initial description of that same conspiracy openly names the Lord's "anointed" as also the object of their malefaction (vs. 2). Within the biblical sequence of the Psalm, the recounted announcement of the Son's anointing is implicitly kept distinct from the event of anointing itself (that is, becoming King). But why then does the epic seem to collapse the announcement and the event into a single moment? In fact, it does not. Satan only perceived (when he "thought himself impair'd") the announcement as the event, rather than as a revelation of a preexisting Kingship. That announcement can thus be understood, not as the occasion of Satan's fall, but as prompting a disclosure of the pride in Satan's heart known until then only to God (compare Michael's observations, 6.262). At the same time, the disclosure of that long-hidden, though free, choice is prompted, not by the Son becoming the Son *per se*, but by the eternal Godhead revealing to the angels a further, more

intimate, sense in which they are made in the Divine image (compare *PL* 5.826-31; 841-45).⁸ Thus, rather than the poem being simply an interpretation of the Psalm (which it is), it also allows itself to be glossed by the Psalm.⁹

By resequencing the announcement of the Son's anointing within the chronology of the poem, Milton also implicitly emphasizes the independence of the Son's Kingship from the limitations of humanly understood chronology. If we keep in mind Raphael's opening discussion of "day," the comments there regarding analogy then become directly linked with the "day" in Psalm 2 as a *kairos* moment.¹⁰ This treatment of chronology follows also from the use of typology at work in this part of the poem. Already, the entire discussion above has presumed Milton's typological reading of the Davidic Psalm as a prophecy of Christ's ultimate supremacy, which places the Psalm's ultimate meaning beyond the chronological framework of the history of Israel. But why choose this particular biblical text as a source for the emplotment of Satan's rebellion? To understand that Milton's choice is not simply arbitrary, we need only to consider Revelation 12:3-9, which is the most direct biblical treatment of the war in heaven. In that passage we find already an intertextual practice that links the Son's "rod of iron" with the story of the angels being cast from heaven. But there again the implied chronology of events does not fit directly with either the Psalm or Raphael's version of events. Milton does go far beyond the oblique suggestions offered by either of these biblical passages, but his elaboration is often achieved through a mutually illuminating arrangement of their elements. Moreover, the apparent anachronicity of many imagistic sequences in the Book of Revelation provides further warrant for altering the sequence of the Psalmic events as they are woven into the angelic narrative.

It may, however, still seem that Milton's timing of the Father's actual announcement,

or revelation, of the Son implies some role in precipitating Satan's fall. But again we need to recall the larger context for this intertextual treatment of Psalm 2. Given the central role that Satan plays in the human fall, the episode is also of great interest to post-lapsarian human readers. In some respects, how readers understand Satan's fall will bear on how we understand the human fall that is central to Milton's theodicy. It is useful to keep in mind here the important distinction between a 'necessary' and a 'sufficient' cause. Insofar as being created at all is a necessary cause for any angel or human to be able to sin, God could be considered a necessary cause of evil. Because creatures are created good, however, existence in itself can never be a sufficient cause for sin. Moreover, because humans (and angels), as rational creatures, are able to choose actions freely, no number of necessary causes, apart from individual volition, can ever amount to a *sufficient* cause. This is why, as Dennis Danielson points out, there can never be a complete explanation of the fall "in terms of sufficient causation"—for to do so would eliminate free choice. If it were possible to demonstrate, on the basis of sufficient causation, why the Fall happened, then it would have been caused inexorably and would not have been freely chosen--thus making God the sufficient cause of evil (Danielson, *Milton's* 146). Stanley Fish makes a similar point in discussing the account of Satan's decision: "there can be no answer to the question, 'why does Satan fall?' for any answer will compromise the freedom of the will he exercises" (*Surprised* xxx-xxxi). In effect, those points in the poem which would apparently offer some explanation for Satan's choice, offer instead only narrated obscurity (for example, *PL* 5.659-66). In both cases (Danielson's and Fish's), however, the attempt to preserve the irreducibility of the epic's narration of free choice, against the excesses of a propositional or mechanistic rationalism, inadvertently implies a degree of division between the reason and will. Such a division Milton seems

particularly concerned to avoid.

Both of these accounts risk overlooking how Milton advances his theodicy from a bare assertion of minimal logical consistency to a more specific claim to plausible truth. To insist upon the possibility of prelapsarian human freedom does help to demonstrate that the Fall (and the ensuing human condition of moral and natural evil) could be the result of human choice for which God is not a sufficient cause. Given the details of the Genesis story, however, there can easily persist a feeling that for God to subject Adam and Eve to temptation at all, over and above their basic freedom to choose between good and evil, is somehow not quite fair. The injustice seems especially striking within the poem because of the immediate contrast with the case of Satan himself who did indeed fall freely without being tempted by someone else. In terms of direct and explicit statements, the poem depicts God as addressing this issue in two specific ways: first, by extending grace and hope of restoration to fallen humans; second, by sending Raphael to prepare Adam and Eve against temptation (that middle third of the epic). However, we could still ask, regardless of these precautions and remedies, why God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve at all. The epic also addresses this question, but it does so indirectly. In order to understand that indirection clearly, we need to consider the rest of the events in heaven as they are recounted in Books 5 and 6.

Notwithstanding the analogical status of Raphael's war story, the narration implies a specific ontology in which the reality of a given creature is relative to its participation in the ultimate reality of charity. Divine love is the origin and end, not just of the larger biblical story, but also of the very creatures whose inexhaustible horizon of understanding (despite finitude) is constituted by that divine conviviality. This aspect of the epic is foregrounded by the debate between Satan and Abdiel at the end of Book 5. Immediately before the allusion to

the final lines of Psalm 2, “Cease then this impious rage / ...but hasten to appease / The incensed Father, and the incensed Son ” (*PL* 5.845-6), Abdiel states clearly that his opposition to Satan’s rebellion is rooted in the distinction between creator and creature (5.822-25). Satan’s appeal to the other angels depends upon his claim that the Son is “equal” to them and does not deserve to rule over them (5.791-802). Abdiel responds:

Yet by experience taught we know how good,
 And of our good, and of our dignity
 How provident he is, how far from thought
 To make us less, bent rather to exalt
 Our happy state under one head more near
 United. But to grant it thee unjust
 That equal over equals monarch reign:
 Thy self though great and glorious dost thou count,
 Or all angelic nature joined in one,
 Equal to him begotten Son, by whom
 As by his Word the mighty Father made
 All things, even thee, and all the spirits of heaven
 By him created in their bright degrees
 Crowned them with glory, and to their glory named
 Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers,
 Essential powers. (5.826-41)

Despite its part in the larger dramatized dialogue regarding central theodic issues, the importance of this passage can easily be obscured by critical debate over Milton’s alleged

“Arianism.” Until Milton’s authorship of *De Doctrina* was questioned, all critics and annotators could take as a starting point the explicit claim that, although the Son is the agency of divine creation, the begetting of the Son is not from all eternity and therefore occurred in time (*CPW* 6: 206, 209). The above passage from the epic, which ends with a paraphrase of Colossians 1:16-17, could then be reconciled with the treatise by locating the occasion of the Son’s generation beyond the narrative framework, but within time. In this way, the epic and the theological treatise seem to be brought into agreement. However, *De Doctrina* ultimately denies any distinction between “creating” and “begetting,” maintaining that the Son is, in effect, simply created “first,” as it were (*CPW* 6:206). But the epic is consistent on this point, in a way that *De Doctrina* is not. The argument of the theological treatise consistently depends for its success upon suppressing the second half of John 1:3--“without him was not any thing made that was made”--which implies that the Son is uncreated (compare Bauman 104; *CPW* 6:206; 217; 301). That verse, however, only states more clearly what is already implied by the epic’s paraphrase of Col. 1:16, when Abdiel maintains that “by his Word [i.e., the Son] the mighty Father made / *All things*” (5.835-6, italics added). In short, the epic remains open to the biblical implication that the Son is not “made” at all, while the treatise rejects such a claim outright. This distinction is not simply a matter of general theological background for understanding Abdiel’s speech. Rather, this difference between the two works is crucial to the epic because of its bearing within the larger theodic debate that Satan engages throughout the poem. The key point is that Abdiel clearly places the Son on the “creator” side of the division between creator and creatures. But if the epic seriously represents the position of the treatise, then Satan would be right to insist that the Son is really just another creature like the angels. If the Son is created, then maybe the whole angelic host could be equal to him

in authority or power. Of course, that is precisely the claim that Abdiel sees as incoherent because he understands the Son to be the means of all divine creation. Even the logic of Satan's own argument acknowledges the unity of the Father and Son: Satan does not simply deny that the Son is his creator, but must deny that he was ever created at all. Satan thereby makes himself out to be what the Son is--uncreated and divine.

Given Raphael's argument, Satan's refutation must depend upon denying, not only that the Son is his creator, but also that the Father is. But immediate implications follow from a claim to being "self-begot":

Who saw
 When this creation was? Remember'st thou
 Thy making, while the maker gave thee being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quickening power, when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native heaven, ethereal sons.
 Our puissance is our own, our own right hand
 Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
 Who is our equal: then thou shalt behold
 Whether by supplication we intend
 Address, and to begirt the almighty throne
 Beseeching or besieging. (5.856-69)

The violence of the main action that then follows in Book 6 is thus a response to Satan's (free)

demand that God prove himself on those terms. Despite the illogical deductions, the overall development of Satan's argument is internally consistent in at least one respect.¹¹ Having denied that the reality of his own existence depends upon the creative act of the Father working through the Son in relationship, Satan's alternative story of spontaneous generation entails also a different ontology. That ontology, in turn, underwrites an ethic of brute force, which is how Satan demands that God meet his challenge. Thus, in a highly compressed form, this passage demonstrates how the originary dimensions of a metanarrative can give rise to an ontology, an ethic, and a political program.

So the war in heaven "unfolds" (by temporal analogy) in Book 6, as a divine response to the demand of free creatures. At one level, the war might seem the greatest obstacle to my claim that typological coherence allows Milton's biblicism to transform the epic genre from underwriting an ontology of violence to that of *caritas*. Clearly, it could be argued that the epic battles of Book 6 are simply descriptions of warfare and its havoc typical of the genre. So where is the typology in Michael's smiting of Satan? In fact the story might best be designated "meta-typological," but however designated, the account of the war is clearly biblicist in its detail and in the structure of its action. If we consider the battles in some detail, we can understand how the explicit dialectical engagement between the characters and the biblicist emplotment work together to advance the theodic claims of the epic.

In keeping with the epic norms for describing battle engagement, before Abdiel or Michael meet Satan in battle, we are presented with speeches that verbalize the respective interior states of the combatants. But rather than simply externalize a subjective state, the dialectical engagements provide occasion for an explicit treatment of the theodic concerns that are treated indirectly through the biblicist emplotment. The speeches of the warring angels

take up explicitly the question of how creaturely reason, faith, and perseverance relate to divine omniscience, omnipotence and love. As the first day of battle begins, Satan is described sitting “in his sun-bright chariot,” “exalted as a god” and as an “Idol of majesty divine” (6.99-103). Abdiel reacts to the sight by noticing the incongruence of Satan’s majestic appearance:

O Heaven! That such resemblance of the highest
 Should yet remain, where faith and realty
 Remain not; wherefore should not strength and might
 There fail where virtue fails, or weakest prove
 Where boldest; though to sight unconquerable?
 His puissance, trusting in th’ Almighty’s aid,
 I mean to try, whose Reason I have tried
 Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just,
 That he who in debate of truth hath won,
 Should win in arms, in both disputes alike
 Victor; though brutish that contest and foul,
 When Reason hath to deal with force, yet so
 Most reason is that Reason overcome. (6.114-126)

As readers of Book 1 of the epic (especially 1.84-87), we know that over time the appearance of Satan and his companions will change to correspond more accurately to their state of infidelity. But the consequences of sin require time for their unfolding (at least for human understanding). It could be argued that Abdiel is simply mistaken to think “That he who in debate of truth hath won, / Should win in arms” (122-23). But in the same way that deception

and sin are intelligibly unfolded only through temporal narration, the victory of truth is only actualized over time. This is why it is important not to be misled by the failure of the good angels to vanquish the rebels in the first two days of battle. On the third day Abdiel's claim is realized by the one who is now the head of the angelic host, the one in whom they are all united. Thus, critics who insist upon the complete inefficacy of the good angels in battle, whether for comedic reasons of style (for example, Stein 23 ff.), or voluntarist theological reasons (for example, Fish, *Surprised* 180-96), miss both of these issues because of a skewed emphasis. The Son's final victory does not denigrate the efforts of the good angels because the Son is now the anointed head of the angelic host. Moreover, Satan is eventually defeated, whatever may be the immediate creaturely perceptions within time. As we shall see, both the ensuing dialogue of this passage and the accompanying biblicism emphasize a specific duality in temporal narration: the unfolding of sin and the unfolding of faith. On the one hand, time is required for the unfolding of sin's consequences, consequences that are necessary for the dignity of creaturely freedom to be meaningful or intelligible. On the other hand, given such a condition, the virtue of the faithful inheres in their perseverance in trusting God over time, despite the difficulty of immediate circumstances.

In Abdiel's interior monologue, the word "reason" is used four times. Through "debate of truth" he has found Satan's "reason" to be "unsound and false," clearly indicating a substantive sense of the word, rather than a functional relation (though that may be included). Furthermore, he observes that although reason can respond to force using force, coercion is external to its nature:

Though brutish that contest and foul,
When Reason hath to deal with force, yet so

Most reason is that Reason overcome. (6.124-26)

Because reason, as described by Abdiel, is inherently peaceful, the meaning of these lines unfolds in three different senses. First, the lines suggest simply the appropriate character (reasonableness) of the eventual victory of the faithful over Satan's violent rebellion. Second, the statement indicates that Satan's use of force belies his previous rejection of true reason. Third, this strong invocation of "reason" at the outset of the battle can be understood as a prophecy of the Son's final victory (as *logos*). In this respect, the individual angelic rational capacity can be seen to bear a synecdochal relation to the ontic-*ratio* of the Son. And as a true prophet should, Abdiel simply proclaims the message that he had already been given by God, who said to him:

...the easier conquest now

Remains thee, aided by this host of friends [i.e., including the Son],

Back on thy foes more glorious to return

Than scorned thou didst depart, and to subdue

By force, who reason for their law refuse,

Right reason for their law, and for their king

Messiah, who by right of merit reigns. (6.37-43)

Even in Abdiel's speech, reason is not separable from faith, as his choice of right reason and the Son leads him to proceed in battle "trusting in the Almighty's aid" (119). Thus the central paradox of the war is this: Satan's use of force reveals his rejection of reason which is inextricable from the inherently peaceful *ratio* of the Son's messiahship. Nevertheless, the Son's use of force in response to that violence does not compromise the peaceful integrity of reason itself because that response is just and fitting to the actions and demands of creatures

whose freedom entails the dignity of their actions having consequences.¹² This is not to suggest that Milton advocates pacificism (compare Fowler on Empson [54], Fowler ed., *PL* 6.122-23n). Instead, it suggests a theory of just war. But even to broach such questions may miss the point of the war story. We need to keep in mind the analogical status of the narration. The root issue here is one of ontology, an understanding of what is ultimately real. Of course, any given ontology, whether that of violence or *caritas*, has unavoidable ethical and political implications, but those are not derived from a simple transference of events from heaven to earth—as though Satan’s throne were simply equivalent to the throne of an idolatrous English King. Rather, the ontology of *caritas* enables an understanding of the need for perseverance in trusting God and of the self-destruction of the wicked, yet without simplistic reductions to present political divisions.

As the war in heaven unfolds, the elements of dialogue, dramatic action, biblical intertextuality, and theodic purpose are woven together with increasing density. Abdiel is the first to engage Satan in battle, and he does so by stepping out of ranks to confront and address Satan directly. As the thoughts of his “undaunted heart” (114) change to open speech, he raises directly the question of God’s omniscience and omnipotence:

Proud, art thou met? Thy hope was to have reached
 The highth of thy aspiring unopposed,
 The throne of God unguarded, and this side
 Abandoned at the terror of thy power
 Or potent tongue; fool, not to think how vain
 Against the omnipotent to rise in arms;
 Who out of smallest things could without end

Have raised incessant armies to defeat
 Thy folly; or with solitary hand
 Reaching beyond all limit at one blow
 Unaided could have finished thee, and whelmed
 Thy legions under darkness. (6.131-43)

According to the poem's conception of God's omniscience, Satan's attempt to mount a surprise attack against God is genuinely laughable. But why then does God seem to let events happen at all, as though they were unknown to him? As revealed even by the terms of such a question, the real issue is not so much omniscience as omnipotence. For the root of the human reflex that drives theodic debate is the desire that God not simply know about evil and suffering, but actually do something. Thus, it is not surprising that without transition Abdiel immediately moves his attention from God's knowledge to God's power. But why then does God not simply do as Abdiel suggests? Why not simply annihilate Satan and the rebels? Why involve all these other angels in a seemingly pointless battle?

But thou seest
 All are not of thy train; there be who faith
 Prefer, and piety to God, though then
 To thee not visible, when I alone
 Seemed in the world erroneous to dissent
 From all: my sect thou seest, now learn too late
 How few sometimes may know, when thousands err.
 (6.142-48)

Once again, the passage reiterates the difference between appearance and reality (in the past),

but that difference is not between the perception of “two worlds,” as in Platonic allegory. Rather, the difference is between a perceived situation and a reality that is only understood over time. This suggests again the way that truth is revealed precisely as the consequences of sin and fidelity are allowed to take their due course. More explicitly, Abdiel indicates that God’s decision not simply to annihilate the rebels “at one blow / Unaided” (140–41), is to allow the faithful angels the opportunity to demonstrate to themselves and to one another their fidelity to God. Obviously God already knows who will freely choose to be faithful and who will not, but having made creatures who can experience the discovery of self-knowledge, he is committed to allowing them the opportunity to declare and manifest their allegiance in accord with their creaturely capacities. At a further level, the invocation of terms from ecclesiastical debate, like “sect” and “dissent,” also implies Milton’s Protestant version of the meaning of the “fellowship of the saints.” Whether the saints be originally angelic or human, they are all, amid infinite variety and irreducible particularity, defined as holy by their fidelity over time.

We find the same emphasis upon this dual aspect of temporal duration—the judgement of consequences and the need for perseverance—in the indirect use of biblical texts to describe this heavenly war. When Abdiel actually first strikes Satan, causing him to fall back “ten paces huge” (193), the description of Satan’s vast bulk staggering backwards is then elaborated into an extended simile:

...as if on earth

Winds under ground or waters forcing way

Sidelong, had pushed a mountain from his seat

Half sunk with all his pines. (195–98)

Although such similes are typical of epic description, this particular simile alludes to the biblical faith that moves mountains (Matt. 17:20; 21:21) and thus adds to Raphael's repeated association with faithfulness. But within the poem, the image of a moving mountain also foreshadows the events of the next day's battle, as well as the imagery used to describe the rebel angels' response to their defeat on the third day. In the latter context, Raphael mentions that, as the Son rode his chariot "O'er shields and helms, and helmed heads," the enemy "wished the mountains now might be again / Thrown on them as a shelter from his ire" (840-43). As annotators observe, these words are a clear allusion to Revelation 6:16 which describes those on earth at the time of the final wrath of God, "[saying] to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." However, St. John is, at that point, repeating an image used by Hosea (10:8) and by Christ (Luke 23:30). Hosea recounts the rebellion of an idolatrous nation of Israel who prefers a human king (10:1-3). When they are finally judged for sin, Hosea predicts that "they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us" (10:8). Jesus similarly predicts the judgement of Israel, and specifically the city of Jerusalem, using the same phrases. The context for Jesus's prophecy (within Luke's Passion narrative) is especially striking. Having been subjected to beating and scourging, condemned to death by crucifixion, Jesus is on his way to Golgotha, when he turns to those who "bewailed and lamented him" and says:

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and

to the hills, Cover us. (Luke 23:28-30)

In each of these three biblical passages, the image is used to convey a sense of the tremendous horror of God's final judgement of Sin. It is not necessary to describe here how Raphael's description of the Son in glory (6.746-800) and in final judgement (6.824-66) derives from a combination of prophetic biblical passages (esp. Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Revelation) (Lieb, *Poetics* 292-312). The key point is that the preference for being crushed by mountains is to give some sense, by comparison, of the subjective experience of those under judgement. At the same time, the invocation of this phrase of judgement that resonates across biblical texts adds to the epic's signification of the events that have already happened on the second day.

In the second day of battle we find the movement of mountains actually dramatized in the action of the poem. In response to Satan's primeval invention of gunpowder and cannon fire, the faithful angels begin taking up whole mountains to cast on the rebels (635-61). The battle then continues such that "hills amid the air encountered hills / Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire / That underground they fought in dismal shade; / Infernal noise" (664-67). The rebel angels are already, in a literal sense, "subdued" (sub-ducere). And although only the King of the angelic host can drive the rebels out, the actions of the faithful angels clearly presage the infernal and subterranean character of the final judgement. At one level, this scene also alludes to the war between the gods, described by Hesiod (*Theogony* 711-20), not only taking the latter as a "pagan type of the angelic rebellion" (Fowler 2nd ed., *PL* 6.639-66n), but even suggesting a possible source for the pagan story. More importantly, the dramatized allusion to Hesiod's story is situated in Milton's epic so that its meaning is clearly shaped by the biblical glosses provided on the first and third days of battle. In this respect, the image of the moving mountains on the second day of battle embodies both suggested

meanings: the power of those acting in faith, and the horror of sin's consequences in final judgement. Thus Milton uses this particular image to dramatize the same opportunity and challenge afforded by the unfolding of time that were addressed explicitly in the debates between the angels: the power of faithful perseverance, and the judgement of consequences. Moreover, Milton does this through a continual shift in signification, as the mountain image is invoked differently on each day of battle.

But why would Milton choose this specific image if it simply reiterates the point already made explicitly by the characters' dialogue? Earlier we observed the context for Jesus' words in Luke 23: 28-30. By speaking those words on his way to the cross, Jesus pronounced that judgement on the first of the three days that he was to spend in the tomb. The sequence of the three-day war in the epic obviously suggests a parallel with Christ's three days in the tomb. It would be a mistake to equate the two events, however, or to see one simply as a version of the other, whether "allegorical" (Hunter, *Visitation* 108) or "meta-allegorical" (Martin, *Ruins* 201-4).¹³ The three-day symmetry is a numerical signification of the Son's victory over sin in both cases. The two sequences are clearly distinct, however, and need to be understood as such—in the situations they address, in their means of unfolding, and in their ends. The war in heaven addresses the case of angels who knowingly chose to wage war against their maker. Battle is a fitting mode of response to the demand that omnipotence prove itself by force. The war thus achieves justly the goal of restoring peace to those angels who remain faithful. By contrast, the incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ address the case of humans who have freely chosen to reject the will of their maker, but have done so under the influence of deception (*PL* 1.131). The work of the Son in response to that situation specifically eschews association with military power, by requiring him instead to be

a victim of violence in order to bear the consequence of sin (death) for others. This allows humans the hope of redemption without over-riding the free will of either humans or fallen angels, and showing at the same time that even God's weakness is stronger than the greatest human or demonic power. Keeping in mind the contrast between these two narrations, we can see the importance of the repetition of the three days, in that both stories proclaim the same Christ who is victorious. The poem does not need to mention here the incarnational side of the parallel three-day sequence because Milton could trust his readers to be familiar with the Easter story. Instead, the war in heaven presents a graphic image of Christ in Judgement and of the horror experienced by those under that judgement. The three-day symmetry reminds the readers who the central character of the Easter story really is—that man covered with blood, carrying a cross on his way to death by torture, who told the Daughters of Jerusalem not to weep for him. By weaving the paraphrase of Luke 23:28-30 into the consummate third day of heavenly warfare, Milton emphasizes that the man on the cross is also the King of glory—that there is only one Messiah, both fully transcendent, terrifying in just judgement, and fully incarnate, who lovingly suffers death.

But why is this theodically relevant? The thrice-repeated image of moving mountains is important also to the signification of the temporal demarcation of the three days of battle. The three-day symmetry (war in heaven; Christ in tomb) helps show the differences between the particularities of the two situations and the series of interactions. The events do not “correspond” allegorically; rather, the typological symmetry allows a connection between the two sequences specifically because of their differences. And that connection (substantively and formally) is important to Milton's theodic objective. The war in heaven shows that divine love, with the freedom and consequences that it entails, can be intelligible to unfallen humans

and is indeed real, completely apart from death. While fully admitting, as we find in books 3 and 12, the importance of sacrificial suffering and death in response to the specifically human version of the problem of sin, *Paradise Lost* does not make death the ultimate standard by which divine love is judged, nor is death ultimately integral to *caritas*. Conceptually, this point is no less crucial to theodicy than the understanding of human freedom. In order to argue intelligibly that God is not the cause of evil, divine love must not be ontologically dependent upon the existence of evil, or death, even as a negation. The idea of sacrificial death cannot be presumed to be inherent in *caritas*.¹⁴ In this respect, we can also see the importance of the fact that the participants in the war are all angels. Although both parties consist of “immortal” creatures who are, in a sense, indestructible, what they all risk losing, protecting, or celebrating is the joy of true fellowship with their maker and with one another. In theological terms, of course, such a breach in relationship is precisely what constitutes genuine “death.” But the key point here is that the gift of that intercommunion ontologically precedes all else. Thus the primal conviviality in which the angels share (and which some choose later to reject freely) does not depend upon death for its reality or its supreme expression. It is important not to misunderstand this point. Milton is not questioning the repeated biblical point that the post-lapsarian human experience of God’s love is dependent upon the work of Christ. Nor does he question the importance, for example, of martyrdom as part of Christian faithfulness in a fallen world. Rather, his concern is to encourage precisely such fidelity by pointing out that the reality of *caritas* does not depend upon death, even in a supplementary way. The three-day symmetry ensures that the ultimate horizon for a thoroughly biblical understanding of Christ’s Passion is not death but the free convivial intimacy of divine love.

We can now return to the earlier theodic question why God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve at all. Although the answer is not properly separable from the entire poem in all its specificity, we have considered enough of Book 6 to understand that the answer is, in a word, *caritas*. The war in heaven provides some account of what divine love really involves, but the meaning continues to unfold throughout the poem because *caritas* is, in effect, the imperative that issues from the biblical metanarrative. In reduced terms, it involves the giving of oneself to another in such a way that allows the other to respond in true freedom—thus involving risk and the reality of consequences. The practice of *caritas* will, of course, differ drastically between different kinds of beings. The difference is greatest when the practice of charity by any creature is compared with that by an omniscient God. But for rational creatures at least, an understanding of *caritas* and its consequences is always borne within a story.

Whether we consider Adam's narration of his first conversation with God, the Protoevangelium after the Fall, the Hebrew covenant of Exodus, or the gospel stories, in each case the narrative embodies a divinely initiated relationship that allows humans the genuine freedom to respond in kind or to turn away as they choose. Typology enables those stories to be linked into a single biblical metanarrative in such a way that the origin and ultimate end remains this self-giving *caritas*.

The centrality of *caritas* to Milton's theodic undertaking thus bears upon the issue of competing metanarratives in an unexpected way. Notwithstanding Satan's fallen condition and his self-deception, God's love still entails that his actions have, within limits, the dignity of consequences. In effect, to believe that God's allowance of active temptation is somehow unfair to humans is to presume, not only that humans can know better than their maker what they can withstand, but also that coercion rather than *caritas* is the ultimate reality. This issue

is, in some ways, the crux of most arguments against theodicy, because most often they hinge upon the claim that, if there were a God who was truly good and omnipotent, he must have prevented anything like the Fall, or evil in general, from ever happening. The root issues here become especially apparent if we consider again briefly the obscurity in the description of the origin of Satan's rebellion. Most striking is Satan's apparent failure to grasp the reality of divine omniscience, when he seems to think that he can keep his plans a secret from God (5.682-83), which invites recollection of the divine laughter of Psalm 2:4. Indeed, Satan seems more concerned to conceal his plans only from other angels and rather presumes that he need not allow for God's omniscience, given the degree of absolute freedom to which he and the other angels are accustomed. But why was Satan allowed to tempt even one other angel, much less humans, or even to speak about his plans at all? Why did God not simply destroy Satan during the first moment that his heart genuinely turned to rebellion? It certainly would have made for a much simpler story and made things easier for humans. Of course, that is not what happens in the story, but the very appeal of such a "solution" for readers indicates how much we are prone to believe in the primacy of coercion rather than *caritas*.

As the apparent exceptions that prove the rule, the precise moments in the epic at which God permits and precludes violence illustrate the point that the free intercommunion of *caritas*, rather than coercion, is the ultimate reality in *Paradise Lost*. As noted earlier, during the war in Heaven, Satan and his troops are answered by violence specifically because they have made their demands within those terms. They claimed supreme force as the basis for supreme rule and then demanded that God's rule be vindicated by a violence greater than their own. As the Son explains:

That they may have their wish, to try with me

In battle which the stronger proves, they all,
 Or I alone against them, since by strength
 They measure all, of other excellence
 Not emulous, nor care who them excels;
 Nor other strife with them do I vouchsafe.

(*PL* 6.818-23)

However, once the angels are answered in this way, and though they are in bondage to sin and its consequences, their own actions continue to have consequences, precisely because of the *caritas* which enabled their initial creation. By contrast, a crucial point in the story where God specifically does not permit violence is in the passage we cited at the outset of this chapter, where Satan is not permitted to use violence to overthrow Adam and Eve (*PL* 5.242). He is allowed to tempt them, but not to coerce. Both aspects of his condition are entailed by charity, as it permits Satan's plan of temptation the dignity of consequences, yet restrains the actions so that those who would suffer the consequences are not forced to endure more than they can bear. But in both respects, *caritas* rather than coercion is primary.

We are surprised then, not by sin, but by a love that is deeper than sin, and more real and more powerful than any coercion. In this way, the epic demonstrates the necessary relation between the logical components of its theodic claim, its use of biblical metanarrative through typology, and the life of *caritas*. In this way the poem implies that an argument against its central theodic claims—whether God's existence or attributes, the reality of the created world, or the existence of evil—must also entail a competing metanarrative whose imperatives embody something other than *caritas*. But understanding theodicy in this way also suggests that a logically sound argument that omits *caritas* is no less flawed. The

character of such a theodic claim must, on its own terms, involve more than a purely logical demonstration in order for it to be an authentic work of *caritas*. This point brings us back to consider the reason Milton undertook to address theodic issues through the indirect means of poetic narration: the form allows an engagement of the affections, an engagement that must be attempted because *caritas* encompasses more than intellectual apprehension. A theodicy is not, properly speaking, usually concerned with the “practical” problem of evil, regarding, for example, how one should deal with vices like “pride, hatred, cruelty, deceit, adultery, envy and covetousness”; rather, its concern is with the “theological,” or intellectual, problem of evil (Danielson, *Milton's* 2). But just as theological orthodoxy without authentic faith can leave one “a heretick in the truth” (*CPW* 2:543), Milton understood that intellectual theism is simply not genuine Christian faith. In effect, Milton’s expansion of theodicy, to include an album of literary genres and the fullest possible range of human experience, follows from his confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, to address the most important human needs. The next stage of this analysis considers how Milton’s biblicism allows his poem to address the relation between reason and revelation, even as it engages readerly affections.

Notes

¹ Danielson discusses some of the similarities between Milton's use of the "Free Will Defence" in his epic and recent attempts by twentieth-century philosophers, most notably Alvin Plantinga, to demonstrate that belief in a good, all-powerful creator-God can be logically consistent with admitting the existence of evil in the world (*Milton's* 91-101; 104-6). However, most theodicies also undertake something more than Plantinga's carefully circumscribed avoidance of contradiction (7). Although Danielson emphasizes the contrasting fact "that Milton's is a largely poetic theodicy" (10), his argument, though obviously literary in its focus, does not seem to consider that Milton may have chosen the indirect means of a biblical epic specifically because he thought it the best way, not just rhetorically, but also conceptually, to address theodic issues. Compare Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* 164-93, as well as his more extended argument in *God, Freedom and Evil*.

² A similar question arises when we consider that Milton describes his own poem as "[pursuing] / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" (*PL* 1.15-16). Given the long-standing tradition of theological reflection and imaginative writing on the problem of evil, neither the topic nor the narrative mode are unique. What sets *Paradise Lost* apart is that its demonstrative and imaginative dimensions are inseparable from its theodic objectives, and that it achieves that integration through a biblicist typological strategy.

³ Catherine Martin observes that too often critics have confused Milton's revisioning of epic and poetic representation with his theodic objectives (7). Even admitting Martin's claims, however, the other extreme of treating the two elements only in isolation from one each other hardly seems like a promising solution. Rather, only by treating the two elements together can they be properly distinguished from each other so that the mutuality of their

operation can be properly discerned.

⁴ The most important theological treatment of the relation between typology and metanarrative is Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. It should be added that Milton integrates elements of classical mythology into his poem using a similar strategy. This is effected by embedding those elements within the interpretive imperatives of the biblical metanarrative's trajectory, not only as demonic deceptions, whose origin and end is something other than *caritas*, but also as quasi-typological shadows. For accounts of typology in Milton studies, see note 1 in section 3 of this chapter below, as well as note 2 in section 4.

⁵ Throughout this account of *Paradise Lost*, I use the term *caritas* interchangeably with "charity," in order to indicate divine love. I do so because the Latin term is actually closer to Milton's use of the English word "charity" than our present usage of the same sound. The Latin cognate is less misleading for readers today, specifically because it does not bear the strong connotations of tax-deductible receipts that the English word has acquired since Milton's day. Thus, although I use them interchangeably throughout this study, the use of the Latin term serves as a reminder that, even when deploying the English word "charity," it should be understood in its seventeenth-century theological sense, as the divine love that is for Milton the highest virtue as well as the basis for his ontology.

⁶ In the notes to his edition of *Paradise Lost*, Alastair Fowler observes that these lines regarding the Son's begetting (5.603-6) "are quite unnecessarily" "among the most controversial in the poem" (713n). The controversy to which Fowler refers is the debate over the extent to which Milton may be correctly described as advocating an Arian Christology.

However, because those lines are such an obvious paraphrase of Psalm 2:7, the real question is whether Milton understood that verse as a proof-text supporting Arianism.

⁷ I make this claim recognizing that in simply translating the Psalm into English there is a degree of unavoidable narrowing from the lexical and semantic range of the Hebrew. Nevertheless, the consistent sense of causal connection borne in this passage by a wide range of translations leads me to think that the specificity is sufficiently warranted.

⁸ As I explain in Chapter 3, my point here must not be misunderstood to imply necessarily that Milton was an orthodox Trinitarian. It is worth noting, however, that those who insist on Milton's outright Arianism do so on the basis of using *De Doctrina* as a gloss on the poem (for example, the treatise states that the Son was begotten in time [CPW 6:206 & 209]). Completely aside from the debate over the treatise, I suggest that one of the functions of the epic's complex narrative treatment of time in relation to eternity, embodied as it is through an indirect biblicist textual practice, is to show the theological difficulties that inhere to demonstrative assertions like those in the treatise.

⁹ In his essay, "The War in Heaven: The Exaltation of the Son," William Hunter covers some of the same biblical and theological material discussed here, but with several important differences: first, Hunter's essay predates his own doubts about the authorship of *De Doctrina*; second, Hunter does not link Milton's Christology directly to his theodic concerns through his biblicism as the present argument does; third, I contend that this part of the epic involves an integrated series of specific allusions to the whole of Psalm 2. The exceptional unity of the allusions and paraphrases taken together then provides the typological context which makes explicit the distinction between the Son's anointing and the announcement of that anointing. Compare Revard, *War* 74-85; 99-102.

¹⁰ I use the Greek term *kairos* to indicate simply a moment at which a typological connection can be made between a “type” and its fulfillment in a later figure. Such a fulfillment of a prophetic prefiguration emphasizes a connection between the narrated events that stands in contrast to a humanly demonstrable causal relationship that is normally understood to operate through the duration of time, or *chronos* (J.S. Hill, *Infinity* 69-77). Two further points are worth noting. First, the contrast between *chronos* and *kairos*, which should not be hypostasized, is directly related to the corresponding conceptions of time as eternally cyclical or as eschatological and involving an ultimate telos for all creation (74-77). Second, I emphasize the “connection” between narrative events rather than the figures per se, because I realize that Milton’s poetic deployment of typology in much of *Paradise Lost* effectively runs that connection “backwards” with respect to any implied biblical chronology. In this way, Milton often presents what amounts to an “implied antetype” by following the logic of the biblical text behind its own surface

¹¹ Stanley Fish attempts to characterize Satan’s argument here (*PL* 5.853-60) as a kind of “classic statement of rational empiricism” that is nevertheless “grounded in an originary act of faith” (*Problem* 244; 247). But Fish’s contention misses the point in two important ways. First, Satan’s argument, in so far as it is one at all, is not empirical, but is rather the opposite: an obviously specious assertion that depends upon deriving a positive claim (that angels were self-caused) based on the non-existence of any evidence whatsoever. Fish is correct, in that what counts for Satan as “evidence” seems to be limited exclusively to personal observation. This kind of facile “empiricism” (as Fish calls it) is indeed a problem, in that it confuses the historical claims of personal recollection about specific past events with the generalized (and repeatable) character of empirical inquiry. The basic logical error is yet more obvious: Satan

argues from ignorance to a positive claim of self-begetting. In a second, and more important, respect Fish's handling of this passage is also misleading about its broader implications. He uses this dialogue as one of several examples to demonstrate where *Paradise Lost* emphasizes the priority of faith over reason, to show, in effect, that "reasoning can't get started until a first premise is put in place" (*Problem* 245). As far as it goes, such an assertion is certainly true for Milton and the theological tradition he inhabits. But that claim is precisely only half of the paradox of "faith seeking understanding," and to make it an exclusive point of emphasis is to miss the whole paradox. Along with the understanding that reasoning only proceeds by means of a prior trust, there is the claim that genuine faith must include thought, in order for it to be genuine faith. In effect, although faith recognizes an incompleteness in human reasoning, a certain minimal degree of understanding must be included in any deliberate choice to trust, in order to discern what or whom is to be trusted, or what that trust involves, or even that an act of trust is called for. By completely omitting one half of the paradox of faith seeking understanding, Fish obscures the reason for Milton to undertake writing a theodicy in the first place and his basis for doing so without self-accused impiety. *Paradise Lost* does certainly point out that faith of some kind is unavoidable, but that gesture only unfolds within the understanding that genuine faith is inextricable from some degree of thought.

¹² After observing how Milton's account of reason in *Paradise Lost* unfolds an ontology of peace, I have noticed a striking similarity between the epic and the claims of John Milbank in *Theology and Social Theory*. Milbank argues that the "thread of continuity between antique reason and modern secular reason" is "the theme of original violence," or primal chaos, "which must be tamed by the stability and self-identity of reason" (5). He goes on to demonstrate how the same ontology of violence shapes postmodern thinking, against

which stands a Christian ontology rooted in charity (see esp. 278-325; 380-434). Thus, the diffuse postmodern anxieties about the “totalizing” tendencies of metanarratives are largely misplaced, in that every action that has consequences beyond oneself effectively implies a totalizing metanarrative. The real question is whether the unavoidable impingement of human actions upon the lives of others ascribes primacy to *caritas* or to something else. I contend that the similarities between Milton and Milbank are rooted in a shared attempt to think through the implications of the Incarnation, and biblical revelation more generally, as a challenge to both ancient and modern accounts of reason.

¹³ There is much in my analysis of this passage that agrees with Martin’s argument in *The Ruins of Allegory* (especially 201-32), but I do not follow her use of the term “meta-allegory” specifically because the war in heaven does not, even as Martin points out, correspond in an allegorical way to another kind of reality. Again, this difference follows from the fact Martin allows “allegory” a wider lexical range than I do. But the difference is also more substantial. As Martin states, in describing how the war in heaven can be interpreted as psychomachia:

The human history that emerges from these episodes then requires a self-referential interrogation rather than a passive ritual or homiletic assimilation of the meaningfulness of its scriptural truths. Rather than a mere typology of God’s providential design, the reader is confronted with a far more problematic and advanced hermeneutics of schema and correction. (205)

My point is that, rather than presenting a “mere” “providential design” (if such a thing could ever be imagined as simple), Milton’s use of typology, and its attendant primacy of narration, is precisely what enables the complex “hermeneutics of schema and correction.” That

Paradise Lost never implies any of the narratives, whether set in heaven or earth, to be reducible simply to static abstractions is a result of this central function of typology.

¹⁴ In *The Word Made Strange*, Milbank points out that for Christians to make self-sacrifice *per se* the supreme expression of divine love is to risk unwitting participation in the gnostic logic of William Blake's axiom: "Mercy could be no more / If there was nobody poor" (219). In effect, "every act of mercy that, in so far as it rejoices in itself [as a good], rejoices, also in its occasion [that is, the poverty]" (219). Milbank's argument contrasts the "five marks of morality" ("Reaction, Sacrifice, Complicity with Death, Scarcity and Generality") with the "five notes of Christianity" ("Gift, End of Sacrifice, Resurrection, Plenitude and Confidence") (219). In a telling elaboration of how the "notes" work together, Milbank also shows the similarity between his account and Milton's, in that they are both susceptible to being misunderstood as antinomian as a result of their attempts to offer an alternative to gnostic dualism:

To believe in plenitude is to believe in the already commenced and yet-to-come restoration of Creation as Creation. Within this belief alone, as Nietzsche failed to perceive, one can cease to be 'moral'. This belief is belief in the resurrection. As resurrection cancels death, and appears to render murder non-serious, it restores no moral order, but absolutely ruins the possibility of any moral order whatsoever. That is to say, any reactive moral order, which presupposes the absoluteness of death. For the Christian, murder is wrong, not because it removes something irreplaceable, but because it repeats the Satanic founding act of instituting death, or the very possibility of irreplaceability, and absolute loss. But in the [commenced and yet-to-come] resurrected order there

need be no law against such Satanism, because it is so manifestly senseless....

For in the resurrected order...the occasion for the exercise of death-presupposing virtue (as Paul says) drops away, and only charity—gift and counter-gift—remain. (229)

5.2 The Reason and Revelation of Heavenly Warfare

Given Milton's confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, one of the persistent problems in understanding the operation of Milton's biblicism in *Paradise Lost* results from its often having several functions at once. Each function of signification is consistent with the objective of faith seeking understanding, but the memory, will, and understanding are understood to be engaged all at once. The difficulty is that a clear exposition of this simultaneous engagement can only be unfolded in sequence here. The rest of this analysis of the war in heaven will therefore proceed in three stages. In order to understand how Milton's biblicism circumvents a potential antinomy between functional and substantive accounts of reason, our first concern is to clarify the nature of Milton's theodic project in relation to the main conceptual challenges of Christian apologetics. The second task is to consider in some detail Milton's use of Revelation 12, the major biblical source for the story of the war in heaven. We have already begun to see how Milton's substantive view of reason compels him to advance the claims of this theodicy beyond a mere claim to logical consistency. The final step here will show how his use of Revelation 12 advances his poem still further beyond the customary intellectual objectives of theodicy in two ways: 1) to engage the affections of those readers open to devotional instruction regarding spiritual warfare; 2) to offer an indirect treatment of the relation between human reason and biblical revelation that does not depend on an appeal to tradition.

Because the poem's explicit goal is to "assert eternal providence, / and justify the ways of God to men" (*PL* 1.25-26), it is crucial that readers not begin with a mistaken

understanding of “justify.” As a point of comparison, it is useful to remember that when the Psalmist calls the people of Israel to “Magnify” the Lord (Ps. 34:3), he does not imply a need to make God appear larger than he really is; rather, the human need to is to apprehend rightly the true greatness (*magnus*) of God, given the human condition of finitude and exile outside the garden. The Psalmist calls people to proclaim and to make manifest the truth of God’s greatness. In the same way, when Milton sets out to “justify the ways of God,” he does not imply that God needs to be excused; rather his concern is to demonstrate God’s justice, as well as goodness and mercy. In effect, his goal is twofold: to make the justice and goodness of God’s actions more susceptible to readers’ understanding, given the limits of human reason, as well as to show that, notwithstanding the present condition of the world and most human lives, God’s action, in creating the world and allowing the possibility of evil, is consistent with justice, goodness, and mercy, even within the limits of human understanding. It is important to grasp this aspect of Milton’s undertaking in order to guard against two of the most likely distortions that readers today might bring to their reading of any theodicy.

First, by using the term “justify” to indicate a demonstration of God’s justice in accomodation to human limitations, Milton avoids the problem of “supplementarity.” For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, Milton’s interpretation of the Bible in his prose tracts could risk becoming a supplement to Scripture: something initially intended to explain the biblical text can end up becoming necessary for its defense and so ultimately risks replacing it (Fish, “Wanting” 41–44). A similar problem arises in regard to theodicy in general. The skeptic can ask, “If your God is so good and just, why does he need you to defend him? More importantly, even if you succeed in excusing him, you effectively base your religious faith on your argument rather than on your God or his word.” Given its account of gratuitous creation,

however, the ethos of *Paradise Lost* implies that neither God nor Scripture needs Milton nor his epic. Both God and Scripture are quite free of any need for defense. Rather, the imperatives for writing the epic arise from the limitations of human reason and a gratuitous human response to the God revealed in Scripture: that is, from Milton's faith seeking understanding, an aspect of sanctification in response to salvation already given.

This understanding of how Milton uses the term "justify" also guards against a misleading application of the terms of contemporary Christian apologetics to the poem's theodic objectives. Conceptually, Christian apologetics often faces two challenges. On the one hand, are those who argue for the "rationality" of Christian belief: that is, its freedom from logical contradiction. Such an approach risks the charge of circularity, brought against it by those who see in every argument that reasons toward a biblical conclusion the tacit presumption of what it sets out to prove. On the other hand, for apologists who attempt to avoid all such charges of circularity, the attempt to locate an extra-biblical common ground from which to engage the claims of faith, can result in adopting a world-view that is basically non-Christian, or even anti-Christian. A classic case in point would be those who attempt to locate reasons for Christian faith in the historical evidence supporting biblical claims of fact. In general, such an approach is quite consonant with the traditional orthodox belief in the historicity of certain biblical events, like the resurrection of Jesus. The danger is that the true object of one's faith can become the empiricism that underlies such evidentialist thinking. Here again we meet the problem of supplementarity. In general, these two apologetic modes and their dangers correspond respectively to what George Mavrodes calls "negative" and "positive" apologetics. Negative apologetics focuses upon "refuting and rebutting arguments against the faith" (197). Positive apologetics attempts to move beyond the former kind by

offering positive evidence or reasons why a person should accept the claims of faith as true, rather than simply admitting them to be “rational” (194-97; 209-14).¹ Two points develop out of this distinction which relate to our consideration of *Paradise Lost*.

First, underlying the distinction between negative and positive apologetics is a further distinction between two different accounts of reason. Those who emphasize the importance of negative apologetics describe a “rational” belief as one that is, in effect, within a person’s “epistemic rights” to believe (196). The difficulty with such a view is that many mutually incompatible beliefs are equally “rational” in this general sense, and this account of reason thus offers little basis for deliberating among them (196). In this respect, both theistic and atheistic belief could be understood as “rational” without compelling one’s consent in either direction (195-96). This broadly defined rationality, which results in a severe limitation of its role, is consistent with the tradition of Reformed epistemology in two ways: 1) the emphasis upon negative apologetics is consistent with the Calvinist insistence upon the limitations of reason and the inefficacy of proofs in bringing someone to genuine faith (194-5; Calvin 1.7.4); 2) the claim that mutually incompatible beliefs (for example, theism vs. atheism) can both be “rational” depends upon a distinction between beliefs that are “basic” and those which are “derived.” A “basic” belief is one that is “held without evidence and on the basis of no other beliefs,” while a “derived” belief is “held on the basis of other beliefs” (Mavrodes 202). Both theism and atheism can thus be viewed as “rational,” in that they could both involve a consistency between basic and derived beliefs. But as Mavrodes points out, it is frequently unclear whether a given belief is basic or derived (for example, the claim that God exists). He argues that the architectural analogy, upon which the foundationalist distinction between basic and derived beliefs depends, is a fundamentally misleading metaphor (203-4). My point,

however, is that Mavrodes' criticism of such Reformed epistemology directly parallels the frequent charge of circularity against fideistic apologists: is belief in God basic or derived?— is belief in God assumed or proven? In both cases, it seems that all attempts at faith seeking understanding will be charged with circularity unless the philosopher convincingly pretends apostasy. With respect to *Paradise Lost*, such a demand incidentally suggests some of the apologetic importance of Satan, as a character who is given a full voice. But at a more basic level, we can also begin to gauge the sophistication with which the epic treats the question of rationality: theodically, Milton is interested in more than simply avoiding logical contradiction—he eschews the more reductive account of reason; but the purpose for his elaborated account of embodied rationality is ultimately the same purpose for which Reformed apologetics tends to emphasize the severe limitations of reason—that is, to engage genuine faith. Thus, we can already begin to see that *Paradise Lost*'s account of rationality entails a different account of the relation between means and ends.

In contrast to the formalist claims of Reformed epistemology, positive apologetics “seems to relate rationality more closely to truth” (Mavrodes 211), truth that is ultimately rooted in the twofold criteria of “interaction with the world and consistent thinking” (212). Such an approach does not attempt to demonstrate that those criteria are reliable, and instead assumes that they are “basic” beliefs generally shared by others (213). Reason, in this latter account, thus involves an element of truth claim, and attempts to move beyond mere logical validity. The difference between the two accounts of “reason” that underwrite negative and positive apologetics respectively is not simply a matter of terminology; there is a substantial difference at stake here regarding the relation between reason, truth, and the claims of religious belief. The character of that difference is suggested by the close connection between

positive apologetics and the objectives of natural theology (213).² As it happens, many who practice positive apologetics today are committed to the specific claims of historic Christianity and might deny that their undertaking has any necessary connection to natural theology. Nevertheless, such positive apologetics have tended historically to participate in the movement away from Christian belief toward belief systems such as unitarianism, and deism. Moreover, such a change in conscious theological belief often resulted from people allowing their trust in a given epistemology to become more important in shaping their explicit beliefs than their trust in the claims of any religious authority, whether scriptural or ecclesial. I contend that this development is related to the persistently tacit yet substantive account of reason employed by positive apologetics. In this way, the traditional Reformed skepticism about the efficacy of positive apologetics seems to be vindicated by the fact that such approaches have tended to result in the operations of human “reason” (so understood) supplanting altogether the revealed truths initially entailed by religious belief. Yet, in practice, the contrasting fideism often entailed by such Reformed *sola scriptura* thinking often leads to a tacit rationalist subjectivism because of the ostensible rejection of “tradition” *in toto*. Milton’s position differs from both of these positions: he insists, like the positive apologist, that reason cannot be purely formal or instrumental and devoid of content; yet, like the negative apologist, he is neither willing to allow an extrabiblical epistemology to determine his faith, nor satisfied with the goal of simply obtaining intellectual assent. Of course, these two conceptions of the interaction between faith and reason do not exhaust all possibilities, but most other solutions tend to resort to a version of “catholic” tradition, variously defined. Because such a turn to tradition is precisely what Milton will not allow, his poem attempts something different by subverting the potential antinomy between these

competing accounts of reason.

Paradise Lost transcends the apologetic categories that I have just described. In fact, the same element within the poem that allows Milton to avoid the supplementarity that arises from evidentialist apologetics is ultimately the same strategy that allows him to overcome the charge of circularity to which Reformed epistemology is often susceptible. At one level, Milton does what we might expect: by writing an epic that recapitulates the entire biblical metanarrative, he avoids the common evidentialist implication of allowing an extra-biblical epistemology to supplant the authority of Scripture. This is why Milton's choice to retell the entire biblical narrative is an important substantive as well as formal dimension of his theodic undertaking. Moreover, the use of Raphael, as one who tells things otherwise "unknown" to humans (7.75), allows Milton to foreground the importance of pre-lapsarian revelation. But if Milton seems to subscribe to the Reformed critique of positive apologetics, how does he avoid the charge of fideistic circularity? How could such a poem, so deeply based on Scripture, and explicitly presuming an originary divine revelation, avoid being circular? It seems impossible, until we ask, "What are the concrete and genuinely possible alternatives to presuming the truth of the theological claims that Milton's story requires?" It is useful here to consider those alternatives based on an appeal to "naturalism," or intellectual atheism. What do such alternatives imply about the origin and operation of human rationality?

If one presumes that there is no God, and hence no possibility of divine revelation to humans, any claims about human origins must be based on speculation about the past, informed exclusively by post-original human observations that are available, by some means or other, to present memory. We meet a comparable situation in the debate between Satan and Abdiel over whether they are "self-begot" (*PL* 5.826-69). By whatever means such a story is

put together, it also entails some kind of primal anthropological *mythos* or hypothetical narrative—whether Hobbesian, Romantic, evolutionary or psychoanalytic—regarding how human intelligence, past and present, interacts with the world and gives rise to an understanding of reality. Despite the often deep opposition between such accounts and their intellectual progeny, all of them share the need to posit a specific story (whether explicit or not) describing how human rationality has operated completely apart from any divine revelation. Here lies the crux of the problem for most attempts to substantiate Christian beliefs by means of appeal to natural theology, along the lines of someone like the seventeenth-century Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Because such natural theology posits the originary existence of an isolated human rationality without revelation, it precludes in its very constitution key elements of the biblical metanarrative: that is, a primal edenic relationship with God. The resulting deeper problem is that any attempt to address the issue of theistic versus naturalistic metanarratives by means of explicit logical argument will involve either circularity or an infinite regress. It seems that one must either presume that primal revelation is possible or not. The choice then between theism and naturalism is unresolvable by direct means, but also unavoidable. In effect, naturalism is no less a belief, and, as such, it faces the same root challenge of accounting for the interaction between our unavoidable reflections on what we explicitly believe and our unavoidable implicit beliefs that enable those reflections.³ Thus, an attempt to answer directly the question posed by the claims of revelation will be circular either way, whether for belief or unbelief (with respect to explicit faith). The unavoidable circularity is thus not peculiar to Christianity or even to religious belief generally. This is why Milton's theodic undertaking necessarily opts for the indirect means of poetic narration.

William Kerrigan observes that within itself, “*Paradise Lost* actively and deliberately stages the ancient battle between poetry and philosophy”:

Paradise Lost is distinguished by the controlled lucidity with which it releases the double power of ‘argument’ to fix and free, joining philosophy and literature to their mutual enrichment. (“Milton’s Place” 256; compare 265).

By embedding the dialectical encounters between characters so firmly within the epic framework, Milton implies that philosophizing or direct and explicit logical engagement has its origin and true completion only within poetry, but not just any poetry. In addition to Kerrigan’s point, it needs to be added that what allows Milton *both* to “fix and free” the engagement of philosophy and poetry is his dense biblicism. Moreover, *Paradise Lost* is intellectually animated by the specific relationship between the authority of biblical revelation and that of human reason, beyond the general opposition between poetry and philosophy,. It might be argued that, Milton is simply opting for poetry rather than doing “real” philosophy. But to respond to this claim would only initiate a dialectical encounter, thereby formally privileging already the philosophic drive for perspicuity, by virtue of the explicit question-and-answer structure of the inquiry and its eschewal of indirection. But even the appearance of such an opposition would, in Milton’s view, be misleading. As a careful reader of Plato’s dialogues, for example, Milton could discern that characterization, dramatic irony, and assumed contextual narrative are all crucial to the intelligibility of any dialectical encounter. Plato also uses stories, of course, but always within a dialectical *telos*, a *telos* that is itself situated within and between multiple implicit narratives—for example, the history of Troy, the history of Athens, the biography of Socrates, or the emergent narration of a happy and virtuous life. The real tension is not so much between philosophy and poetry, but between the

degrees of explicit narration and implicit dialectical engagement. *Paradise Lost* effectively reverses only the emphases of the Platonic literary genre. In comparison to the *Republic*, for example, *Paradise Lost* offers, at one level, a more concrete and specified sense of the narrative embedding that surrounds the dialectical encounters. At another level, the resulting increased complexity of both the characterization and the emplotment makes also more complex the relation between understanding individual speeches and understanding their composite meaning (there is no character comparable to Socrates in *Paradise Lost*). Beyond all this, however, is added the further complexity of interwoven implicit narratives, biblical and classical, continuously invoked throughout the epic. In short, Milton does not simply privilege poetry over philosophy; he admits and then radicalizes philosophy's own dialectical requirements by consistently making explicit even those narrative elements that the dialectical genre would leave implicit. Accepting dialectic's own demands for explicit transparency thus leads to its own subsuming within poetry. I contend that a similar dynamic animates Milton's treatment of the relation between human reason and divine revelation. The intertextual biblicism allows this issue to be addressed using an extraordinary degree of indirection that is yet textually specific—some of whose specificities we will now consider.

How one understands the relationship between reason and revelation will shape directly—by implication or analogy—how one views the relation between scriptural and ecclesial authority. Thus the treatment of the former pair of terms in *Paradise Lost* bears directly on its account of the latter pair. At the outset of this study, I described how the interpretive crises of the Reformation explicitly raised the question of competing authorities. In that context, the pivotal question was how (or even whether) a Reformed critique of ecclesial authority could preserve the integrity of Scriptural authority. One of the central

textual *loci* for the conflict between individual and ecclesial interpretive authority was the Book of Revelation. Historiographically, the precise conceptual and causal explanations of the interpretive and political dynamics surrounding that particular biblical text are often difficult to sustain.⁴ However, at the very least there was, in Reformation England, a clear correlation between the ways various groups interpreted the Book of Revelation, their respective ecclesiologies, and their general accounts of biblical interpretation. In Part One of this investigation we observed how apocalyptic and millenarian interpretations of the larger biblical story tended to be set against established ecclesial institutions, often as a result of either the substance of the interpretations or the individualist character of the interpretive activity itself.⁵ This is why even a poetic treatment of a text from Revelation could be fraught with numerous and far-reaching implications. The potential of *Paradise Lost* for signification is thus multiplied further by the fact that Milton chose to place at the architectural center of his poem an account of heavenly warfare that directly parallels the biblically unique account of a similar war in Revelation 12.⁶

The indirection that shapes the incorporation of elements from Revelation 12 into *Paradise Lost* involves three levels at which the epic narrative removes itself from the biblical text. First, the epic states explicitly that the events described in Book 6 are not to be identified with the fall of Satan in Revelation. At the outset of Book 4, which describes Satan's arrival on earth, the narrator cries out:

O for that warning voice, which he who saw
 The Apocalypse, heard cry in heaven aloud,
 Then when the dragon put to second rout,
 Came furious down to be revenged on men,

Woe to the inhabitants on earth! (4.1-5)

By explicitly describing the heavenly war in Revelation 12 as Satan's "second rout," the epic implies that what follows (in books 5 and 6) is an account of the dragon's first defeat. Thus, notwithstanding the numerous points of parallel and comparison between the two stories (as we shall see), they must be understood to describe two distinct events. The cry of the narrator in the above passage also prepares us for that request for an apocalypse to be answered by the sending of Raphael. The use of Raphael, as an intervening narrative voice, is a second way in which the interpretation of the war in heaven is placed at a further remove from the biblical text. The third important means of attenuating the relationship between the two stories is the frequent alterations, reversals, insertions, and elaborations that Milton adds to the epic account. It could be argued, of course, that if the stories are supposed to describe different events, then the dissimilarities are hardly worth noting. But although the two wars cannot be collapsed into a single event, the striking parallels between the two stories foreground the potential for mutual interpretation through the interweaving of repetition and difference.

Despite the thrice-removed indirection of its treatment, Revelation 12 finds several important parallels in the epic. The Authorized Version renders the biblical passage as follows:

(1) And there appeared a great wonder [*semeion; signum*] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: (2) And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. (3) And there appeared another wonder [*semeion; signum*] in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. (4) And his tail drew the third part of

the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (5) And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God and to his throne. (6) And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (7) And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. (8) And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. (9) And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (10) And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our bretheren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (11) And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their own lives unto the death. (12) Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (Rev. 12:1-12)

The last three verses here are the specific passage to which the epic narrator alludes in the opening lines of Book 4 (quoted above). If Raphael is the implicit answer to that cry for a “warning voice” (4.1), then the further parallel between the two war stories effectively circles the biblical passage back upon itself, by making the war story to be part of the very content of

the warning from heaven, rather than its antecedent condition. Before considering further some of the changes that Milton makes in adapting this passage, we should first notice the several elements that he does incorporate into Raphael's narration. First, both are revelations of spiritual truth based on explicit analogy: one by "lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms," the other by describing "signs" in the heavens as a manifestation of spiritual events. Second, both recount a war in heaven between Michael and Satan accompanied by their respective armies of angels. Third, in both stories Satan and his angels are defeated and cast from "heaven." Fourth, ultimate victory in both cases is ascribed to God and "the power of his Christ," in conjunction with the "saints." Fifth, there are only two biblical passages that identify "Satan" as both the deceptive "old serpent" from the garden and the dragon who makes war in heaven. Revelation 12:9 (together with Rev. 20:2) is exceptional among canonical texts in being so specific and explicit. Because the identification of the "serpent" in Genesis 3 as Satan is part of some traditions of Genesis interpretation, but not all (J.M. Evans, *Paradise* 19-20; 46; 75; 88), the biblical authority for such a view was evidently important to Milton. Sixth, the mention of the iron sceptre involves a direct allusion to Psalm 2, synecdochally in Revelation 12, and as a whole in Raphael's story, as established in the previous section.

We have already begun to consider the kinds of changes that Milton makes to the biblical story when, for example, he uses biblical intertextuality to dilate the narrative in keeping with the demands of epic elaboration. By specifying the three days of battle for the war, Milton elaborates the relatively spare biblical account. Within that three-day framework we find the details of angelic debate and battle, including the allusions to moving mountains, and so forth. In making all these details explicit and in making the surface of the story more openly cohesive, Milton could be described as "rationalizing" the often cryptic biblical story

(whether Rev. 12 or Gen. 3). Yet that same rational elucidation results, not in a reductive “demythologizing” (which would result only in the tacit inscription of a different mythos), but actually intensifying and multiplying the indirect and implicit bearings of the story.

Moreover, if we take a closer look at Revelation 12, we can see that the “signs” in heaven already involve a somewhat free rescension and elaboration of the gospel narratives.

The customary Protestant interpretation of Revelation 12 was to view it as a description of the history of the early church (see the Geneva Bible preface to Revelation) or of the pre-Reformation church more broadly (*CPW* 1:524-25). The “man child” is clearly the messiah, but the events of his life, as well as the life of the woman (church), have been contextualized to show their cosmic spiritual importance. There is no reference, however, to the concrete particularities of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. It seems that the most relevant highlights of the signs that St. John sees are the Incarnation and Ascension. Of course, the dual claim of Christ’s death and resurrection has already been emphasized from the beginning of the Apocalypse (for example, Rev. 1:18, 2:8), as has the image of the Lamb of God who was slain (Rev. 5:9-12). Milton does not develop the same specific image, but the epic follows a similar logic in Book 3, where, in effect, the Father and Son reveal to the angels their eternal purpose to redeem mankind. But what are we to make of the fact that Milton uses all these parallels and differences to recount a heavenly battle that is specifically not to be identified with the “second rout” of Satan described in Revelation? In short, the parallel provides Milton with a biblical model for a spiritual battle that is based on a Christocentric cosmology and yet does not recount all the historical details of the Passion narrative.

Thus the function of the biblical intertextuality in the epic is not simply to gloss the

poem but to enact the dynamics of difference through repetition. By using elements from the biblical story of Satan's second defeat to tell explicitly the story of his first defeat, the biblical elements are resituated in a way that brings them into a new relation with their biblical source. For example, in the very act of pointing out that Revelation 12 describes Satan's second defeat, the poem raises the question of what we could ever mean by Satan "falling" from heaven at all. Construed in crudely spatial terms, how could Satan ever get to "heaven" in order to be cast down a second time? The Book of Job suggests that, even after becoming the Adversary, Satan still somehow comes before God's throne (Job 1:6-7). How can this be? The relevance of this question for Milton is demonstrated by the direct raising of a similar question, with specific reference to Job, in *Paradise Regained* (1:368-426). First, we must keep in mind that Raphael's story, following the idiom of Revelation 12, uses the adjective "heavenly" more to indicate things "spiritual," rather than a precise spatial relationship. "Where" do the events described in Revelation 12—for example, the birth of the messiah—actually occur, "heaven" or earth? It is also important to note that most of biblical history unfolds after the Fall of mankind. After the Fall, Satan became legitimately entitled to a certain degree of spiritual ("heavenly") authority over the earth, including human institutions (Luke 4:5-6)—that is, until his defeat at Golgotha. After the Resurrection, we find the situation described in Rev. 12:12-17 and explained theologically in Pauline epistles that discuss Christ's supremacy "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in the world to come" (Eph. 1:21). Thus, the ongoing battle described in Revelation 12, after Satan's "second rout" and Christ's Ascension, results from the fact that, although Satan is divested of all legitimate spiritual authority, he maintains physical earthly power for a time and can persecute the

Saints. There is then a partial symmetry between the two wars: Satan continues to be granted agency, despite his loss of any genuine authority on earth. There is also an implied parallel between the situation of Abdiel, dismayed at Satan's continued appearance of power and glory (*PL* 6.114-16), and the "warfaring" Christian reader of the poem. Yet the sequential symmetry is skewed, because Abdiel's speech occurs even before Satan's "first rout"; whereas the implied reader of the epic, amid an incomplete Reformation, is located after the "second rout." The implication is that both war stories point toward the present spiritual battle that will culminate in the third defeat of Satan on earth, at which point Christ in glory will drive Satan from the earth in the same way that he drove him from heaven. The use of this particular passage from Revelation thus allows Milton to unite the beginning, middle, and end of the battle against evil into a single episode at the centre of his epic, through a strategy of precise indirection.

This enfolding of the three battles is made possible, however, not by collapsing the events into a single "abstracted narrative," but by recounting the singularities of the first war with a view (by implication and allusion) to parallel events in the other two wars, even as they remain distinct. Moreover, this triadic relation is made possible through the implied fourth temporal location of the reader. If the three wars between Christ and Satan are taken respectively as the beginning, middle, and end of the ongoing struggle, the implied location of the reader is not in the "middle" as such (that is, at the Incarnation of the Son on earth). Instead, the reader is located, in this sense, between the "middle" and the "end." The parallel between the situations of Abdiel and the reader implies that the reader is at the beginning of a spiritual battle (the 'third rout') which will drive Satan from the earth.

This dynamic location of the implied reader relates to one further important class of

biblical allusions that pervade Raphael's war story: those describing the condition of Christians as one of "spiritual warfare." Among the best known of such passages are Eph. 6: 10-18 and 2 Cor. 10: 3-5. At the very beginning of his story, when Raphael describes the announcement of the Son's anointing, the Father addresses the Angelic host as "Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers" (*PL* 5.601). The exact same combination of titles is used again later by Satan in addressing his army (5.772) and by Abdiel in enumerating the "spirits of heaven" who were made by the Son (5.835-41). On the first and last of these occasions, Alastair Fowler cites Colossians 1:16-17 as a proof text. That passage, however, is only relevant in the latter context where the question of the creation of angels is specifically at issue. In the first two instances, given the context of impending battle, the more pertinent passage is Eph. 6:12: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Similarly, although Isaiah 59:17 and Jeremiah 50:25 (Fowler ed., *PL* 6.320-23n) both describe divine armour, Milton's references to angelic military equipment (*PL* 6.83; 6.320-21) are interwoven with clear allusions to the "fiery darts of the wicked," described in Eph. 6:16 (*PL* 6.213; 6.541-46). This suggests that the angelic armour in the epic is primarily being compared to the "armour of God" which Christians are exhorted to put on in Ephesians 6: 13-17 ("the shield of faith," "helmet of salvation," and so forth). The combination of allusions to Ephesians 6, together with Raphael's point about the spiritual quality of the events he narrates, make clear that the epic is describing in detail a spiritual battle similar to what St. Paul describes as the present condition of the believer. This dimension of biblical allusion in the epic is important because it provides an indirect link between the events of the narrative and the present spiritual situation of an implied reader. Within the tradition of Christian

psychomachia poetry, *Paradise Lost*, at one level, resists the tendency to normative allegory, but even as it does so, it reiterates the potential for the war in heaven to be understood literally as a kind of soul-battle (compare Zinck 140-56; Martin *Ruins*, 210-45). My point, however, is that this psychomachic devotional aspect of *Paradise Lost* can be seen as seamlessly woven into the theodic-poetic fabric of the epic.

When Abdiel's story of ridicule and vindication invokes the vocabulary of ecclesiastical controversy (*PL* 6.142-48), it speaks powerfully at many levels to the condition of English dissenters in the 1660s. As a simple sub-plot drama, it engages the affections of such readers through an exhortation to perseverance amid trial. It also reminds such dissenters that their true battle is a spiritual one, along the lines of Ephesians 6, and is not to be waged through physical force, but through Christ's authority. At the same time, the location of that sub-plot within a larger heavenly war that invokes Revelation 12, further emphasizes the eschatological dimensions of the present individual and corporate spiritual struggles. That same narrative also addresses the root intellectual issues of theodicy through its biblicist modulation of direct and indirect treatment of *caritas* and reason. These threads of poetic *textus* have been separated here for the sake of diachronic analysis, with the understanding that in the immediate experience of the poem they are inseparable. Earlier I suggested that part of the difficulty in following Milton's use of the Bible derives from the complexity of his adaptation of source texts for several purposes at once. It should now be clear why customary critical terminology like "allusion," "source," and "influence" are simply inadequate to describe the relation of *Paradise Lost* to the Bible (McCarty 382). The density of signification often bears simultaneously on issues generic, theodic, hermeneutic, and devotional. In order for such a theodic biblical epic based on an ontology of *caritas* to be self-

consistent, it must attempt no less.

How then does the subtle density of Milton's biblicism enable his epic to address the charge of fideistic circularity? In one sense, a short answer cannot be given, except to say that the irreducible totality of the epic is the answer. Of course, such a non-answer is available to the critical study of any imaginative literature. But my aim here has been to prompt a re-reading of *Paradise Lost*, to offer an account that would give rise, through understanding, to a new experience of the poem and its aims. In a different sense, however, we have already considered how *Paradise Lost* interrogates the dialectic of belief and unbelief to show (through indirection) that some degree of circularity is humanly impossible to avoid. Raphael's war story does not "reconceptualize" the relation between reason and revelation, but offers instead a concrete embodiment of that relation through what might be called a "thrice-removed" deployment of biblical intertextuality. Catherine Martin calls the War in Heaven "the interpretation of an interpretation" (*Ruins* 203); but, more precisely, the poem offers an interpretation of Raphael's interpretation of events the presentation of which entails, through analogous repetition and difference, an interpretive integration of several specific biblical narratives. Unlike Martin's formulation, *Paradise Lost* does not conceptualize an abstracted act of interpretation, except as an activity either for or against the specific claims of *caritas* issuing from the biblical metanarrative. In this respect, *Paradise Lost* does not advocate an "interpretive strategy" *per se*, as though its logic could function apart from the specifics of biblical content. Rather, by recounting the possibility of an original coherence between human reason and divine revelation that is inseparable from the concrete particulars of the biblical metanarrative (beginning and ending in *caritas*), *Paradise Lost* avoids the incoherence that results from trying to locate a formal interpretive principle that stands apart

from (or “outside”) any specific metanarrative.

The last statement, however, raises one final question. To what extent can we speak intelligibly of deliberation between metanarratives if there are no criteria “outside” by which to evaluate them? The problem with such a question is that the idea of an “outside” is itself a part of the naturalism that Milton is arguing against, the view which presumes the human ego can occupy a “God’s-eye-view.” To ask whether all this talk about “metanarratives” might not be reduced instead to “ideology” or the “subconscious” is, therefore, to miss the point, and in a very important way. For to reduce the biblical metanarrative to either of such terms would require an antecedent presumption of the truth of either Marxian or psychoanalytic science (respectively)--both of which are variations of the naturalist metanarrative. Still, against my earlier point regarding the unavoidability of some kind of overarching story, it could be argued that such an assertion is itself yet one more metahermeneutic claim that pretends to stand “outside” all metanarratives. But that is why *Paradise Lost* never makes such a claim. The attempt to answer such a question is precisely the point at which my critical discourse exhausts itself and points necessarily back to the epic. The inadequacy of our terms of reference should not be identified as a flaw in the poem. There is, in this respect, some similarity between some postmodern accounts of “textuality,” and Milton’s participation in the patristic and Reformed understanding that Scripture “absorbs” the world of the reader (Greene-McCreight 213). The more crucial difference, which I elaborate in an account of books 11 and 12, is that, unlike postmodern accounts of textuality, *Paradise Lost* does not mirror the incoherence of modernity. Nor does the epic participate in the same kind of individualism typically presumed by modernity, as demonstrated in the next section by the account of gender and the Fall in *Paradise Lost*.

Notes

¹ In developing the distinction between negative and positive apologetics, Mavrodes cites Nicholas Wolterstorff and Alvin Plantinga as examples of the former and Clark Pinnock as an example of the latter (194-97).

² By “natural theology” I indicate simply the attempt to use human reason, apart from any divine revelation, in order to deduce or discover knowledge about God. Within the present discussion, because I am concerned specifically with the Protestant attempt to work through that issue, I do not consider the Thomist tradition of reflection on natural theology. What I have in mind is something more specifically like the project of Lord Herbert of Cherbury in *De Veritate* (1645). Herbert argues that the rationally available knowledge of God (the five “Common Notions” regarding religion), apart from any espoused revelation, is completely sufficient for the right practice of religion (289-91). This obviously differs sharply from the Thomist tradition which makes greater allowance for the religious inadequacy of the knowledge available through natural theology. The relevant point for my larger argument is that, despite many differences between the claims of positive apologetics and someone like Herbert, they both appeal to an account of reason that includes substantive content. At the same time, it should be observed that such a view does not necessarily entail, as it did for Herbert, a doctrine of innate ideas, but rather that reason as a human faculty is never reducible to pure form or function.

³ In *Rhetorical Faith* I explain how Stanley Fish’s theoretical arguments require a selective alternation between eliding and distinguishing these two senses of “belief” (explicit and implicit). I contend here that Milton, by contrast, neither confuses nor collapses these two meanings of “faith.” This latter claim, on my part, involves a revision of my previous

argument and is due primarily to my reconsideration of the debate over Milton's authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*

⁴ For example, even the attempt to establish the antecedent traditions of millenarian interpretation that culminate in the political ferment of seventeenth-century England has proven difficult to sustain. Katherine R. Firth's study, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645*, has been widely influential. As Curtis Bostick points out, however, treatments of Renaissance apocalypticism tend to emphasize the influence of continental millenarian writing upon English writers, while overlooking the more immediate tradition of earlier British apocalypticism which writers like John Bale cited directly (Bostick 48-56).

⁵ Janel Mueller's essay, "Embodying Glory: The Apocalyptic Strain in Milton's *Of Reformation*," emphasizes Milton's critique of earlier traditions of English apocalypticism (9-25). But even Milton's radicalizing and criticism of earlier writers still presumes a shared belief about the basic relevance of apocalyptic discourse to issues of ecclesiastical reform. Milton's *Of Reformation* continues the tendency to make a direct link between a certain reading of the book of Revelation, whatever the details of that might be, and the legitimacy, or not, of ecclesiastical institutions.

⁶ For a treatment of the relationship between *Paradise Lost* and the whole of the book of Revelation, see Fixler, "Apocalypse"; compare *Kingdoms*. Stella Revard considers in detail the specific use of Revelation 12 in her study, *The War in Heaven* (see esp. 108-128). In "'Something Like Prophetic Strain,'" C.A. Patrides takes issue with Fixler's emphasis upon the book of Revelation as a structural model for the whole poem (198-200). My own account does not follow Fixler's emphasis upon the importance of surface connections between the

two texts, but nor does it concur with Pátrides' claim that Milton's use of the Book of Revelation is "but a gesture" (207). Instead, I contend that the "gestures" to Revelation involve, not necessarily a structural correspondence that can be clearly mapped out, but the embodiment of an intertextual practice that aims both texts toward the single end of charity in its fullest sense.

5.3 Allegoresis, Gender, and the Fall

What I have thus far described in *Paradise Lost* is, in one sense, only preparation for the central action of the Fall that Milton narrates in Book 9. With respect to the explicit objectives of theodicy, this is the crucial moment. And yet, having considered the intertextual narrative logic according to which the preceding eight books unfold, we can now understand the earlier events not simply as prologue for this pivotal event, but as part of an ultimately single action whose significance is only manifest through the integrated diversity of the epic's entire twelve books. Milton's challenge is to create this sense of a unified whole, aesthetically, with respect to the poem, and theologically, with respect to an implied providential design, but without making the event of the Fall itself inevitable. I have already shown how Milton's central concern with *caritas*, or divine love, enables him conceptually to narrate the biblical account of the Fall in a way that preserves the finite freedom of rational creatures. Specifically, he does this through a typological strategy of narrative elaboration that preserves divine love as the origin and end of the biblical metanarrative, even as he recapitulates that larger story within the poem. What remains to be seen is how the direct and indirect treatments of reason and *caritas* engage this central theodic moment in the epic. Because of the particular exegetical history of Genesis 3 to which Milton partly responds, our consideration of reason here will necessarily include an account of allegory. That discussion of allegory will, in turn, engage questions concerning the treatment of gender in *Paradise Lost*, questions that will ultimately lead to a further clarification of how divine love is presented in the poem.

Any adequate account of the treatment of reason in *Paradise Lost* must contend with allegory on three different, though related, grounds. First, Christian allegorical interpretations of Genesis 3 had, at least since Origen, been deployed specifically to address “rationalist” claims that the surface narrative was absurdly fanciful (J.M. Evans, *Paradise* 70-71). Thus allegory, as an interpretive mode, became a means to make the surface narrative intellectually acceptable, by finding a universal abstract meaning behind the ostensible events of the story (69-76). Second, the substantive content of those allegorical interpretations advanced specific accounts of the role of “reason” as a faculty in the human soul. The concept of “reason” thus functioned traditionally both as the source for the imperatives of allegorical interpretation and as the object of that interpretive mode. In both of these cases, however, the concern is with allegory as a mode of reading, rather than writing. Throughout the medieval and early-modern period, “allegory” functioned not only as an interpretive mode that could be applied to the Bible or any other text, but also as a compositional mode by which the resulting narrative foregrounded the allegorical function of its own surface elements. In what follows, I use the term “allegoresis” to refer specifically to the mode of interpretation, and “allegorical narrative” to indicate stories that explicitly point out the referential status of their own constituent parts (Quilligan 24-30). Early modern examples of the latter kind of writing can be found in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In Chapter 3, I established how Milton uses such explicitly allegorical narrative primarily to depict ontic privation in, for example, the account of Satan, Sin, and Death. The typological depiction of reality, rather than its privation, in *Paradise Lost* contrasts with allegorical narrative, or what Catherine Martin calls “normative allegory” (*Ruins* 135), specifically in its insistence that the “surface” narrative is not simply a discardable husk for communicating abstract truth. The

intelligibility of truth, in such a view, is thus inseparable from the particularities of the story. In his retelling of the Fall of Adam and Eve, Milton does not deploy explicitly allegorical narrative, but his account does clearly demonstrate a familiarity with the allegorical interpretations to which the biblical narrative had been subjected.

This distinction between allegoresis, as a reading strategy, and allegorical narrative, as a mode of writing, is important to keep in view in order to avoid two potential misunderstandings of *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand, the predominant emphasis among Milton critics on the importance of typology in Reformation thinking (often to the exclusion of allegoresis),¹ obscures the ongoing currency of allegory among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English interpreters of Genesis 3 specifically (Borris 48-52).² Indeed, once one realizes how deeply persistent and widely presumed was the tendency toward allegorical readings of the Fall, it becomes especially striking that *Paradise Lost* does not engage the modes of allegory more directly. In reaction against that dominant critical view, Kenneth Borris does not deny the complex individuality in Adam and Eve's characterization but argues that in *Paradise Lost*, "the traditional [Edenic] allegories become heuristic devices, played off each other and the couple's diverse traits as individuals; and so the allegories are themselves to be queried even as they are used to explore the meaning of the Fall" (66). Ultimately, Borris's analysis suggests that Milton does not so much "query" the allegories as use them to add complementary psychological sophistication to his account of the Fall (66-67). As I shall demonstrate, such an account risks obscuring that *Paradise Lost* avoids explicit allegorical narration when recounting the event of the Fall itself. In this respect, Milton's deliberate choice of genre is revealing. The Trinity College manuscript that records Milton's early drafts of a tragic play titled "Paradise Lost," or "Adam Unparadized," shows that the logic of the

dramatic genre would have led Milton to make extensive use of allegorical characters, along the lines of a morality play, with names such as Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, Conscience, Faith, Hope, and Charity (Fowler, ed. 419-21). In choosing the genre of biblical epic, Milton deliberately eschewed such abstract allegorical narrative, in the same way that he explicitly rejected the allegorical potential of romance epic (*PL* 9.25-31). The danger of the dominant critical attitude is to ignore how much Milton could have presumed his first readers' expectations of an allegorical interpretation. The weakness of Borris's account is that to elide the distinction between allegoresis and allegorical narrative results, as we shall see, in a misunderstanding of how Milton criticizes the ontology often implied by allegoresis.³

The allegorical interpretations of Genesis 3 that remained commonplace in Renaissance English discourse did so in two main forms: one originating with Philo, the other with St. Augustine (Borris 47-50). Moreover, those allegories were used, in some cases, to underwrite a hierarchy of gender relations (49). In *De Opificio Mundi*, Philo interprets Adam in Genesis 3 as the Reason, or mind, and Eve as the Senses (sec. 55-59). In this model, the Fall occurs when the rational faculty becomes subject to sensual appetites or passions. Philo interprets the passage using the traditional Platonic categories of a bipartite soul. Although such a reading could be, and often was, harmonized with a generally Christian admonition to avoid sensuality, it was most commonly used during the Renaissance period by those in the Hermetic and mystical traditions of Platonist philosophy (Farwell 6-7). The connection is important because that tradition linked the account of the bipartite soul with the story of the hermaphrodite in Plato's *Symposium*. According to that androgynous model, the originally perfect human soul consisted of a spiritual (masculine) and corporeal (feminine) component. As Marilyn Farwell has shown, the Renaissance Platonist concept of androgyny is simply not

reconcilable with *Paradise Lost*, for several reasons. It requires that the sexes were originally part of an ontologically static unit, something directly opposed to Milton's dynamic ontology (Farwell 12-13). In this respect, because the androgynous Platonic "Fall" is from the eternal into the temporal, it is an entirely different kind of event from that recounted in Genesis. Moreover, if Adam and Eve are interpreted as an androgyne, then the "Fall," in the Platonic sense, actually occurs at their "separation," whether that is understood as a physical separation that precedes the temptation, or as the moment of their differentiation. The first view participates in a kind of fatalism that *Paradise Lost* avoids (Farwell 15); this is why the narrator specifically observes that, even after separating from Adam, Eve is still "sinless" (*PL* 9.659). The second view locates the origin of the fallen, evil, corporeal human condition in the differentiation of the sexes. This contradicts Milton's biblical insistence on the goodness of sexuality as it was first created, and also on the goodness of the created body. Moreover, the whole point of the epic is to show that God, as creator, is not the sufficient cause of evil.² All of this is not surprising, given Milton's explicit rejection, in *Tetrachordon*, of the idea that humanity was first created hermaphroditic (*CPW* 2: 589). The key point here is that, even if we discern within *Paradise Lost* an invocation of a Philonic allegoresis, such an invocation would still not entail a hermaphroditic account of human origins.⁴

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine argues that both Adam and Eve correspond to different aspects of human reason: Adam to *intellectus* (understanding) or higher reason, Eve to *scientia* (knowledge) or lower reason. The intellect is concerned with the contemplation of eternal, noncontingent truth, while *scientia* (also called simply reason or *ratio*), is concerned with the ordered reflection upon sense experience. In this model, the snake then corresponds to the senses. The "Fall" thus occurs when the lower reason becomes enamoured of sensual

experience, which is that moment when Eve eats the fruit. Sin then becomes complete when the Intellect gives consent to the action of the lower reason (*De Trin.* 12.3-14). Augustine's discussion of the Fall in *De Trinitate* concerns specifically how to discern in the individual human mind a triune image of God. In his account, the divine image is located only in that part of the mind that contemplates eternal things (intellect) and not in that which deals with temporal things (lower reason) (12.3-4). Moreover, that image, or intellectual capacity to consult "the eternal reasons of things" is something that "not only men, but also women have" (12.7.12). Thus, the physical differences between sexes is taken as a figural representation of the two functions of reason within every human mind, regardless of gender (12.8). These elements of Augustine's account are important because they bear on several issues that are addressed in *Paradise Lost*, including the nature of the divine image, the relation between reason (higher or lower) and that image, and the way that image pertains to gender relations between whole persons. Moreover, Augustine is negotiating tensions between the same biblical texts that Milton will later engage. Augustine must contend with the double assertion, made by St. Paul, that the relation between men and women is apparently hierarchical (1 Cor. 11:3-12), but that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28) (*De Trin.* 12.7). In short, Augustine's response here is to say that the hierarchical relation and its potential corruption is only a temporal figuration of an individual spiritual state that pertains to every person, with respect to the psychology of good and evil. The individual dimension is important because Augustine stipulates, in passing, that his allegorical interpretation does not preclude an historical reading of the same biblical passage, according to which all three faculties (intellect, reason, and senses) would be equally operative in both Adam and Eve as whole individual persons (12.12.19). The crucial element in Augustine's allegorical account

is that lower reason, or knowledge of temporal action, must always be referred, through the intellect, to an eternal end, rather than being delighted in for its own sake, because that would result in a turning away from the contemplation of eternal things (12.12.17). As we shall see, Milton's account of the relation between temporal and eternal reality is different from Augustine's—generally, Milton's account of eternity is less static. But Milton must ultimately deal with many of the same issues.

Given the persistence of these influential models for interpreting the Fall, how does *Paradise Lost* engage them? Borris frames, and begins to answer, the question in this way:

Milton could have endeavoured to preclude such readings altogether by stating explicitly that his couple are not “allegoric,” or by dismissing the traditional allegories with one of his brusque narratorial interjections, such as “thus they relate, / Erring.” [PL 1.746-7] But the poet provides no such directives; critical assertions that allegory has little or no relevance to *Paradise Lost* are at best suppositious. Instead, *the poem clearly aligns Adam and Eve to some extent with qualities attached to their respective psychological meanings in once-familiar allegories of the Fall.* (Borris 47, italics added)

Despite the accuracy of the initial observations, the final assertion is ultimately untenable. The allegories were familiar to readers, but the poem's deployment of their categories is far from clear. Indeed, I contend that their invocation is so ambiguous as to have an effect quite different from what Borris suggests.

Despite the importance of Philonic and Augustinian allegoresis of the Fall, it is important to realize that not all invocations of faculty psychology necessarily invoke that Edenic allegory, much less the same didactic point. For example, Borris describes Milton's

account of faculty psychology in the Seventh Prolusion as “quasi–philonic” (50); however, a closer look at the passage shows that even as a university student, Milton found such traditional allegorical categories inadequate to describe complex psychological dynamics:

But all agree that while the human Intellect shines forth as the lord and governor of all the other faculties, it guides and illuminates with its radiance the Will also, which would else be blind, and the Will shines with borrowed light, even as the moon does. So even though we grant and willingly concede that Virtue without Learning is more conducive to happiness than Learning without Virtue, yet when these two are once wedded in happy union as they sure ought to be, and often are, then indeed Knowledge [*scientia*] raises her head aloft and shows herself far superior, and shining forth takes up her seat on high beside the king and governor, Intellect, and gazes upon the doings of the Will below as upon some object lying far beneath her feet; and thereafter for evermore she claims as her right all excellence and splendor and a majesty next to that of God Himself. (*CPW* 1: 293)

The only thing vaguely “Philonic” about this account is that it uses a marriage metaphor to describe the union between two faculties of the soul. But the two faculties united do not correspond completely with either the Philonic or Augustinian model. Instead of the bipartite soul of Reason and Sense, the Intellect unites with the feminine “Will” in order to produce the further feminine figure of “Knowledge.” If anything, the figure of Knowledge corresponds more closely to the Augustinian account of Eve as *ratio* or *scientia*, but even in that respect the allegory is stretched to the breaking point. Indeed, Knowledge seems to have important similarities to Eve in *Paradise Lost*, in that she initially proceeds (in part) from the male

faculty, but then ultimately sits enthroned “beside” it as a type of equal, and even seems only next to “God Himself” in majesty. The latter aspect in particular seems to foreshadow Adam’s concern that Eve’s beauty is overwhelming. But such similarities are more misleading than helpful for several reasons. First, the terms and events of the Prolusion’s allegorical narration of faculty psychology simply cannot be mapped onto the Genesis 3 narrative. Unlike the Philonic and Augustinian allegories, the senses are not even discussed directly as a faculty, much less as a threat to the Intellect’s sovereignty. The “union” and implicit birth metaphor put the Prolusion’s allegorical narrative into a genre completely different from the allegoresis of the Fall story. Second, the “union” of Intellect and Will is more accurately viewed as an early attempt by Milton to adapt inherited philosophical vocabulary to describe the mutual relation between understanding and choice. This attempt to grapple with the extremes of both rationalism and voluntarism will later lead to the single assertion that “Reason also is choice” (*PL* 3.108; cf. *CPW* 2:527). Although Milton elsewhere makes a similar distinction between reason and will, his later usage does not insist so strongly as the Prolusion upon their spatial separation and emphasizes instead their unity.⁵ Third, although, the Prolusion’s allegory is rhetorically effective in extolling the importance of the will in producing true knowledge, when taken on its own terms and pressed to its logical conclusion the analogy breaks down. With respect to the surface narrative, when Knowledge becomes the Intellect’s consort, the story implies an incestuous relationship in which Knowledge supplants her own “mother,” the Will. Ultimately, except for the fact that the Prolusion employs the general categories of faculty psychology, the allegory is neither specifically Augustinian nor Philonic. Instead, the “inbreeding” entailed by Milton’s use of such faculty psychology ends up pushing the very limits of such allegorizing. More

importantly, with respect to Borris's claim, not every narrative deployment of faculty psychology need entail an allegorical interpretation of the Fall.

Within *Paradise Lost*, there are four key passages in which the portrayal of Adam and Eve seems to invoke most clearly the categories of allegorical interpretation with respect to the Fall: Adam's appeal to faculty psychology to explain Eve's dream (5.98-113); the dialogue between Adam and Eve before they decide to work separately (9.343-66); the narrator's description, immediately after the Fall, of the psychological conditions that result from sin (9.1121-31); Michael's explanation to Adam, in Book 12, of what happened in the Fall.

After hearing about Eve's dream, which neither of them realize was guided by Satan's whispering into Eve's ear during her sleep, Adam uses his grasp of psychology to attempt an explanation. The terms of this explanation, Borris contends, initiates the motif of allegoresis throughout the ensuing account of the Fall:

Adam creates his initial *allegoria* of psychic functions after Eve's demonic dream: Reason "as chief" properly superintends "many lesser faculties" within "the soul." By rendering elements of the psyche into notional persons, Adam endeavours to assess how "the mind of god or man" relates to "Evil." (Borris 53)

If we consider directly the complete passage from *Paradise Lost* and its context, we get a much different sense of what Milton is doing by invoking the categories of faculty psychology. The problem for Adam, after finding out about Eve's troubling dream, is to explain where the apparent "evil" in the dream came from:

This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear;
Yet evil whence? In thee can harbour none,

Created pure. But know that in the soul
 Are many lesser faculties that serve
 Reason as the chief; among these fancy next
 Her office holds; of all external things
 Which the five watchful senses represent,
 She forms imaginations, airy shapes,
 Which reason joining or disjoining, frames
 All what we affirm or what deny, and call
 Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
 Into her private cell when nature rests.
 Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes
 To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,
 Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,
 Ill matching words and deeds long past or late. (*PL* 5.98-113)

By arguing that Milton invokes both the Philonic and Augustinian allegories, Borris attempts to alternate between the two, invoking the former when there is an apparent reason-passion binary, but appealing to the latter whenever reason is identified explicitly as feminine. But in the above passage neither account really fits, because although “Reason” is clearly a feminine character (lines 109-11), she is also evidently the *ratio superior*, or intellect (102). If compared with the Augustinian model, Fancy seems most comparable to lower reason who similarly rules over the senses. But in this case the entire soul is gendered as feminine. It is also important to keep in view the larger context of this dialogue. Although Adam is sinless, his explanation of the origin of the dream’s apparent evil is simply wrong. Even if Adam’s

presumed account of human psychology is provisionally granted as conceptually true, his explanation of the particular event fails, much like Eve's later attempt to understand an unusual phenomenon (a talking snake), because it does not allow for demonic agency. In this respect, the narrative emphasizes that Adam, like Uriel before him and Eve after him, is no less susceptible to Satan's deception. Far from suggesting to the reader possible terms for interpreting the Fall, the invocation of faculty psychology is pre-emptively discredited as an adequate means for understanding the reality of the contingent events of the drama.

When Adam and Eve decide to separate in order to work more efficiently in the garden, Milton introduces into the epic his most striking elaboration of the explicit content of the biblical narrative. The Genesis text states simply that after Eve ate of the fruit, she gave some also to her husband who was "with" her. Milton takes "with" to mean generally "in the garden of Eden"; such an interpretation is not in itself unusual, as interpreters had long offered various explanations for Adam's silence during Eve's temptation by the snake (J.M. Evans, *Paradise* 23; 48). Milton dilates the text significantly, however, by elaborating Adam and Eve's separation scene into an extended dialogue on the nature of temptation and freedom. Once again, the elaboration of the spare biblical narrative is arranged so that the *telos* of the story remains *caritas*—that love which gives of the self in a way that allows the other the true freedom to respond, entailing genuine consequences for both. The fact that Adam and Eve separate while still remaining innocent and unfallen is important for Milton's theodic purposes because it emphasizes that the choice to obey is ultimately an individual choice, and hence a decision which both Adam and Eve must be adequate to make for themselves, regardless of circumstances. Moreover, their separation highlights the dynamic character of Milton's paradise, where the necessary conditions of finitude, like misunderstanding and

disagreement, do not preclude preserving the bond of mutual love. He imagines a paradise in which there is freedom to disagree without a loss of innocence or charity.

During her initial dialogue with Adam in Book 9, Eve contends that they are both sufficient to stand against the attacks of the enemy, or else Eden is not truly paradise. Adam's response suggests a tension between the different ways that their rationality and their sufficiency each applies to them individually and jointly:

O woman best are all things as the will
 Of God ordained them, his creating hand
 Nothing imperfect or deficient left
 Of all that he created, much less man,
 Or aught that might his happy state secure,
 Secure from outward force; 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 obeys
 Reason, is free, and reason he made right,
 But bid her well beware, and still erect,
 Lest by some fair appearing good surprised
 She dictate false, and misinform the will
 To do what God expressly hath forbid.
 Not then mistrust, but tender love enjoins,
 That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me.
 Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve,

Since reason not impossibly may meet
 Some specious object by the foe suborned,
 And fall into deception unaware,
 Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warned.

(9.343-63)

Adam's description of Reason as a feminine character who is deceived by appearances clearly foreshadows Eve's deception by Satan later in Book 9. Borris calls this passage "the most important psychological *allegoria* in *Paradise Lost*" (58). But the passage bears no clear relation to either of the received modes of Edenic allegoresis. Instead, it highlights the very element that is not usually accounted for in the allegorical interpretations at all: the agency of the deceiver and the central role of deception. The very character of the usual psychological allegories requires that all agency be "internal" to the one psyche—as Adam initially suggests, "within himself." Even by the end of his own speech, however, Adam must revise the account to allow for the external agency of their enemy.

Clearly Adam's "allegorical narrative" foreshadows Eve's later actions, but it remains a question whether his story implies that Eve's actions should, in turn, be interpreted allegorically, and if so how. For example, the relation between "Reason" and will seems to correspond with the Seventh Prolusion's account of how the "Intellect" illumines the will, except that the gender is reversed. In that respect, the orientation of Reason toward temporal action seems to be most similar to the Augustinian account of feminine *scientia*. Of course, there is no mention of the Senses as a faculty, because the role of the snake is already filled by the "foe" who attempts to "suborn." At the same time, because Eve is so strongly identified with Reason, the Philonic allegory cannot be intended here. It is more accurate to say that,

within the terms that Adam uses and applies to both of their psychological states, Adam's speech emphasizes that the challenge in the face of potential deception is for the Reason of both characters to keep sufficiently alert. Beyond that, the relationship between the allegorical narrative invoked here and the customary allegorical readings of the Fall is so discordant as to raise questions about the legitimacy of such interpretations.

Ultimately, the problem of Satan's agency foregrounds the conceptual impossibility of trying to maintain simultaneously both an allegorical and literal reading of the Fall. This problem is already implicit in Augustine's attempt to affirm both interpretations in *De Trinitate*. There he specifically invokes the "historical" sense of the Genesis narrative, to the effect that his own allegorical interpretation should only be admitted insofar as it does not obscure "divine testimony" regarding "the first two human beings, that is, the man and his wife from whom the human species is propagated" (12.12.19). In this respect, the literal sense is taken as primary and is consequently invoked as a limit on the allegorical reading. The difficulty is that if the allegory is granted as a true psychological account of sin's progression, it remains unclear how that psychology would relate to an historical interpretation of the events. Specifically, if the psychic narrative is applied to the individual characters, the historical interpretation risks becoming incoherent regarding the origin of evil. For theodic purposes, Milton insists upon the agency of Satan, because a purely psychological interpretation risks making corporeality, or sense experience, in itself the cause of evil. Augustine avoids this problem by insisting that evil originates from a freely chosen perversity in the rational will toward a sensible object that is good but is not an end in itself. That interpretation still depends, however, upon a strict separation between the allegorical and the literal reading of the passage, so that in the former the serpent represents "sense," while in the

latter account, the snake is an independent, intelligent volitional creature. Both Augustine and Milton need to maintain the literal reading of the Fall narrative as part of the doctrine of original sin, which is central to their account of the origin of evil. Regardless of a given reader's precise grasp of these distinctions, the overall effect of Adam's brief allegorical narrative (*PL* 9.343-66) is to emphasize the utter inadequacy of customary allegoresis with respect to a theodic reading of the Genesis narrative. This is effected through the invocation of the allegorical terms in such a way that is unmistakable yet also evidently incomplete and conflicted.

The crux of the disagreement between Adam and Eve is whether the divinely ordered goodness which ensures their sufficiency to stand against temptation applies to them only as a couple, or also individually. They are, in different senses, both correct: existentially, their relationship of shared and complementary responsibility allows them to benefit each other if faced with temptation; but ontologically, they are both sufficient to stand individually against temptation (Farwell 14). The contrasting companion passage to Adam's speech above is his postlapsarian denunciation of Eve as "crooked by nature" (*PL* 10.885, 891). This appears in the third of Adam's tirades against Eve after the Fall. Against those critics who mistakenly sense Milton's own voice in those passages, Diane McColley points out that, if the accusations were true, God would be the cause of evil, having made her naturally defective (*Eve* 23-24; 28). By introducing into the biblical narrative the event of Adam and Eve's physical separation, Milton emphasizes that the individual rational integrity of both Adam and Eve was sufficient to make the right choice when faced with temptation.

There are two further points in the narrative which seem to invoke allegorical categories to describe Adam and Eve after the Fall. After having put together aprons of leaves

to cover their nakedness, Adam and Eve still suffer from a sense of inward shame. The narrator elaborates the state of their souls thus:

Not at rest or ease of mind
 They sat them down to weep, nor only tears
 Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within
 Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
 Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
 Their inward state of mind, calm region once
 And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
 For understanding ruled not, and the will
 Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
 To sensual appetite, who from beneath
 Usurping over sovereign reason claimed
 Superior sway. (*PL* 9.1121-31)

The last few lines especially echo directly the Philonic account of the Fall as the subordination of “reason” to the senses, or passions (Borris 60). But if so, why is “understanding,” which is equated with reason here, identified as feminine (9.1127-28)? Milton is simply being consistent here with his characterization of the entire soul and its faculties as feminine. Given that terminological gendering, Milton uses a brief “allegorical narrative” to depict the fallen psychological states of both Adam and Eve. But there is no clear sense in which that allegorical narrative could be taken to imply an allegoresis of the main Fall narration just recounted in the poem. For example, to which character would the allegorical figure “understanding” correspond, Adam or Eve? If Adam, then why is the faculty gendered as

feminine? If Eve, why is she occupying the male position in a would-be Philonic binary? The narrative voice is invoking the terms of faculty psychology in a generally admonitory fashion, rather than suggesting that an Edenic allegorical gloss be applied to the main action of the poem.

The same kind of uncertainty surrounds a later extended deployment of faculty psychology. In telling to Adam the events of biblical history that follow the Flood, Michael recounts the story of Nimrod the tyrant that culminates in the folly of Babel. Adam responds to the story by denouncing Nimrod, that “execrable son,” who would dare to subject others by force, thereby taking away their freedom. But Michael explains:

Justly thou abhorr’st
 That son, who on the quiet state of men
 Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue
 Rational liberty; yet know withal,
 Since thy original lapse, true liberty
 Is lost, which always with right reason dwells
 Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:
 Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
 Immediately inordinate desires
 And upstart passions catch the government
 From reason, and to servitude reduce
 Man till then free. (12.79-92)

This passage would fit perfectly with the Philonic binary opposition between Reason and the Passions, except that the female gender of Reason would either reverse the terms of the

relation or else throw the whole comparison into question. Once again, if the brief allegorical narrative is intended to imply a Philonic allegoresis of the preceding event, then to which character in the surface narrative of the epic does a feminine Reason correspond? We shall soon consider in more detail how Milton treats the gendered hierarchy of reason, but it is already evident that Milton has a complex though consistent purpose in engaging the readers' expectations of allegoresis.

We can now understand the alleged invocations of Edenic allegory in *Paradise Lost* as often little more than general appeals to faculty psychology. More importantly, if we do not distinguish between interpretive allegoresis and explicitly allegorical narrative, we obscure the way Milton plays against his readers' expectation of the former, by rigorously refusing to indulge the latter with respect to the main action of the poem. He effects this by invoking, through dialogue and description, some of the terms of Edenic allegoresis, but never allowing any of those terms to be effectively identified with a single character in the surface narrative of his own epic. The key point is not to mistake invocations of allegoresis terminology as evidence that *Paradise Lost* is presenting an allegorical narrative. I contend that Milton is doing something much closer to the reverse. By refusing to deploy allegorical narrative to depict anything other than ontic privation, and by invoking the terms of Edenic allegoresis in ways that are obviously incomplete or self-contradictory, Milton shows how the consistent application of such allegoresis would preclude a successful theodic argument. This preclusion would operate on several levels: with respect to the nature of the pre-lapsarian state, the freedom of Adam and Eve as individuals, and the nature of *caritas*.

Having begun to see how Milton's explicit invocations of "reason" bear upon his deployment of allegory, it remains to be seen how his account of reason shapes his treatment

of gender relations. For readers today, one of the most explicitly objectionable passages regarding sexual equality is the description of Satan's, and the reader's, first sight of Adam and Eve in the garden:

...the fiend

Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
 Of living creatures new to sight and strange:
 Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
 Godlike erect, with native honour clad
 In naked majesty seem'd lords of all,
 And worthy seem'd, for in their looks divine
 The image of their glorious maker shone,
 Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
 Severe but in true filial freedom placed;
 Whence true authority in men; though both
 Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;
 For contemplation he and valour formed,
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
 He for God only, she for God in him.

(*PL* 4.285-99)

As Diane McColley points out, one of the most striking characteristics of the first half of the passage, in contrast to the iconographic and literary tradition, is that the qualities of truth, wisdom (contemplation of eternal truth), and authority are ascribed clearly to both Adam and Eve who, in the plural, bear the "image of their glorious maker" (4.292) (*Eve* 41). What is so

often overlooked in those last four offending lines is that while they conflict with attitudes today, they also conflict with much that is said and done in the poem, including the immediately preceding lines. Viewed in context, this descriptive contrast between the sexes seems to serve mostly to introduce confusing ambiguities. For example, “in the lines that follow we learn already that Eve’s first gaze is the contemplation of a reflection of heaven, and that Adam’s hand is ‘gentle’” (*Eve* 41). Moreover, in considering the last line, “He for God only, she for God in him,” it is important to realize what the line could not possibly mean. The line could not be taken to entail a rejection of the central Reformed theological understanding of the priesthood of the believer, the belief that each individual Christian is directly accountable to God. This central Reformed teaching is crucial to the arguments against “priestcraft” that insisted upon the need for church clerics to mediate between God and humans. Milton is not implying that priests be replaced by husbands as necessary mediaries between their wives and God. But what then is Milton suggesting by the phrase, “she for God in him”?

To answer this question, we need to situate the line once again within its immediate context, and the larger treatment of the sexes within the epic. Here we come to the crux of the usual debate over Milton’s treatment of Eve. This particular passage poses problems especially for those who emphasize Milton’s egalitarianism. On the other hand, those who characterize Milton as simply an advocate of patriarchal oppression are no less compelled to pick and choose their proof texts.⁶ While the more balanced view seems to be that Milton is simply contradictory on the point, at least according to modern categories, we need to ask whether the apparent contradiction in the work of such a deliberate artist might be for a specific purpose. Regarding the above quoted passage (i.e., *PL* 4.285-99), Catherine Martin

observes:

This inherently contradictory portrait has thus generated a large number of disparate reactions: Milton is either the last great literary exponent of patriarchy, a moderate liberal proponent of gender equality within the context of seventeenth-century marriage manuals and Pauline doctrine, or a “radical and seminal revisionist” often divided against himself on the crucial issue of human freedom versus the stable economy of the Judeo-Christian family. Given this extraordinarily wide range, it seems tempting to question whether Milton is pointedly contradictory on the subject of gender in precisely the terms dictated by his allegorical poetics: in tune with a technique that “baroquely” conserves the ruins of a tradition whose shortcomings he overstates to the point of parody, thereby once again implosively correcting its schemas. (*Ruins* 248-49)

Such an “implosion” does not, however, in Martin’s view, simply eliminate hierarchies, because they continue to function, although “neither normatively nor wholly deconstructively” (249). In contrast, though not necessarily in contradiction, I contend that the ultimate basis for this strategy within the epic is not so much the operations of “baroque allegory,” but rather a rigorous biblicism that eschews allegorical narrative in its attempt to embody *caritas* as the dynamic union between means and end.

Some critics try to distinguish sharply between the hierarchy of gender roles in the above passage and Milton’s own views by pointing out that we are only getting Satan’s perceptions of Adam and Eve (for example, Turner 266-67; Aers and Hodge 143-46). Martin rejects such qualifications, on the grounds that Satan’s observations must be accurate, given

the nature of his purpose (to spy) and given that we do not dismiss the other lines in the passage that seem to fit with a correct sense of Adam and Eve's appearance (248). But Martin overlooks several points. It is not incidental but crucial that readers first see Eden through the eyes of Satan. Milton denies his readers any pretension to a clear apprehension of Eden, reminding us through Satan's role in this scene that a post-lapsarian reader (or writer) will never even be able to imagine Eden without taint. If the passage had not pertained so directly to the issue of gender hierarchy, this aspect might be more readily admitted. Moreover, regardless of how accurate Satan's perceptions need to be in order to serve his purpose of spying, his fallen condition requires that his perceptions will be constitutionally skewed on precisely the question of authority and how it operates. After Satan "thought himself impair'd," he necessarily construes all truth, reason, and authority into the most reductive terms of coercion. Finally, that many of Satan's observations are evidently accepted as true elsewhere in the epic fits exactly with the mixture of truth and falsehood that readers could expect from Satan. Nevertheless, to reject the whole description outright on such grounds seems inevitably like special pleading on the part of those arguing for Milton's proto-feminism. The real question is how an understanding of divine love, offered to the reader in the first eight books, enables one to sort through the present passage in order to separate the truth from the falsehood.

There is, then, a further way to understand the passage. We can take the emphasis upon "saw" and "sight" (286-87) and the thrice explicit invocations of "seem'd" (lines 290, 291, 296), not as evidence that the account is only a Satanic report to be wholly disregarded, but as a more basic emphasis upon the simple fact of observation. What does Satan see? Insofar as he is able to discern the divine image in their upright posture and their "looks

divine,” they both evidently have the same capacity for “higher reason,” or the contemplation of eternal truth, called here “Wisdom” (293). As soon as he turns his attention specifically to their sexuality, however, he deduces a hierarchical difference between them, a difference which is elaborated in terms of their referential relation to God. That referential connection between Adam and Eve, described as Satan’s perception, directly parallels the Augustinian account of the relation between “understanding” (*intellectus*, or higher reason) and “knowledge” (*scientia*, or lower reason) (*De Trinitate* 12.3-14). The parallel is especially striking, given Augustine’s emphasis that the lower reason needs consistently to refer all temporal knowledge to the intellect for judgement, which in turn refers to eternal truth which is the end, or goal, of both. That sense of referential teleology is briefly but precisely captured in Milton’s parallel use of the word “for.” Thus Satan’s two-stage observations fit perfectly with the double aspect of the treatment of gender in Augustine’s allegoresis of the Fall. He first observes the evidence of the divine image that exists in all humans regardless of gender, and then observes the bodily differences in sex that are figurations of the psychological dynamics within each person. Within *Paradise Lost*, it remains a question whether Satan understands that those sexual differences embody a psychological reality that exists within both Adam and Eve. But the observation stands as such and is the most unambiguous invocation of this Augustinian duality. Thus, for Milton’s readers who were habituated to the allegoresis of Genesis 3, the line “He for God only, she for God in him” need not be taken as repudiation of the Reformed doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, because the figurative interpretation of Adam and Eve’s sexuality could be understood as a psychological account that necessarily applied to both characters who, when interpreted literally as individuals, each incarnate the image of God. As a clear invocation of the Augustinian allegory of referential

psychological hierarchy, neither would the phrase be mistaken for an ontological assessment of Adam and Eve's relative worth. Given what we have already discovered, however, about how the categories of allegoresis are invoked elsewhere in the epic, what are we to make of the fact that the most consistent and clear deployment of Augustinian allegoresis is in Satan's perception of Adam and Eve? It suggests that, although the strong invocations of Satan's perception do not negate the ascription of gender hierarchy to the passage or to the poem, they instead raise questions regarding how allegory is used to connect that hierarchical relation to the goal of *caritas*.

Ultimately, the tension within Milton's treatment of gender hierarchy—the very tension which has provoked such a wide range of interpretations—is rooted in his commitment to imitating the same tension within the Bible. To this Augustine also had to respond. Augustine's allegorical interpretation of the Fall allowed him to reconcile the apparently contradictory Pauline claims that gender hierarchy should be affirmed and yet also denied (compare Eph. 4:22-24; Gal. 3:28). In brief, Augustine accommodates both by insisting that, with respect to the individual, the former concerns temporal things, while the latter concerns eternal things. I stipulate “with respect to the individual” because, within Scripture and Christian tradition, the temporal arrangement of gender hierarchy is most often taken to be a figure, not of an individual psychological state, but of an eternal truth with respect to the whole community of faith, in which all believers, male and female, are described as the Bride of Christ (see Augustine, *De Civitate* 22.17). Milton's approach to negotiating this same tension is importantly different from Augustine's, in that Milton locates the destabilization of gender hierarchy within time, with respect to Adam and Eve as individual characters, even as he affirms that hierarchy as a figure for the eternal relation

between Christ and the Church. In order to understand the depth at which Milton engages this issue, it is helpful to recall that the root for both of the terms “hierarchy” and “patriarchy” is the Greek word *arche*, meaning origin, or ruling principle. In the first section of this chapter, I outlined how Milton’s treatment of Satan in the first eight books of the epic enables the revelation that divine love rather than coercive force is the true *arche* and *telos* of all creation. By insisting upon an ontology of *caritas*, Milton’s epic stands against those accounts that emphasize the primacy of chaos. In the latter view, existence is constituted through the imposition of order upon that chaos by a coercive, self-identical reason (Milbank, *Theology* 5). Thus, the *arche* of existence, as well as social organization, in such accounts is necessarily coercive. In contrast, because *caritas* in Milton’s account entails a giving of the self in such a way that allows the other to respond with true freedom, customary accounts of rulership are effectively turned on their heads when that love is taken as the ruling principle, or *arche*, of existence. A gender *hierarche* thus constituted as an ordering of self-giving love differs radically from a hierarchy constituted by domination.

If we briefly consider a series of pivotal moments in prelapsarian gender relations, we can observe this alternative *arche* embodied in the epic. In each case we meet different aspects of that self-giving love, followed by a truly free response from the beloved, which then, in turn, becomes a new gift to the lover. To begin, when Eve is created from Adam’s rib, the blood that pours from Adam’s side is a figure, or type, of the blood that will later flow from Christ’s side when he is pierced by a spear after dying on the cross (*PL* 8.467). The central parallel is really between Eve and the Church, in that the Church is said to be born from Christ’s side in the same way as Eve came from Adam. Why is this important? The parallel has general application in that all Christian husbands are called to love their wives,

“even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Most striking, however, is the deliberate artistry by which Milton situates Adam’s narration of Eve’s creation within the elaboration of the response and counter-response to that self-giving. The account of Eve’s creation comes as part of Adam’s telling Raphael about his memories since his own creation (*PL* 8.203-9; 250-520). As readers of Book 4, we know that, although evidently prompted by Raphael’s stories, Adam’s narration of his own first experiences follows the model of such self-understanding that he first heard from Eve (4.449-91; McColley, *Eve* 80-89). Similarly, Adam’s supposedly masculine question concerning the purpose of the stars in relation to earth (8.15-31) was first posed by Eve in that earlier discussion between them (4.657-58) (Martin, *Ruins* 275-76). Moreover, when Eve first asks quite briefly, “wherefore all night long shine these [stars & moon], for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?” (4.657-58), she does so only at the end of a sixteen-line declaration of the incomparable degree of her love for Adam. In that passage we thus get a complete example of how the conversation might proceed later as Adam recounts to Eve his cosmological discoveries when she is his “sole Auditress” (8.51). The key point here is that Adam’s questions to Raphael are themselves instances of discourse first modelled by Eve in her response to the gift of her creation and Adam’s love for her. This is evidently the central reason for her choice to leave the discussion with Raphael at the beginning of Book 8: she wants to give Adam the opportunity to respond to her in the same way that she earlier responded to him, by weaving lofty accounts of cosmology with no less superlative declarations of love. To suggest that her decision to leave implies a distaste for abstraction or speculative thinking simply disregards the explicit statement that she did not go “as not with such discourse / Delighted, or not capable her ear / Of what was high” (8.48-50). Instead, the

decision to go emphasizes not only her freedom with respect to the immediate situation (Farwell 14), but also her participation in a circle of gift-love in which she has moved from being the initial receiver of the gift to being the one who has become the giver and is, like God, now waiting to see how the other will respond.

That Adam and Eve are both, amid “conjugal Caresses,” able to discourse on “high” subjects of contemplation, reminds us again of their shared capacity for intellection. The other key element in the story that Adam tells Raphael is a similar insistence upon the need for a mate who is equal and would be able to share “All rational delight” (8.383-84; 389-92). The passage unmistakably implies that Adam’s mate must be equal to him. This is, of course, a favourite passage among those who argue for Milton as a champion of sexual equality, in the same way that those arguing for his misogyny focus on the hierarchical passages like the initial description of the couple through Satan’s eyes. Even more striking, however, are Eve’s enraptured declarations of love for Adam that consistently imply that she is subordinate to him, as when she, for example, calls him her “Head” (4.443) or addresses him as “My Author and Disposer” to whom she says “unargu’d I obey” (4.635-36). How can this kind of gender hierarchy coincide with an apparent affirmation of equality? From what has already been observed, the freedom of response inherent in the nature of *caritas* as *arche* entails that such a response is always given and never demanded. More importantly, the latter passage in particular highlights the dynamic nature of that freedom and response as it unfolds. When she states, “God is thy Law, thou mine; to know no more / Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise” (4.637-38), how does that fit with her later insistence that Adam is simply wrong in his judgement that they should not separate in order to work more efficiently? The separation scene in Book 9 is crucial to how one assesses the theodic undertaking as a whole.

In order for his argument to be successful in its claim that Eve falls freely, without necessity impinging on her choice, the decision must not be determined by some pre-existing factor like the decision to work separately. This is why it is crucial for the narrator to emphasize Eve's continued innocence even after their separation (9.659). Marilyn Farwell, following Diane McColley's lead, makes the important point that the differences between Eve's character in Book 4 and Book 9 reveal "Eve's growth from inexperienced thought to independent decisions based on experienced thought" (Farwell 14). The decision that Eve makes to work by herself, after careful reflection and deliberation on the point, is not a surprise but a natural part of her growth as a person (14-15). What should be added here is that the form and substance of that growth has been the self-giving love that was initiated by God through Adam—the love that grants the other that freedom to respond. Although Adam is her "Head," in the sense that the giving first came literally and figuratively from him, the evident *telos* of that *caritas* is a life where the love is continually reciprocated.

We have focused here upon the events before and surrounding the moment of the Fall; what about life after the Fall? The next chapter will focus more on postlapsarian history, but in closing we can consider one key moment in Adam and Eve's restoration after their repentance. By redefining the *arche* in patriarchy as *caritas*, Milton rejects domination in the Christian exercise of male leadership, and reminds Christian husbands of their calling to love their wives, "even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). The Son demonstrates through his actions for Adam and Eve the prototypical model of such love, while the narrative provides the precise allusions to cue the reader as to the larger significance of the act being described. After the Son pronounces judgement on Adam and Eve, he provides them, as the Genesis account specifies, with the "skins of beasts" to cover their

nakedness (*PL* 10.217; Gen. 3:21). But the narrator elaborates the description of the Son's action by explicit reference to a different biblical passage:

Then pitying how they stood
 Before him naked to the air, that now
 Must suffer change, disdained not to begin
 Thenceforth the form of servant to assume,
 As when he washed his servants' feet so now
 As father of his family he clad
 Their nakedness with skins of beasts. (10.211-17)

The role of the Son as "father" of the human family is exercised precisely through this act that foreshadows his later taking on the role of a servant and washing the feet of his disciples. That act, in turn, represents the work of his sacrificial death which occurs the next day within the gospel narratives. The biblical passage is important because the action is described by Christ as a demonstration of the contrast between true and false leadership:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.
 (John 13: 13-15)

This event takes place in the moments just before the Last Supper on the night before Christ was crucified. In the same dramatic context Luke recounts Jesus' further elaboration of the point:

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise that authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he

that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. (Luke 22: 25-26)

By explicitly mentioning this dramatic context within the above description of the Son's clothing Adam and Eve, Milton makes explicit the typological connection between the animals sacrificed to make those coverings and the Son's own sacrificial death. The previous section demonstrated how the logic of typological interpretation enabled Milton to connect the biblical stories into a single metanarrative in such a way that keeps divine love, or *caritas* as the ultimate origin and end of that larger story. This is what continues to happen in this passage of the epic. Although the typological interpretation of the animal skins (as types of Christ's sacrifice) would not itself be unusual, Milton takes it a step further by the specific invocation of the foot-washing episode as a sign of true servant leadership, or fatherhood rightly formed by *caritas*. Ultimately, the depiction of gender hierarchy in *Paradise Lost* will appear contradictory only to the extent that a reader fails to understand how deeply Christ's revelation of divine love interrogates the satanic account of coercive *arche* that is normally presumed as the root of patriarchy. Thus, both those who insist upon Milton's egalitarian orientation and those who see him as endorsing patriarchy are correct in some respects. But they are more importantly both wrong, in the sense that what is most crucial for Milton is the divine love that so deeply challenges the coercive basis of both fallen patriarchal practice and the atomistic individualism of allegedly egalitarian thinking.

Notes

¹ Historical accounts of the interaction between typology and literature can be found in Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, B.K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, and C.A. Patrides, *The Grand Design of God*. One of the seminal works in Milton studies is William G. Madsen, *From Shadowy Types to Truth*. See also C.A. Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition*. In “Transmuting the Lump” Stanley Fish describes the tradition of typological interpretation specifically in relation to books 11 and 12 (see note 2 of the next section). The influence of that tradition is also evidenced by the tendency to oppose an allegorical understanding of Adam and Eve (Pavlock 189-90; Hill, *Milton* 342; McColley, *Eve* 11-15). It is therefore against this tradition that Kenneth Borris and Catherine Martin offer their accounts of allegory in *Paradise Lost*. Although the larger scope of my analysis here focuses on typology, I contend that Milton does invoke the categories of allegory, though not for the reasons that Borris and Martin cite.

² Early modern writers who deploy such allegorical interpretations of Genesis 3 include, for example, Philip Sidney, Joseph Glanvill, Sir Henry Vane, Henry More, and Jean Bodin (Borris 49-51).

³ I should clarify here that my use of the term “allegory” in general, whether as interpretive mode or narration strategy, is distinct from Catherine Martin’s use of the term. Although she distinguishes sharply between what Milton is doing and the more rigid constraints of what she calls “normative allegory” (*Ruins* 135), Martin insists upon including Milton within a broader account of “baroque allegory” (24). In one sense, her “normative allegory” corresponds directly with what I term “allegorical narrative.” At the same time, her

description of Milton's "baroque allegory" is similar to what I characterize as his elaborations of a temporal typological strategy:

Instead [of normative allegory], in *Paradise Lost* the immanent source and meaning of its teleology emerge gradually, naturalistically, and utterly apart from any even hypothetical stasis in eternity, the "abyss, /...whose end no eye can reach" (12.555-56). Before that end lies the entirety of the epic's development, its linear, historical impetus constructing visual and verbal fields whose relation is relentlessly subject to reinterpretation and change. (*Ruins* 135)

Excepting Martin's recurrent positing of ontic chaos (the central point of difference between us which I addressed in Chapter 3), what she describes is, in effect, Milton's typological insistence that divine truth can only be humanly intelligible to the extent that it is incarnated through time and narrated. Beyond her clear use of the term "normative allegory," as Martin's argument unfolds, her general sense of the term "allegory" ultimately seems to become so broad as to include all forms of indirection. At the same time, my characterization of "allegory" or "normative allegory" should not be misunderstood indicate a necessarily reductive reading strategy. We need to remember that by the end of the medieval period there persisted, along side the moral allegory of works like *Everyman*, the sophisticated treatment of biblical narrative in the dramatic form of the mystery plays, or the narrative poetry of *Piers Plowman*. This diversity reflects, in part, the fact that the celebrated "fourfold method" of medieval exegesis was not nearly so abstractly reductive as later caricatures of it might suggest (see De Lubac 15-74).

⁴ It would not be necessary to explain the connection between Philonic allegoresis and

the more gnostic traditions of Platonist interpretation, except that critics still persist in interpreting *Paradise Lost* as an invocation of androgyny and then proceeding to show how such a view is not only misogynist, but also theodically incoherent. As Borris points out, there is a tradition of Christian adaptations of the Philonic, or dualist, psychological allegoresis of Genesis 3. However, that tradition must continually guard against the risk of ontological dualism which the hermetic tradition fully advocates in its account of androgyny. The failure to recognize that distinction introduces serious errors into an account of *Paradise Lost*. James Stone, for example, takes as his starting point Adam's post-lapsarian misogynist lament, in which he complains that humans were not made like angels, and calls Eve a "fair defect" (Stone 33-35; *PL* 10.888-95). He then sets out to show that Adam's prelapsarian state is no less "marred" by defect or lack in Adam. The conceptual deployment of androgyny to interpret gender relations is consistent with the gnostic tradition, in that it logically implies sexual difference to be the origin of evil. Stone's argument must aggressively disregard any claim to distinguish legitimately between pre- and post-lapsarian states, as normally understood in *Paradise Lost*. Ultimately, he must conclude instead that the male is "condemned by nature to long for such a union [of the sexes that fatally extinguishes the male] even as he excoriates it" (38). But to imply that the death urge is an inexorable function of "nature" would preclude even attempting to write a theodicy. Moreover, Stone ascribes to the poem precisely the kind of ontological dualism that Milton eschews, in which the feminine principle is an inherently evil corporeal substance.

⁵ As I observed earlier in the debate between Erasmus and Luther over the freedom of the will, the inherited use of "reason" and "will," as categories of faculty psychology, impinged directly on the prospects for theodicy. In many respects, the central conflict of the

Reformation on that point was an unavoidable function of this inherited terminology which tended to absolutize the respective functions and play them off against each other:

When conscience becomes a category for all moral understanding, we may suspect that dividedness has come to be seen as the natural condition of moral knowledge. Why should this be? It arises on the one hand from the characteristic medieval concern to ensure the freedom of the will. The will therefore comes to be thought of as the ontological ground of personal agency, the 'real me' who is the subject of all my acts. For reason, it appears, is bound to objective reality, and therefore cannot be free as moral agents are free. [...] The perceptions of reason thus come to be placed among the circumstances of the subject's agency. [...] The subject is no longer a reasoning-willing subject, but a will that has at its disposal the services of a reason; while the reason exercises an authority over the subject's activity which should properly belong only to external reality. Thus arises in the West a moral psychology in constant oscillation between rationalism and voluntarism, all the time unable to establish a satisfactory relation between the agent and the real world.

(O'Donovan, *Resurrection* 116)

Although Milton's explicit use of the terms "conscience," "reason" and "will" does not always interrogate directly their conceptual deployment, his writing does involve a consistent and deliberately indirect treatment of the conceptual issues shaped by the customary use of those terms. Thus the above-quoted example of faculty psychology from the seventh Prolusion indicates one of Milton's early attempts to point out publicly the conceptual limitations of such terminology. Later, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's treatment of the problem of evil indicates

his mature attempt to move beyond the antinomies inherited through the use of those terms.

⁶ For a characterization of Milton as simply a misogynist, see Gilbert and Gubar; Gilbert 368-82; K. Rogers 20; Landy. Compare Webber, "Politics" (21-22), which offers a brief list of some of the main problems in Gilbert's analysis. For arguments contending that Milton is doing something more than reiterating his culture's assumptions about gender, see Wittreich, *Feminist*; Lewalski, "Women." The latter essay responds to Landy's claims. For an overview of the literature on this point, see McColley, "Sexes"; compare McColley, *Eve* 19. See also Gallagher; Fresch; Benet 130-33.

5.4 Narrating the End of Trinitarian Theology in Michael's Prophecy

I have been using the term “biblical metanarrative” throughout this account of *Paradise Lost*; however, because the last two books of the poem, to which we shall now attend, foreground within themselves the importance of an overarching biblical story, it is worth elaborating more explicitly here the specific sense in which I use that phrase. I have used the designation for lack of a better one, since the nineteenth-century phrase “salvation history” is no less anachronistic or potentially misleading.¹ What is most misleading about the term “metanarrative” is that the use of it here, with respect to biblical interpretation, is distinct from the customary use of the word, especially by Jean-François Lyotard. In Lyotard’s account, the “metanarratives,” about which there is so much skepticism, are specifically Enlightenment metanarratives (Lyotard xxiv). As such, those overarching accounts of the trajectory of human social life depend specifically on Enlightenment versions of “the unfolding of foundational reason” (Milbank, *Theology* 385-86)—whether referring to Kantian, Marxian, or Freudian accounts of history. By contrast, the phrase “biblical metanarrative” stands against Enlightenment attempts to narrate the world by means of a constitutionally contentless, or purely instrumental, rationality. Thus it is that Milton participates in a pre-Enlightenment Christian tradition of “faith seeking understanding,” which maintains that the life of charity and fidelity, the right exercise of reason, and the content of biblical narration are inseparable:

Christian belief belongs to Christian practice, and it sustains its affirmations

about God and creation only by repeating and enacting the metanarrative about how God speaks in the world in order to redeem it. In elaborating the metanarrative of a counter-historical interruption of history, one elaborates also a distinctive practice, a counter ethics, embodying a social ontology, an account of duty and virtue, and an ineffable element of aesthetic ‘idiom’, which cannot be fully dealt with in the style of theoretical theology. (423)

With reference to books 11 and 12 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s engagement of the biblical metanarrative will be shown to embody both a “counter ethics,” with respect to religious toleration, and a probing of the limits of “theoretical theology,” with respect to formulations of Trinitarian doctrine. In both cases, the implications follow from an account of “reason” that is inseparable from an account of creaturely freedom and divine love embodied in the content of the biblical metanarrative.

It should be emphasized that Milton offers within his epic one possible version of that metanarrative. As with all versions, the work as a whole, not simply the last two books, must continually negotiate between the interpretive tendency toward conceptualization (the “paradigmatic”) and the integrity of the biblical narration with its particular sequential arrangement (the “syntagmatic”) (Milbank, *Theology* 386). In this respect, *Paradise Lost* embodies in all its particularity what Milbank calls a “metanarrative realism”:

A genuine ‘metanarrative realism’ does full justice to the internal tension within narrative. In particular, the temporality of the syntagmatic dimension is not betrayed, because the metanarrative ceases [...] to be *only* a privileged set of events, but rather becomes the whole story of human history which is still being enacted and interpreted in the light of those events. (388)

Although some might argue that the theological emphasis of the last two books fails to preserve a balance with the narration, we must keep in mind that Michael's prophecy itself remains embedded within a story altogether different from a simple biblical paraphrase.

The revelation of human history that Michael gives to Adam and which takes up most of books 11 and 12 continues, in a most striking way, Milton's conversion of epic modes through biblicist adaptation. In these last two books, however, important changes in the mode of that adaptation require a qualitatively different kind of attention to the poetry. The intertextual situation is largely reversed from the previous books, as the typological elements that had formerly to be explicated are now drawn out on the surface of the text. The switch to the mode of biblical paraphrase can also be potentially misleading, however, with respect to the larger function of that scriptural engagement. For example, what is for the implied epic reader an obvious case of biblical paraphrase of ostensibly past events is for Adam, as an interpreter within the story, an instance of prophetic revelation of future events. We need to keep in view how Milton uses this persistent double-focus throughout these books to embody a strategy of indirection that aims to educate the affections of the reader as well as Adam.

With respect to the general use of typology in these books, a slightly different critical mode is required here because the deployment is so much closer to the surface of the text than elsewhere in the epic. First Abel, Enoch, and Noah in Book 11, and then Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David in Book 12 are each "types" depicting different aspects of the redeeming work accomplished by the coming Messiah to whom they look forward in hope, just as Adam eventually does.² But again the difference between Adam and the epic reader is that, because Adam encounters the story as prophecy, rather than history, he only understands fully the typological function of these characters after the culminating revelation of the Son's life on

earth. In this way, Adam's experience emphasizes that typology is simply a Christocentric reading of Scripture, in that Christ is the culminating revelation of divine love toward humans.

The obvious extent and density of the deployment of typology in these last two books is worth noting, however, lest Michael's explicit comment regarding "types" be misconstrued as a general disparagement. In explaining to Adam the function of the Mosaic Law, the angel elaborates:

So Law appears imperfet and but giv'n
 With purpose to resign them in full time
 Up to better Cov'nant, disciplin'd
 From shadowy Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit,
 From imposition of strict Laws, to free
 Acceptance of large Grace, from servile fear
 To filial, works of Law to works of Faith. (12.300-306)

Taken in isolation, the passage could be misunderstood, if not as a disavowal of typology, at least as a suggestion that typology is really not very important to Milton. Viewed within its full context, the apparent denigration is striking—immediately surrounded as it is by particularly dense treatment of the interaction between Moses and Joshua as types of different aspects of Christ's work (12.235-44; 307-14), and more generally embedded within the larger description of typological figures. The "shadowy" quality of the types refers to their intelligibility apart from their fulfillment in Christ who is "the Truth." But even in that respect, the context of the passage suggests that the types are crucial preparation in order for the Truth of the Messiah to be intelligible. The conceptual dynamics of typology are thus not unidirectional; the arrival of the Incarnation of divine love is only intelligible within the

context of the history of Israel that Milton summarizes. Because the types are fulfilled by “Truth” within time, they are specifically not “shadowy” in the platonic sense that they resemble realities belonging to a more real or spiritual world.³ Thus types persist as the incorrigibly particular and embodied instances of divine revelation that are not simply discardable, but necessary preparation for the human apprehension of divine love. At the same time, by including within the epic a condensed summary of the church’s history between the Ascension and the return of Christ, Milton emphasizes the continuity between the “world” of the poem and the world of the implied reader.

Also accessible at the surface level of books 11 and 12 are the central didactic themes that recur through them. Michael is intent upon the elucidation of three pairs of key concepts and their multiple interactions: the dialectic of freedom versus bondage; conflict between charity and the coercion of conscience; and the relation between internal and external aspects of the human condition. None of the terms, as worked through the stories, involves a simple correspondence with the other pairs. For example, the bondage discussed within a given story can, in Milton’s account, involve internal enslavement to appetites (like those in the lazar house, or Noah’s peers) or external coercion (whether by Cain or Nimrod). Yet the same story can also develop the theme of internal freedom amid external force (for example, Abel, Enoch, Christ, or the early Church). A favorite topic is the persistence of internal bondage to appetites amid apparent external freedom (for example, 11.791-96; 12.315-18; 12.348-59). As these various themes repeatedly recombine within Michael’s prophecy, the poem offers a consistent characterization of those who attempt to coerce the consciences of others through a union of civil and religious authority. In effect, such people suffer from bondage to base appetites, because their *imago dei* capacity for right reason has been obscured or has

never been restored (compare 11.507-25, 12.508-35). Milton does not suggest that all who suffer from such an internal disorder of the affections necessarily attempt such coercion, but he does imply the reverse. At the same time, the pairing of the terms “internal” versus “external” should not be misconstrued to imply that Milton advocates religious toleration by means of limiting “spiritual truth” to a sphere of “private” religion.

The first section of this chapter showed how Milton’s typological strategy is the means by which he weaves a continuous narrative thread through the various biblical stories in such a way that the origin and end of the larger story remains divine love. It should not be surprising, therefore, that both the beginning and end of Milton’s summary of biblical history invoke charity. It is especially revealing that at these same points in the recapitulation of the biblical metanarrative, the poem also specifically invokes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Given that, within the orthodox formulation of trinitarian belief, the members of the Godhead subsist in a relation of charity, this collocation in books 11 and 12 is especially remarkable in view of the longstanding debate over Milton’s view of the Trinity.⁴ The earlier argument of Chapter 3 demonstrated that the rigor of *Paradise Lost*’s biblicism ensures that the epic cannot be used any more effectively than the Bible itself to show that poem is “Arian,” or “Antitrinitarian.” While the epic does not invoke the precise terminology of Nicene or Athanasian orthodoxy, it does invoke all three members of the orthodox Trinity working together in biblically consistent ways. An appeal to biblicism is, of course, in itself often part of the antitrinitarian argument (Carey, *CPW* 6:55; 62-63; Wiles 141-47). It is thus possible to debate whether the biblicism is simply in service to a secret antitrinitarianism, or whether the apparently weak trinitarian formulation is only an incidental result of the biblicism. But my point is that the very attempt to resolve such a question obscures a more important point that

Milton is trying to make about the connection between true belief and genuine transformation. Rather, I contend that the capacity of the epic to invoke biblical categories without insisting upon the dogmatic formulations to which both Trinitarians and Arians were given at times reveals instead an attempt to engage the charitable goal for which people of good will on both sides of the debate sought.

Before Michael presents Adam with the revelation of future events, his explanation of the vision's purpose relates ultimately to Adam's experience of charity:

Ere thou from hence depart, know I am sent
 To show thee what shall come in future days
 To thee and to thy Offspring; good with bad
 Expect to hear, supernal Grace contending
 With sinfulness of Men; thereby to learn
 True patience, and to temper joy with fear
 And pious sorrow, equally inur'd
 By moderation either state to bear,
 Prosperous or adverse: so shalt thou lead
 Safest thy life, and best prepar'd endure
 Thy mortal passage when it comes. (11.356-66)

What may not be evident from this quotation is that the first line is not the syntactic beginning of the sentence. The immediately preceding line situates the goal of moral education within a still larger purpose, which has just been elaborated. In bemoaning his expulsion from Eden, Adam specifically regrets that he will not be able to set up shrines in order to show his children where he met with God (11.317-27). Michael responds:

Doubt not but in Valley and in Plain
 God is as here, and will be found alike
 Present, and of his presence many a sign
 Still following thee, still compassing thee round
 With goodness and paternal *Love*, his Face
 Express, and of his steps the track Divine.
Which that thou may'st believe, and be confirm'd,
 Ere thou from hence depart, know I am sent
 To show thee what shall come.... (11.349-57, emphasis added)

In short, the ultimate purpose of the revelation is to strengthen Adam's faith (trust) in God's continued love toward him and his progeny. Thus, the exhortation to virtue which the narrative embodies for Adam is part of the divine care for creaturely happiness within a world of freedom, action, and consequence.

At the conclusion of Michael's prophecy, the didactic purpose of the revelation is again emphasized, though in slightly different terms. At the culmination of his postlapsarian education, Adam responds to Raphael by summarizing the lessons that has learned about virtue and declaring his own trust in the coming "Redeemer" (12.561-73). Michael responds by acknowledging that what Adam has learned is "the sum / Of wisdom" (575-76). He recommends such understanding to Adam on the grounds that it is superior to the knowledge of "all Nature's works" (578). Michael also indicates, however, that in order for Adam to experience the full restoration of God's image, that "paradise within," the intellectual apprehension that he possesses is not sufficient in itself:

Only add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
 Add Virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
 By name to come call'd Charity, the soul
 Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
 To leave this Paradise, but thou shalt possess
 A paradise within thee, happier far. (12.581-87)

Lest this passage be misconstrued as evidence of a latent rationalist-voluntarist binary, it should be observed that the repeated use of the word “add” suggests a similar construction found in 2 Peter 1:5-7, which begins with faith and culminates in charity. The “soul,” or living form, as it were, of the “paradise within” is not constituted through private inner knowledge, but through active and often outwardly accessible action. The key point here, however, is that “divine love” progresses through the course of books 11 and 12 from being something external to Adam, something of which he needs assurance, to being something internal to him, in the restoration of the divine image.

Just before Adam's final confession of faith, Michael begins the last segment of his prophetic narration by describing the life of the Church after Christ's Ascension. In a manner strikingly similar to Adam's own situation a few lines later, Michael describes the operations of divine love upon the hearts of the first disciples after Pentacost. Moreover, he does so in terms that are generally Trinitarian:

From Heav'n
 [Christ] 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 arm
 With spiritual armor, able to resist
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts,
 What man can do against them, not afraid. (12.485-93)

Intertextually, several important things are happening at the same time within this passage. First, the “fiery darts” alludes to the devotional themes earlier engaged in Book 6 of the epic, where Ephesians 6:11-17 had shaped the account of spiritual warfare. Second, the last two lines are consistent with Milton’s emphasis throughout books 11 and 12, upon showing how inward or spiritual restoration often results in certain kinds of outward actions or conditions. Thus, the “spiritual” is not simply a “private” realm. Third, the inscription of the “Law of Faith” by the Holy Spirit clearly invokes the restoration of the *imago dei* as conscience or “right reason,” but it does so in a way that links that restoration to all three members of the Trinity and to the internalization of divine love. Thus, finally, as with Adam, the restoration of the divine image is expressed specifically in terms of “Faith” (knowledge of God) and “love.” The Son sends the Holy Spirit who is promised by the Father, in order to regenerate within individual believers the image of God. That restored faculty of right reason then allows believers to embody a unity of faith and love in a way that necessarily impinges on the world with consequence. Thus Milton’s brief summary of the Church’s earliest history also emphasizes that people who experience such an “inner” restoration do not encounter execution or persecution by civil authorities as a result of practicing a purely private religion.

Lest these claims seem unwarranted, the reader has already been prepared for such triune divine action at the very outset of Book 11, where the members of the Trinity each play

a role in Adam and Eve's repentance:

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
 Praying, for from the Mercy-seat above
 Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd
 The stony from thir hearts, and made new flesh
 Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breath'd
 Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer
 Inspir'd, and wing'd for Heav'n with speedier flight
 Than loudest Oratory.

.
 Then the glad Son
 Presenting, thus to intercede began.
 See Father, what first fruits are sprung
 From thy implanted Grace in Man, these Sighs
 And Prayers, which in this Golden Censer, mixt
 With Incense, I thy Priest before thee bring....
 (11.1-8; 20-25)

In the lines that follow, the Son, as “Advocate,” goes on to offer to the Father his “Merit” and “Death” to redeem mankind, so that, as he says, “All my redeem'd may dwell in joy and bliss, / Made one with me as I with thee am one” (11.44-45). The Holy Spirit enables prevenient grace to induce repentance—the sighs “unutterable” openly invokes the description of the Holy Spirit’s role in prayer found in Romans 8:26—so the phrase “Spirit of prayer” should not be misinterpreted as intentional vagueness or obfuscation on Milton’s part. Taken as a whole,

the above passage clearly invokes the different roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in effecting salvation. However, the last phrase, equating the unity between Father and Son with the unity between Christ and humanity (line 45), is exceptionally ambiguous. It is especially so regarding any attempt to derive a clearly trinitarian, or antitrinitarian, interpretation of not just the particular line, but also of the biblical passage to which it seems to allude (John 17). But rather than revisit here the unresolvable questions regarding the authorship of *De Doctrina* and its antitrinitarianism, it may be more useful to consider how Milton engaged similar issues in a prose text that he certainly did write—a text that does not simply offer a gloss on the poem, but offers an analogous rhetorical strategy.

In *Of True Religion* (1673), Milton lists a series of theological issues that are “the hottest disputes among Protestants,” but which may nevertheless be “charitably enquir’d into” (*CPW* 8:424). The list includes, Lutherans on Consubstantiation, Calvinists on Predestination, Anabaptists on Infant Baptism, Arians and Socinians on the Trinity, Arminians on “free will against free grace” (424-25). Those who have presumed Milton’s authorship of *De Doctrina* have been quick to point out where the treatise stands on the various questions listed (see, for example, Keith Stavely’s annotations in the Yale edition). There has been, however, some debate over the sentences in which Milton describes the antitrinitarian position:

The Arian and Socinian are charg’d to dispute against the Trinity: they affirm to believe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to Scripture and the Apostolic Creed; as for the terms of Trinity, Triunity, Coessentiality, Tripersonality, and the like, they reject them as Scholastic Notions, not to be found in Scripture, which by a general Protestant Maxim is plain and

perspicuous abundantly to explain its own meaning in the properest words, belonging to so high a Matter and so necessary to be known; a mystery indeed to their Sophistic Subtilties, but in Scripture a plain Doctrine. (*CPW* 8:424-25)

William Hunter points out that, on the particular issue of Milton's own Arianism, this passage is rhetorically structured like those preceding it, so that the "Sophistic Subtilties" refers to the antitrinitarian position (*Visitation* 100-104). John Rumrich rejects Hunter's reading on the grounds that "sophistic Subtleties" is an "obvious" reference directly back to the phrase, "Scholastic Notions," used by Arians to describe trinitarian arguments ("Arianism" 78)—indeed, such usage would be consistent with *De Doctrina*'s rhetoric. But even if Milton were repeating the Arian misgivings of others, that would not imply his adopting them as his own, unless we deliberately disregard the obvious context of the tract and its presumed readers. As Stavely points out, the overall concern of the tract is to address the issues raised by a pending bill in parliament, by taking advantage of the recent "No Popery" agitation in such a way as to argue for the toleration of dissenting Protestants (*CPW* 8:413). Thus, for example, Milton's repeated invocations of the Thirty-Nine Articles in this particular piece of writing are part of his larger attempt to appeal to the Anglican orientation of the Restoration Parliament. In such a context, to identify Trinitarian belief with "sophistic Subtleties," as Rumrich does, would ascribe to Milton an impossible rhetorical ineptitude. Why should Milton alienate his most important intended readers? Even if Rumrich is correct in insisting that Milton's views on the Trinity are represented in some form within *De Doctrina*, that belief could have no relation to the ostensible meaning of the text in *Of True Religion*, given the latter's rhetorical purpose.

Both attempts, either to relate the *De Doctrina*'s theology to the text or to insist that Milton holds the implied orthodox view in this passage is really to miss the point being made

in *Of True Religion*. Before presenting the list of disputed issues, Milton states openly that regarding “all things absolutely necessary to salvation,” these doctrines “will be found less than such” (424). The passage goes on to emphasize that even if such beliefs are disputed among Protestants, such that some might be in error, “it cannot be imagin’d that God would desert [them]...to damnable Errors & and Reprobate sense” (426). Milton’s argument depends upon a previous distinction between heresy and error, as well as specific definitions of both Protestant and Catholic belief that he continues to unfold. Much of what he argues is common Protestant fare, but a brief consideration of the modes and implications of his argument offer telling comparison with *Paradise Lost*. His central distinction is that, “heresy is in the Will and choice profestly against Scripture; error is against the Will, in misunderstanding the Scripture after all sincere endeavours to understand it rightly” (*CPW* 8:423).⁵ Milton defines “True Religion,” or Protestantism, as “the true Worship and Service of God, learnt and believed from the Word of God only” (419). This definition he then elaborates into two “main Principles of true Religion”:

That the Rule of true Religion is the Word of God only and that their Faith ought not to be an implicit faith that is, to believe, though as the Church believes, against or without express authority of Scripture. (419-20)

In terms of the argument construction, these two principles enable the contrasting characterization of Popery, as including extra-biblical human traditions and “tacit faith,” or faith based on the word of other humans rather than Scripture. The second point is that which ultimately enables the pivotal move to equate all attempts to coerce conscience with “Popery,” for to deploy such coercion embodies a necessary endorsement of tacit faith. In this way, Milton thus elaborates the commonplace Protestant self-identification with *sola scriptura*

(against tradition) and *sola fides* (of the individual rather than of others), in such a way that equates all Erastian or religiously coercive policy with “Popery.” By employing a further Reformed commonplace of equating Popery with Idolatry, Milton implies that such policy entails idolatry (430-31). Here, as with the position adopted in *Areopagitica*, the inclusion of Catholics within the scope of toleration is conceptually precluded. This view follows from Milton’s definition of Popery as inherently tending to coercive idolatry, owing to Catholicism’s central adherence to tacit faith.

But how does this relate to the treatment of the Trinity in this context? By Milton’s own explicit account, belief or unbelief in “the Trinity” *per se* is not “necessary to salvation,” even though it is “in Scripture a plain Doctrine” (*CPW* 8:424-25). What is crucial is that people hold the scriptural view that Christ is “both God and Saviour” (425). By bracketing the question of whether Milton is precisely orthodox or “Arian,” I contend that his statements in both the epic and the 1673 tract reveal, not a lack of commitment to the question, but an express purpose to avoid textual susceptibility to strong interpretations along either Trinitarian or Antitrinitarian lines. However, we can now see how that the biblicism and “interpretive openness” that we have observed in Milton’s poetry is really integral to his elaboration of charity and religious toleration as inherent to true religion. In that respect, both of Milton’s texts resist the simple rehearsal of doctrinal formulations, which can leave someone still a “heretick in the truth.” Moreover, the scope of the epic genre allows it to embody and to provoke an embodiment of divine love—the same love which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share in perfect unity and together enable humans to experience within time. He eschews the doctrinal formulations in such a way that emphasizes the charity that is the essence of the Trinity, but he simultaneously offers strong criticism of those who would try to join ostensibly

trinitarian belief with religious coercion. Indeed, I contend that one of the central functions of the concluding books, with respect to “reader response,” is to provoke a reaction of extreme discomfort among Erastian readers who find throughout the summary of biblical history that their deployment of civil authority locates them consistently in opposition to divine love. Thus to insist upon a conclusive account of whether *Paradise Lost* implies either an “Arian” or “Trinitarian” position with respect to the demands of “theoretical theology” is, quite simply, to miss the point.

In conclusion, given the extent to which I have emphasized the centrality of narration, my analysis here needs to consider what happens when, between books 11 and 12, the mode of revelation changes from immediate visionary experience (on Adam’s part) to discursive narration. Within the terms of the story, we are given an account of the change in prophetic mode. Michael explains:

Much thou hast yet to see, but I perceive
 Thy mortal sight to fail: objects divine
 Must needs impair and weary human sense:
 Henceforth what is to come I will relate. (12.8-11)

The mention of “mortal” defines this shift in mode as part of the dramatization of the consequences of sin in their unfolding. There is also a broader theological point being made, however, through the difference between the two kinds of revelation. For epic readers, the majority of whom do not encounter such visions, the point being made within the story is almost the reverse of what we might initially expect. Michael can shift the mode of prophecy from “vision” to narration without any sense, on his part, that Adam is getting anything less by way of divine revelation. In effect, the contrast between the two modes undermines the

potential to privilege one over the other, by insisting that nothing crucial is lost with respect to Adam's education that culminates in conversion. The implications here are important with respect to biblical interpretation in two ways. First, the efficacy of the revelation in discursive form is not inferior to the visionary experience to which a given discourse may refer. Here the most obvious comparison is with the experience of St. John whose vision on the Isle of Patmos results in his writing the Book of Revelation. But the general point can be applied to any biblical passage where readers might be tempted to think that a first-hand experience of events or visions described within Scripture would be spiritually more efficacious than the discursive form in which they presently encounter those events. Milton's arrangement of the shift in prophetic mode thus emphasizes the complete sufficiency and adequacy of Scripture as divine revelation in its discursive form, the form best suited to human reason (5.486-90). Moreover, because the mode of revelation never really changes for the epic reader, the shift in mode, from Adam's perspective, entails for the epic reader that the epic text in discursive form is not necessarily subordinated to the immediate experience of the visionary poet.

Second, the poem's treatment of the relation between visionary experience and biblical discourse pertains also to the debate over "enthusiasm," and private revelations, which were such a point of contention between religious factions. Milton's handling of this issue is likely part of the means by which he alleviated Andrew Marvell's initial fear that the epic poet's own claim to prophetic strain might "ruin...the sacred truths" ("On P.L." lines 7-8; compare Achinstein, "Milton's" 22-25).⁶ The epic presents an originary instance of prophetic revelation which is deemed sufficiently truth-bearing through its incarnation in discursive rather than immediate visionary form. The discursive form is necessarily communicative and social, rather than incommunicable and solitary, as an unspeakable vision might remain. In

this way, Adam and Eve are entrusted with a prototype of the whole of biblical history to pass on, in the form of a narration, to their children (compare Deut. 4:9 and Psalm 78:1-6). At the same time, the inter-subjective accessibility of those stories as they circulate means that, although susceptible to abuse, they do not necessarily function as either solipsistic fancies of private imagination, nor as an excuse for tyranny by one person over others.

Because the story embodies the kind of Christocentric typological reading that informs the rest of the poem, Michael's prophecy, in some sense, is the rule of charity, or a summary of the biblical metanarrative through elements of its irreducible particularity. Thus, for the epic reader, the memory of the explicit typology in books 11 and 12 becomes the guide for discerning the charitable interpretation of the preceding 10 books. Milton's strategy presumes a second reading which keeps in mind the previous reading. The poem thus implies the central importance of memory in the readers' response to its central thematic and biblical preoccupations. Moreover, that charitable educative reading is not simply a process of intellectual apprehension that would risk leaving the reader a "heretick in the truth." Instead, the dramatization of biblical events is made inextricable from an account of charity that incarnates the relation between liberty, virtue, and reason—the latter term unfolding simultaneously through the discourses of conscience, ontic-logos, and Christology. In his prose, Milton effectively claims that religious coercion is antichristian: that it opposes the nature of the Protestant understanding of the gospel. In *Paradise Lost*, he attempts to show, through a renarration of the whole of biblical history, that to admit religious coercion is inherently Satanic and necessarily entails an inversion of the Protestant meaning of Scripture. Milton poses for his readers an unavoidable choice, not simply between either advocating religious toleration or siding with Satan, but also between either religious toleration or the

Protestant view of Salvation, charity and freedom. Milton's ingenuity is to make each of those elements integral to the overarching biblical story that he presents.

The resulting challenge for those supporting the use of state coercion in religious causes would be to advance a refutation and genuine conceptual alternative to *Paradise Lost* that similarly involves a comprehensive rule of charity and does not simply encompass but embodies the scope of the biblical story. There is then a double aspect to the "end" of trinitarian theology invoked in the title to this section. At one level, Milton's poetry aims at the same *telos* as trinitarian theology: to articulate a thoroughly biblical apprehension of divine love and its implications for faithful praxis. However, his poem also seems to resist fitting easily and completely into the precise formulations of orthodoxy, along the lines of the Nicene Creed, for example. The case of Lucy Hutchinson provides a striking contrast. Her paraphrase of the creation story in *Order and Disorder* explicitly invokes all three members of the Trinity with orthodox precision (1.85-144). *Paradise Lost*'s contrasting obscurity on this point is important, but not for the reasons usually cited. Milton's alleged "Arianism" is important, not because it is possible to resolve the question with any certainty or finality, but because Milton deliberately subordinates the issue of explicit doctrinal formulation to the more pressing violation of charity entailed by religious coercion. Indeed, what *Of True Religion* states openly and what *Paradise Lost* embodies is not that Milton is necessarily an Arian, but that he regards the precise Nicene formulation of Trinitarian doctrine as among things indifferent. Moreover, Milton could take such a view, not necessarily because he denied the truth of such doctrine, but because he believed it to be an understanding that only emerged out of the process of sanctification, out of faith seeking understanding. Hence, the logic of Protestant justification by faith requires that no one would be condemned by God,

much less coerced by humans for incomplete temporal sanctification. In short, by using biblicism to resubmerge the doctrine of the Trinity, Milton foregrounds the sad contradiction of demanding ostensible orthodoxy in such a way that violates the same charity which the doctrinal formulation attempts to articulate. In arguing that a certain praxis is integral to any genuinely Reformed account of faith, such a strategy is consonant with the main argument in *Of True Religion*. That praxis of charity is thus the *telos* of the triune God's actions, but also the *terminus* of the attempt to use theological formulation to justify religious coercion.

Notes

¹ As William Tooman points out, the nineteenth-century use of the term *Heilsgeschichte*, although ostensibly derived from “typology,” involves a substantive rejection of the kind of typological reading initially practiced by the Reformers, as well as writers of late antiquity. In short, the Reformers gave primacy to the textual relationships that underwrite an understanding of the world, whereas “salvation history” involves ascribing primacy to the historical referents that are located, as it were, “behind” the text (5-14). Tooman’s essay elaborates issues raised earlier by Hans Frei in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. If I used the term “salvation history,” rather than “biblical metanarrative,” the resulting account would be confused rather than clarified because of the association of the former with a deployment of typology that contrasts with the historical account of Reform typology that I present.

² As Stanley Fish points out, there is within the history of Milton criticism a direct connection between the rehabilitation of books 11 and 12 of *Paradise Lost*, and the attention given to the use of typology in the epic (“Transmuting” 276-80). The tradition of giving strong attention to the use of typology in the last two books of the poem extends from the work of William Madsen and F.T. Prince in the late 1950s, through H.R. MacCallum and B.A. Rajan in the 1960s, to Edward Taylor at the end of the 1970s. In each case there persists the shared view that typology is central to the poem and especially the last two books (“Transmuting” 276-87). Today, the sheer weight of such a critical tradition explains part of what Catherine Martin reacts against when she contends that a precise and simple distinction between typology and allegory in Milton’s poem—favoring the former and denigrating the

latter—has been emphasized far too much (*Ruins* 18-20). I contend, however, that Martin's emphasis upon temporality remains deeply consistent with the poem's emphasis upon typology. By contrast, Fish's account of the history of typological interpretation is influenced by the Jungian orientation of Northrop Frye ("Transmuting" 274-77). As a result, Fish tends to emphasize the "spatial" rather than temporal aspects of typology. In this respect, his description of typology revealingly ends up sounding much like Martin's account of "normative allegory" (compare Fish "Transmuting" 277; Martin, *Ruins* 135). For other accounts of typology see note 1 of the previous section.

³ My point here is substantiated by William Madsen's account of how Milton's use of typology entails a contrast with the "two worlds" doctrine of Platonism (85-113). The key point here is that all the events and characters described in "heaven" are no less creaturely than those on earth. The account of heaven, both in Books 3 and 6-7, make it clear that Milton does not construe "heaven" along the lines of a Platonist analogy that would make it simply the location of static forms within the mind of the Creator.

⁴ In Chapter 3 I described very briefly some of the debate over Milton's view of the Trinity and how it has become inseparable from the debate over his authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*. My own fuller account of what *De Doctrina* does with the Trinity can be found in *Rhetorical Faith* (chapters 3 and 5). Beyond that analysis, I would add that the most important thing to understand about *De Doctrina* is that whatever position it might try to defend, the view that it argues most strongly against is not really trinitarianism *per se*, but something closer to a modalist misconstrual of the Trinity. *De Doctrina*'s central refutation of the trinitarian formulation depends upon an explicit redefinition of key terms so that the

central arguments are simply deductions from them. But as a result of those new definitions, the trinitarian position is effectively reduced to modalism (where the Three are simply aspects of the “one” inaccessible substance). Colin Gunton contends that, in fact, such misconstrual is normative in the Western tradition, even among ostensibly orthodox writers (“Augustine” 34-35; 45). At the same time, *De Doctrina*’s argument is, in effect, a reversed image of that offered by Stephen Nye in *The Explication of the Articles* (1715) which contends that the usual orthodox view is simply “Tritheism” and offers instead his own explicitly modalist account (Wyles 67).

⁵ Milton’s distinction here is similar to that made by J. Taylor in *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* (23; 28), and J. Hales in *A Tract Concerning Schisme and Schismatiques* (9).

⁶ Apparently Marvell was not the only one to have such concerns about *Paradise Lost*. The poem’s first licenser, Thomas Tomkins, also had doubts that stemmed from “his suspicion of the old Puritan habit of overreading ordinary providence” and from his opposition to “the Doctrine of the New Light or private illumination” (von Maltzahn, “First Reception” 483-84; 486).

Coda:

Paradise Regained

This account of the relationship between reason, narrative, and religious toleration in Milton's writing leads to several implications regarding how we view his poetic practice generally. At one level, we can now understand the deeper connections between his poetry and prose, in their varied attempts to integrate biblical form and content with a specific suasive end. In the earliest polemical prose we observed the conceptual relationship between reason, freedom, and Milton's sense of the overarching biblical story. Within the context of Reformation theology, Milton's writing connects those conceptual elements with issues of soteriology, historical narration, and ecclesiology, as they participate in the unity of freedom and charity. That same conceptual relationship which underlies the arguments for toleration in Milton's polemical prose also animates *Paradise Lost*, not simply as an ornamental version of the earlier arguments, but as a formal solution to the limitations of the prose genres in treating the root issues of human freedom, human virtue, and divine justice. The genre of a biblical epic allowed Milton the scope to integrate narrative form with the content of charity in a manner that engages the whole of the biblical metanarrative. This is why the aim of the analysis here has not been simply to observe that Milton addresses the same topic of religious toleration in different works and across genres. Rather, the unfolding dynamics of that conceptual relationship, in conjunction with Milton's ongoing interpretive engagement of biblical texts, resulted in his epic taking the specific form that it does. Milton had earlier planned to write a national epic, initially considering something more like a Spenserian *Arthuriad* ("Epitaphium Daemonis" lines 165-74; compare *CPW* 1:810-17; *PL* 9.14-47). But the apparently late decision to write a specifically

biblical epic afforded unique scope to address with the greatest subtlety this set of issues which had for so long occupied his thoughts. This account of Milton's writing thus entails also a new interpretation of the meaning and importance of the debate over whether Milton authored *De Doctrina Christiana*. We can now understand that, even if Milton's authorship were conclusively proven, attention to the treatise as an explicit statement of doctrines within the epic risks obscuring the more urgent purposes involved in the stylistically subtle biblicism of the epic.

Although this treatment of Milton's writing is not exhaustive, the depth and range of this analysis is sufficient to result in clear implications regarding how we read the rest of his works. In order to demonstrate how such a reading of Milton's texts would unfold, I shall conclude here with a brief account of *Paradise Regained*. The purpose here is not to offer a complete reading of the text, but to show how the conclusions reached in the analysis thus far would continue to work out in a treatment of the shorter epic.

In his biography of Milton (1694), Edward Phillips observes that *Paradise Regained* "is generally censur'd to be much inferiour to the other [*Paradise Lost*], though [Milton] could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him" (75-76). Why should Milton be so utterly convinced that *Paradise Regained* was at least as good as *Paradise Lost*, if not superior? Historical evidence suggests that he wrote most of the brief epic after the first publication of *Paradise Lost* in 1667 (Phillips 75; Carey, ed. 1063). In composing the later work between 1667 and 1670, Milton was able to write with some sense of how his earlier poem had been and would be understood, at least by initial contemporary readers. Even if he began writing *Paradise Regained* before *Paradise Lost* was actually published, evidence indicates that the longer epic was probably written before Milton began *Paradise Regained* (Carey, ed. 1063). I suggest that Milton's strong reaction to the comparison of the two epics at the expense of

Paradise Regained resulted from his understanding of the often mistaken basis for such comparison. In his account of the early readers of *Paradise Lost*, Nicholas von Maltzahn has shown that the epic's central war in heaven was one of the most important elements of the poem for Restoration readers ("War" 13-20). Those early readers, however, tended not to understand the war as part of the spiritual battle similar to that described in Revelation 12, but as an endorsement of the traditional epic ethos which valorized warfare and physical coercion (1-20). By contrast, the "great duel" central to *Paradise Regained* is explicitly stipulated to be "not of arms" but between "wisdom" and "hellish wiles" (1.174-75). Thus, like Michael's earlier explanation to Adam, that the fight between Christ and Satan does not concern the "local wounds" of physical battle (*PL* 12.386-395), the later epic reminds readers that the most important warfare is not physical (compare Fish, "Things" 163-65). The explicit account of Christ's life and work on earth is presented briefly in *Paradise Lost*, whereas in *Paradise Regained* one segment of the gospel text is dilated to make the same point regarding the non-coercive nature of Christ's embodiment of charity. In *Paradise Regained* we are reminded of Christ's later "Conquest" which will "drive [Satan] back to Hell" "with all his vast force," but the Father observes that first he must:

Exercise [the Son] in the Wilderness;
 There he shall first lay down the rudiments
 Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
 To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes,
 By Humiliation and strong Sufferance:
 His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength
 And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh. (*PR* 1.151-62)

Paradise Regained could address the apparently common failure to appreciate the earlier epic's war in heaven as a critique of existing assumptions about heroism, ontology, and religious coercion. "A fool will be a fool with the best book, yea or without book" (*CPW* 2:521). Yet *Paradise Regained* suggests that Milton may not have resigned the earlier poem entirely to such foolish misreading and may have attempted to offer a corrective to such a misunderstanding.

In elaborating the gospel accounts of Christ's temptation in *Paradise Regained* Milton deploys a biblicist strategy similar to the earlier epic's elaboration of the Genesis narrative. He makes similar use of typology to engage within the immediate framework the whole of the biblical story. We can see this in the explicit connections and comparisons made between Adam (1.51; 1.115; 2.133-34), Job (1.47; 1.369; 1.424-26), and Christ, the latter being a completion or fulfillment of the truth that was incomplete or only intimated by aspects of the former two. The same typological dynamic is also at work in the several parallels drawn between the temptation story and the heavenly war in Revelation 12.¹ Although, in one sense, the repeated mention of "Wilderness" (always capitalized) simply follows the gospel narratives, and is part of Christ's identification with Israel's forty years in the desert, the repeated descriptions of the temptation as a battle also connect that wilderness to the one into which "the Woman" and the "remnant of her seed" are pursued by the dragon, where he attempts to "make war" against them (Rev. 12:13-17). Structurally, the poem's use of the angelic song as a kind of dramatic chorus is similar to the angelic chorus and/or the "voice in heaven" that speaks throughout the Apocalypse (compare *PR* 1.169-81; 4.596-635; Rev. 5:6-14; 12:10-12; 19:1-8). This results in what Joseph Mede called, in his commentary on Revelation, "the apocalyptic theater," in which the reader is able to glimpse the connections between temporally distant events (Mede 52). Such an apocalyptic strategy "provides an open typological perspective that enables the spectator-reader to employ

interpretive contexts from both past and future revelation” (S.O. Smith 86).

One of the most important changes, however, that Milton makes to the biblical versions of the temptation story is the conclusion. By arranging that the final defeat of Satan’s last effort to tempt Christ results in Satan’s own “fall” from the temple pinnacle, rather than in Christ’s fall into sin (4.562-81), Milton makes a series of further biblical connections. Most immediately, the fall constitutes a further parallel with the heavenly war in Revelation 12 that results in Satan’s first fall. Thus the closing angelic song relates Satan’s immediate fall from the temple both to his past defeat “long of old” (4.604) and to his future final defeat (619-35). Consistent with his typological strategy in *Paradise Lost*, however, Milton does not collapse the various similar events into a single form or identify them entirely with one another. For example, although the fall of Satan from the top of the temple at the end of *Paradise Regained* is like his earlier fall from heaven and his future fall into hell, the narrative preserves the temporal framework and does not imply that these events are simply re-enactments of a single eternal pattern. Rather, the typological similarity between the three events allows the recognition of a pattern that does not deny their singularity. Thus, Milton emphasizes that the most important battles fought by humans are spiritual rather than physical. At the same time, the prediction of Christ’s final judgement, like the earlier war in heaven, is a response to Satan’s freely chosen demand that God’s power be proven by force to match his own. But the point of invoking the Last Judgement with *Paradise Regained* is that precisely such retribution cannot be exercised by humans who, before the eschaton, can only best follow the example of the incarnate Christ. The invocation of the future judgement thus serves as a reminder of the penultimate character of all temporal regimes and their use of force. Moreover, by alluding to the same biblical locus of Revelation 12, Milton emphasizes the typological correspondence between the event which occupies the

center of *Paradise Lost* and the event at the end of *Paradise Regained*, thus weaving the conclusion of the later poem back into the center of the earlier one.

We encounter a different typological elaboration of the gospel narratives in the most sustained treatment of Job within the poem, in Book 3. There Christ responds to the temptation to pursue imperial power for fame and glory by citing Job as an example of true virtue which remains little known among humans. Job's character occasions sustained comment on his position as someone who is better known in heaven than on earth, whose true glory is not public and therefore eschews the use of public force to acquire fame or glory among men:

They err who count it glorious to subdue
By Conquest far and wide, to overrun
Large Countries, and in the field great Battles win,
Great Cities by assault: what do these Worthies,
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter and enslave
Peaceable Nations....

If there be in glory aught of good,
It may by means far different be attain'd
Without ambition, war, or violence. (3.71-76; 88-90)

This description of true glory is offered here by Christ as part of an explanation of the nature of Job's exceptional life (3.64, 67, 95), a life that is itself a prefigurement of the life that Christ lives in fullness (Lewalski, *Brief* 7-9, 103). But Job also, in a sense, becomes here a figure for the hidden character of the true church, at the same time that his rejection of worldly power clarifies the distinction between the two views of reality.

But the similar deployment of typology in the two epics should not obscure crucial

differences in emphasis between them. *Paradise Regained* invokes the terms of spiritual battle by reference to an apocalyptic framework similar to that deployed in Book 6 of *Paradise Lost*, but in a much different immediate setting. The brief epic's choice of the temptation story allows for a more explicit emphasis upon how the question of interpretation relates to the understanding of Christ's identity (compare Lewalski, *Brief* 178-82). The repeated accounts of Christ's baptism within *Paradise Regained* emphasize the central question of interpretation, but also the basis for the Son's identity and ensuing course of action. After Christ's baptism, the narrator first tells us, "the Father's voice / from Heav'n pronounc'd him his beloved Son" (1.30-31). The account is repeated three times, twice by Satan and once by Christ, but each time the key epithet "belov'd" is used explicitly (see 1.84-85; 1.284-85; 4.512-21). There is much that could be made of Satan's puzzlement over the descent of the dove (1.83) or of the interpretive nature of their engagement generally (Krook 132-36; Radzinowicz "Hermeneutic"). The key point here, however, is that the basis for the Son's response to Satan's temptations is his trust in the Father's love. That the brief epic manages structurally to state four times the emphasis upon the Father's love for the Son shows that Milton is making a point beyond the usually single reference to the Father's announcement in the gospel narratives. The same divine love which, in *Paradise Lost*, is the source of all reality is presented in the later epic as integral to the basis for Christ's virtue. In this way, *Paradise Regained* presents a direct reversal of the connections between ontology, identity, and action that we observed in the case of Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

It may seem that the sense of charity in the story of Christ's temptation is muted by his isolation. But it must be remembered that although Christ is alone, he is neither independent nor self-concerned. The basis and origin of his action is the love he shares with the Father, while the ultimate purpose of his resistance to Satan's temptation is the redemption of humanity—hardly a

case of spiritual subjectivism. In effect, *Paradise Regained* offers in the temptation story, and through its use of typology, an explicit embodiment of charity in the life of Christ. And in this way, the brief epic places in the foreground the connections between typology, the rule of charity, and a Christocentric poetic which operate in *Paradise Lost* at usually a more subtextual level. The surface narrative of *Paradise Regained* thus makes more explicit than the earlier epic the account of ontic charity and peace that underlies the Christocentric poetics of *Paradise Lost*. The later poem's shift in emphasis is unmistakable, which explains the aversion to *Paradise Regained* by those who, on Milton's account, enjoyed the earlier epic for the wrong reasons.

In the analysis of *Paradise Lost*, we saw how the intertextual dynamics of biblical typology are, in effect, a Christocentric interpretation of the overarching biblical story intended to ensure that charity rather than coercion is understood as the basis for reality and authentic human freedom. Milton's biblicism thus allows him to redeploy the Augustinian rule of charity so as to guard against the coercive potential in the ecclesiology of *De Civitate Dei* and its accompanying narration of human history. In the earlier epic, books 11 and 12 function as a version of the rule of charity writ large, as it were, through the whole of biblical history. In *Paradise Regained*, the direction of the scale for the Christocentric poetic is reversed so that the whole of Christ's work is engaged from within the narration of one part of his life. By making more explicit the nature of charity inherent in that Christocentric poetic, Milton identifies more directly the kind of choices involved in the spiritual battle depicted at the centre of *Paradise Lost*. Thus, if books 11 and 12 function as a metanarrative version of the rule of charity for the preceding books of the longer epic, *Paradise Regained* offers a micronarrative version of the rule of charity which makes more explicit the moral and spiritual nature of the war in heaven. In this way, the brief epic could offer a corrective to those early readers who mistook the nature of the

epic battle at the centre of *Paradise Lost*. Moreover, *Paradise Regained* effects this corrective through a similar range of biblical intertextuality, invoking Genesis, Job, passion narratives, and Revelation—all within the scope of the story of Christ's temptation. In this respect, Milton subsumes the overarching biblical story within the shorter epic from near the midpoint of that larger story, at the Incarnation of the Logos, rather than from its beginning.

Thus, like the earlier epic, *Paradise Regained* embodies a logic of scriptural imagination, in which the intertextual dilation of biblical narrative becomes inextricable from the account of liberty and charity that underwrites Milton's stance on religious toleration. The brief epic's intertextual dynamic weaves together the elements from the whole range of biblical narration from Genesis to Revelation, and presents the resulting *textus* from the location of the Incarnational mid-point of the overarching biblical story. In many respects, *Paradise Regained* involves some of the same issues of human freedom and divine responsibility addressed in *Paradise Lost*. But in the later poem he more explicitly rejects any enthusiasm for carnal warfare which would mis-celebrate the central battle of the earlier poem. The potential for such a mistaken understanding of *Paradise Lost*, as a basis for comparing it with *Paradise Regained*, would explain to a great extent the vehemence of Milton's response to those who viewed the later poem as inferior to the longer epic. Thus *Paradise Regained* offers, through its portrayal of Satan's interpretive practice and its defeat, a quasi-prophetic account of how *Paradise Lost* could be misunderstood, at the same time that it embodies an antidote to such a misreading that would mistake the ontology of the earlier poem for one of coercion rather than charity.

Notes

¹ Emory Elliott lists no fewer than 24 allusions to the Book of Revelation in *Paradise Regained*, 10 of those occurring in the final fifty lines (231). Samuel Smith argues at greater length and in greater detail that the allusions at the end are the culmination of an engagement with the book of Revelation which is consistent through the whole of *Paradise Regained* (87-188). Whether or not one agrees entirely with Smith's larger claims about the apocalyptic character of the whole poem, the simple parallel between Satan's "fall" in both poems and the war in Revelation 12 remains readily apparent. For what remains the definitive study on the relationship between *Paradise Regained* and its biblical precedents, emphasizing the book of Job, see Lewlaski, *Brief*.

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