

# The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*: Addenda from the Bishop of Salisbury

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When I was investigating the provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*, a frequently heterodox theological treatise that has been assigned to John Milton ever since its discovery in 1823,<sup>1</sup> I came across another writer, Thomas Burgess (1756-1837), Bishop of Salisbury, who had argued objections to Milton's authorship similar to mine. Because his views had been dismissed by everyone concerned with the authenticity of the ascription to Milton, I did not follow up this lead. I now know that I should have, because the Bishop has left a number of astute observations which are certainly worth consideration today.

Burgess was an outstanding scholar and churchman. His list of publications is a long and broad one, including a book on the divinity of Christ countering Arianism,<sup>2</sup> the heresy out of which so much has been made regarding the *Christian Doctrine* and Milton's supposed acceptance of it. He was also a founder of the Protestant Union (a group of activists within the Church of England) and of the Royal Society of Literature. He led the development of higher education in Wales. In his day Burgess was certainly a distinguished intellectual and religious leader whose opinions it would be wrong to ignore.

Charles Sumner published the original Latin text and his translation of the recently discovered treatise in two sumptuous volumes dedicated on 25 June 1825 to King George IV.<sup>3</sup> It seems

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likely that the bishop learned a good deal about its heterodox contents before this date—probably through his connections with the Royal Society of Literature, to which Robert Lemon was reporting this and other discoveries that he was making as he catalogued English public records—for the next year he republished Milton's last prose tract, *Of True Religion*, with a long introduction arguing that its author had not written the *Christian Doctrine*.<sup>4</sup> In this preface he made the point (p. xxxv) that the treatise does not concern itself significantly with the Roman Catholic Church, a favorite object of attack in Milton's canonical works. Burgess (or someone else) must have alerted Sumner to this problem, for in the "Preliminary Observations" to his translation, as part of his proof that Milton was its author, Sumner thought it necessary to argue that it ignores the Roman Church because Protestantism was by then so well established as not to need further apology. But anti-Catholic bias is basic to the position of the canonical *Of True Religion*, which Milton would dictate in 1673. Its silent rebuttal of Sumner's argument must be one of the reasons why Burgess reprinted the pamphlet in 1826.

His preface to it made other important points. First, he considered a statement in the canonical *Logic* which discusses the individuality of forms as essence and concludes, "*Here let the theologians take notice*"—that is, as usually interpreted, theologians should beware of (orthodox) Trinitarianism, which would violate this principle. Such an argument was taken to be a support for Milton's supposed Arianism: the essence of the Son differed in this heresy from that of the Father and so was not part of the Godhead.<sup>5</sup> But as Burgess argues, the sentence can be read with the opposite meaning: let orthodox theologians be on guard lest they fall into Arianism over the issue (as did the author of the *Christian Doctrine*). The bishop, who had analyzed the heresy in print, observed that essences are partly shared in common and are partly individual; they are two in one respect, one in another: "essentially different in person, . . . essentially one in their common essence or substance" (pp. xix-xx). As he goes on to observe, more generally and I believe correctly, Milton disagreed with the Church of England not on its doctrines but on its form of government (pp. xxii-xxv), an idea to which he would return.

Second, Burgess argues that a paragraph in Milton's *Of True Religion* sharply distances him from the Arians. In it Milton takes pains to list religious groups which disagree in one way or another with the received doctrines of the Church of England:

The Lutheran holds Consubstantiation; an error indeed, but not mortal. The Calvinist is taxt with Predestination, and to

make God the Author of sin; not with any dishonourable thought of God, but it may be over zealously asserting his absolute power, not without plea of Scripture. The Anabaptist is accus'd of Denying Infants their right to Baptism; again they say, they deny nothing but what the Scripture denies them. 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 terms of Trinity, Triniunity, 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 in their Sophistic Subtlties, but in Scripture a plain Doctrin.<sup>6</sup>

Although the meaning of the long sentence about the Arians and Socinians is far from clear, critics have assumed it to mean that Milton favored their doctrines.

Such a conclusion evidently gave Burgess real trouble. To escape it he proposed that the punctuation of the treatise was inexact but that it could be cleared up by repointing it with parentheses: "The Arian and Socinian are charg'd to dispute against the Trinity (they affirm . . . to be known); a mystery indeed in their Sophistic Subtlties, but in Scripture a plain Doctrine" (p. 9 n.). Assuming the traditional interpretation, Keith Stavelly, the editor of the treatise in *Yale Prose*, protested such a reading, which he judged to be so forced in order to accommodate Burgess's "theory of Milton's antipathy to antitrinitarianism."<sup>7</sup> Indeed the long and internally complex parenthesis is difficult to accept as it stands in his revision.

But Burgess was on the right path. The paragraph is a good example of a rhetorical strategy that Milton sometimes employed in his later years, the sentence by sentence statement of another's position followed immediately by his own response to it. In *Hirelings* (1659), for example, Milton takes a position against someone who believes that ministers should be paid for their services:

At burials thir [the ministers'] attendance they alleage on the corps; all the guests do as much unhir'd: But thir praiers at the grave; superstitiously requir'd: yet if requir'd, thir last performance to the decesd of thir own flock. But the funeral sermon: at thir choise: or if not, an occasion offerd them to preach out of season, which is one part of thir office. But

something must be spoken in praise: if due, thir duty; if undue, thir corruption.<sup>8</sup>

A modern format makes Milton's meaning clear:

[The view of those advocating pay for the services of ministers:] At burials thir attendance they alleage on the corps.

[Milton's response:] All the guests do as much unhir'd.

But thir praiers at the grave.

[Response:] Superstitiously requir'd, yet if requir'd, thir last performance to the decesd of thir own flock.

But the funeral sermon.

[Response:] At thir choice . . . etc.

Compositors had no accepted format for such a dialogue. In *A Treatise of Civil Power* the same kind of argument is primarily indicated by contrast of italic type with roman for statement and response.<sup>9</sup> In the foregoing quotation from *Hirelings* it is primarily indicated by punctuation. A similar kind of division holds for the passage from *Of True Religion* under consideration:

[The view of a speaker arguing for alienating differences among Protestant groups:] The Lutheran holds Consubstantiation.

[Milton's response:] An error indeed, but not mortal.<sup>10</sup>

The Calvinist is taxt with Predestination and to make God the Author of sin.<sup>11</sup>

[Response: They do it] not with any dishonourable thought of God . . .

The Anabaptist is accus'd of Denying Infants their right to Baptism.<sup>12</sup>

[Response:] Again they say, they deny nothing but what the Scripture denies them.

The Arian and Socinian are charg'd to dispute against the Trinity.

[Response:] They affirm to believe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to Scripture, and the Apostolic Creed.

As for terms of Trinity, Triniunity, 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.

[Response:] A mystery indeed in their Sophistic Subtilties,  
but in Scripture a plain Doctrin.

Such a division of the sentences shows clearly that Milton recognizes the position of the Arians and Socinians but rejects "their Sophistic Subtilties" to accept instead the "plain Doctrin" of scripture. Writing from the perspective of the Church of England, he no more identifies with them than with Lutherans or Presbyterians. He thinks, however, that the Church should tolerate them, as it should all Protestant groups against the Roman Catholics. In summary, the canonic *Of True Religion*, dictated after the supposed dictation of the *Christian Doctrine*, rejects the arguments about the Son of God advanced in the earlier treatise.

In his preface to the edition of Milton's tract, the bishop promised to publish a fuller statement of his argument in a book to be entitled *Milton Contrasted with Milton*.<sup>13</sup> It appeared in 1829, but he had already had a few copies of it printed in 1825 for private circulation. For the most part the book compares Milton's ideas in his canonic works with those of the treatise to prove his disagreements with it—contrasts now well known but generally judged not conclusive. Its author observed that Milton put all of his statements concerned with religion into English, not the Latin of the treatise, and wondered why—unless the projected audience were foreign (pp. 179-83). This fertile idea (which I myself have argued on somewhat different grounds<sup>14</sup>) he would develop in the Discourses of 1826 and 1827. As he would repeat in the Discourses, he again confirmed that Milton's genuine religious arguments, set forth in a variety of books, concern only church discipline, not doctrine (p. 192).

In the first two Discourses to the Royal Society of Literature included in the 1829 volume (the third, delivered in 1828, contains nothing really new), Burgess continued his case against Milton's authorship of the *Christian Doctrine* put forward in 1826 in the preface to his edition of *Of True Religion*. He evaluated the evidence of the early biographers, ably anticipating my own arguments.<sup>15</sup> I do not believe that his discussion of the probable amanuenses uncovered anything that we do not now know, though he had made so minute an examination as to be able to assert correctly that Daniel Skinner's supposedly corrected pages contained a good many more errors than their original had had (p. 14). A skilled Latinist, he thought the prose style quite un-Miltonic<sup>16</sup> and, like many others, did not see how a blind man could have dictated such a work (pp. 27-29).

In a postscript added to his earlier preface to *Of True Religion* he had briefly mentioned a significant discovery about a forgery

associated with Milton's friend John Selden. In 1673 "Ioannis Seldeni Angli" had been foisted on to a work of Alexander Sardo, analogously to the "Ioannis Miltoni Angli" which Burgess recognized had been added to the *Christian Doctrine* manuscript (p. xlvi). Now in the Discourses he reported that the false ascription to Selden, together with a fraudulent dedication to the book, derived from Moses Pitt, who was somehow associated with Daniel Skinner, the original possessor of the manuscript of the *Christian Doctrine* as well as of a collection of the *State Papers* which he wanted Pitt to publish (pp. 70-73). Burgess concluded that Skinner's transcript of the treatise with Milton's name on it "seems to have been made for some purpose of disguise" (p. 75).

The bishop's most informative new material, however, derives from his querying where and when the manuscript was written. First, he picks up an interpretation of Acts 20:28:

"Syriaca versio non *Dei*, sed *Christi* ecclesiam scribit, ut *nostra* recens *Domini* ecclesiam."<sup>17</sup> By *our recent* Version, the writer must have meant the public Version of his country, or his own translation. *Our* recent Version in Milton's time was that of King James's translators, which has not the "Church of the Lord," but "the Church of God." Nor has *any* Version of the seventeenth century been yet discovered that has the meaning which is ascribed to it in the Latin Treatise, but *one*, and that is the *Arian* Version of the New Testament by Felbinger, published at Amsterdam in 1660, in which the passage is thus rendered: "the Church of the Lord—die gemeine dass Hern." Here, then, we have a voucher, and here *only*, for the *nostra recens (versio)* of the Latin writer, which affords a clue to the author's country and age, if not to the author himself.<sup>18</sup>

Burgess may not have known that Felbinger's interpretation derives from a comment of a better-known scholar, Étienne Courcelles (1586-1659), a leading figure in the Remonstrant Seminary in Amsterdam who in 1658 had published an edition of the Greek New Testament with a note that made the point about Acts 20:28 that Burgess found in Felbinger's German.<sup>19</sup> Thus the *Christian Doctrine* relates here to the strong Dutch Arminian tradition of which in mid-century Courcelles was a leader.<sup>20</sup> "Our recent version" in the treatise suggests that the sentence was written not long after 1660.

Returning to this conclusion in the Discourse of the following year, Burgess dismissed Walton's Polyglot Bible as the text referred to "because that [Latin] translation, whether it was by Tremellius

or by Gabriel Sionita, was not the work of Walton or of his age" (p. 57).<sup>21</sup>

This is the beginning of a detailed argument associating the author of the *Christian Doctrine* with the Continent and most especially with Holland rather than with England. Because the treatise concerns itself to a considerable extent with the ideas of William Ames, as Maurice Kelley has shown in detail,<sup>22</sup> and once names him "*our countryman, Ames*" (*Yale Prose*, 6:706, emphasis added), one might argue that inasmuch as Ames was born in England the author of the treatise was English. But as the bishop showed, Ames had no significant English connections. He identified himself only with Holland, where he spent his life and published most of his work, and indeed placed himself, as Burgess noted, firmly in the Dutch tradition "in the Preface to his *Coronis ad Collationem Hagiensem*. . . . Throughout the whole of the *Coronis*, *Nostri* is used" to refer to Dutch, not English, divines. The "oppositi" who were his opponents there were "the Remonstrant Divines" (p. 61).

An interesting issue which the bishop raised is that of public financial support for ministers. As he observed, the treatise assumes that they may rely upon their own litigation in order to collect tithes due them. But because in many English parishes tithes were farmed out to "impropriators," who bought the right to collect them as a business investment and who would sue to protect it,<sup>23</sup> in historical fact the argument, Burgess states, "is inapplicable to England or Holland" (p. 62). Because it was not standard English practice (pp. 62-63), an English writer would not think to attack it as the treatise does:

To bargain for or exact tithes or gospel-taxes, to extort a subsidy from the flock by force or by the intervention of the magistrates, to invoke the civil law in order to secure church revenue, and to take such matters into the courts—these are the actions of wolves, not ministers of the gospel. . . . How disgraceful is it, then, for a man of the church to enter into litigation with his flock, or rather with a flock which is not strictly speaking his at all, for the sake of tithes.

(*Yale Prose*, 6:598)

As the bishop went on to observe, "The Latin Writer says (which Milton does not), that litigation for tithes is peculiar to the ecclesiastics of his own country. Milton asserts (which the Latin Writer does not), that no Protestant Divines are maintained by tithes but the English [*Yale Prose*, 7:281]. Tithes are paid to the

clergy in various Protestant parts of Germany, and throughout Sweden and Denmark" (p. 63). Whether or not ministers sued to collect them in England, the important point here is that Milton, who strongly opposed forced tithing in *Hirelings* (1659), never suggested there that ministers went to court over the issue.

As for the passage on divorce in the *Christian Doctrine* alluding to some other work by its author that Dr. Lewalski and I have analyzed with opposite conclusions,<sup>24</sup> Burgess made the interesting, if minor, point that it twice refers merely to the name "Selden" without any qualifying term: "Selden demonstrated" the issue, and again, "I have proved this elsewhere. . . . and Selden has demonstrated the same thing" (*Yale Prose*, 6:378). But Milton in canonical works never names this friend so barely: he is at least "Mr. Selden" in *Areopagitica* (*Yale Prose*, 2:513) and elsewhere "our learned Selden" (*Doctrine and Discipline*, *Yale Prose*, 2:350), "Our distinguished Countryman Selden" (*Second Defense*, *Yale Prose*, 4:625), or "our Selden" (*Hirelings*, *Yale Prose*, 7:299). Selden's name is distanced from the author of the treatise as it nowhere is in Milton's own writing (pp. 64-66).

Finally, in a significant insight, Burgess observed that the *Christian Doctrine* responds to the ideas of foreign, not English writers. The only ones with any English connections that it cites are Ames and Selden (p. 66).<sup>25</sup> For example, in the chapter on justification the author raises

a question over which there is very fierce controversy: does faith alone justify? *Our* theologians say yes; and hold, moreover, that works are the effects of faith, not the causes of justification. . . . *Others* [and these include the author, as will be made clear below] contend that we are not justified by faith alone, and they base their argument [for works too] on James ii:24. . . . As the two points of view seem incompatible, *our* theologians argue that James must be talking about justification [by works] in the sight of men, not in the sight of God.

(*Yale Prose*, 6:489, emphasis added)

Burgess pointed out that this was not the sense adopted by any of "our" English theologians—Jewell, Hooker, Jackson, Mede, Taylor, and Hammond—"who may be considered as the standards of the Church of England doctrine" (pp. 59-60). Rather, the text's "*Nostrī Theologi*," he judged, should "be understood of those of Holland" (p. 60), though he was unable to provide any more specific identification.



In the New Testament issues between Paul's faith that alone justifies before God and James's faith coupled with works, "our theologians" in the foregoing quotation singled out the Pauline. They then were constrained to bring the verse from James about works somehow into harmony with it and so concluded "that James must be talking about justification in the sight of man, not of God," a position that the treatise goes on to reject in the paragraph that follows. In his note quoting an analogue of the sentence Kelley has shown that this reading of "our theologians" is that of the Arminian Courcelles (*Opera*, p. 794), who had interpreted James 2:24 in almost identical language: "illum de justificatione coram Deo non agere, sed de justificatione coram hominibus." The Latin of the treatise reads, "de justificatione coram hominibus, non coram Deo."<sup>26</sup>

The author of the treatise goes on to state regretfully that he "cannot imagine what came into our theologians' heads" to lead them to this conclusion (*Yale Prose*, 6:490). His own position is that works are necessary too, that true faith inspires them. Arguing from Romans 3:28 "that man is justified by faith without the works of the law," he concludes that Paul has eliminated only works done to fulfill the law, not works that result from faith: "Faith has its own works" and thus "the only living faith is a faith which acts" (*Yale Prose*, 6:490). Again Kelley is helpful in establishing the context of this idea. A follower of Courcelles in Amsterdam was Philip van Limborch (1633-1712), who also wrote in disagreement, "when we say we are justified by Faith, we do not exclude those Works which Faith requires and produces, since they are included in such a Faith," and again, "here 'tis objected, that St. Paul in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians does all along maintain, that a Man is justified by Faith only, without the Works of the Law. Answ. 'Tis here to be remembered, the Apostle does not exclude all Works, but only those of the Law, as he expressly calls them."<sup>27</sup>

That Courcelles is important throughout the treatise is not surprising, though he is never named. Kelley cited his work thirty-eight times to clarify or give parallels to the arguments of the treatise—more than anyone else except Reformed Dogmatists like Wolleb and Ames, who usually provided contrasting ideas or an organizational pattern. But the work does not name Courcelles or any other of the Amsterdam school, nor would its author do so if he associated himself with its ideas. He freely alludes, however, to members of other groups like the Reformed Dogmatists and the School of Saumur.<sup>28</sup>

Such is the case that one can make, following the bishop's lead, to orient the treatise to this Dutch rather than English religious

context. Burgess was unable to identify its author nor have I, though there are some interesting leads to follow up and others that can be discarded. The work itself as we know it was under way between 1660 (when the New Testament interpretation of Acts 20:28 cited above was published) and perhaps earlier, and 1674 or shortly thereafter at the latest, when it turned up in Daniel Skinner's hands. It could have originated from only the limited number of apologists active during those years whose references to "our" authorities are always so far as they can be identified to Dutch writers. One can eliminate two of the most important, Courcelles and Limborch. The former died in 1659; as has been seen, some of his ideas are countered in the work. Limborch also is quite unlikely, though he would publish in 1686 a book on dogmatics even longer than the *Christian Doctrine*, with which it shares many ideas.<sup>29</sup> But I have not found in it any verbal echoes from the earlier treatise such as one might expect if one person authored them both, and the organization is so different that the one cannot be an expansion of the other. Furthermore, Limborch reportedly advised Elzevir to reject the *Christian Doctrine* on the grounds of its Arianism when Skinner was trying to find a publisher for it.<sup>30</sup> If this account of Limborch's judgment is accurate, it also suggests that he did not know who wrote it and hence that it did not derive from any of the Amsterdam Seminary group themselves of which Limborch was a leader, like Andrew Wiszowaty (1608-1678) or the Polish Socinian Daniel Zweicker (1612-1678).

Because the treatise turned up among Milton's effects at his death, when it was handed over to Skinner, one of his Dutch associates who gave or loaned him the manuscript may be considered as its author.<sup>31</sup> Such a possibility is Isaac Vossius (1618-1689), who had close relations with religious developments in the Netherlands. His maternal grandfather was Francis Junius, who with John Tremellius made the Latin translation of the Bible which is the standard text quoted throughout the *Christian Doctrine*. His father, Gerard, was sympathetic with Arminianism and was a friend of Conrad Vorst, who was successor to Arminius at Leiden and had established an Arian-Arminian position there analogous to that of the treatise. In 1655 Isaac moved from the court of Queen Christina of Sweden back to the Netherlands, where he was active until 1670. He then settled in London and direct association with Milton became distinctly possible, though no early biographer mentions it. His locations in Holland and London nicely fit the period concerned. As seen above, Burgess stated that in Sweden, where Vossius had lived for many years, ministers received tithes directly from their parishioners. On the other hand

there is a tradition that in his later years when Vossius was Canon of Windsor he was noted for his extreme credulity. Charles II is said to have remarked of him then that Vossius would believe anything except the Bible—an unexpected judgment if he were the author of the strongly Bible-centered treatise. Nor is there any evidence that he ever wrote on divorce, as the author of the treatise mentions that he has (*Yale Prose*, 6:378).

From its origin in this mid-century Arminian Dutch context, Jeremie Picard made a copy of the manuscript (it is a fair copy despite a few corrections and additions, not the original working one), possibly for Milton himself and so may include material added by one or more of his associates. In any case, it turned up at his death as an anonymous work which its new owner, the outsider Skinner, would naturally attribute to him. Its later history is well known.

## APPENDIX

In this appendix I add, without detailed argument, several doctrines that escaped the bishop's attention. Each exhibits fundamental disagreement between the *Christian Doctrine* and the canon of Milton's works dictated after 1655. See also notes 10, 11, and 12.

1. Because its Arianism denies to the Son a necessary intermediary role between man and God, the author of the treatise can argue in opposition to the traditional Christian judgment of the hopeless state of many pagan gentiles that they "are saved although they believed or believe in God alone." The reason is that Christ's sacrifice is for anyone "who believed only in God the Father" (*Yale Prose*, 6:475). On the contrary, in *Paradise Lost* "to God [there] is no access / Without Mediator" (12:239-40), whom the virtuous pagans, of course, could not know; and in *Paradise Regained*, beginning with Socrates, they were led only "by Natures light," were "Ignorant of themselves, of God much more" (4:228-310), and so could not meet the requirements asserted by the treatise.<sup>32</sup>

2. Normative Christianity has viewed the Incarnation as a union of divine and human *natures* to produce the single *person* Jesus. Thus in *Paradise Lost* the Father instructs the Son, "Thir Nature also to thy Nature joyn," to become a "Man among men" (3:282-83). Later, the Father foretells that the Son will join "Manhood to God-head" (12:389). The treatise, on the other hand, argues at length for the identity of "nature" and "person" and that the historical Jesus originated from "a mutual hypostatic union of two

natures or, in other words . . . , of two persons" (*Yale Prose*, 6:424). The Christological differences between the two words are immense.

3. It has long been recognized that the *Christian Doctrine* and *Paradise Lost* do not agree about divorce. The former asserts that "Marriage is, by definition, a union of the most intimate kind, but it is not indissoluble or indivisible" (*Yale Prose*, 6:371), the latter that Eve "shall enjoy [Adam] / Inseparablie thine." Adam tells her that she will be "Henceforth an individual [that is, undividable] solace dear" to him (4:473, 486). Later as he sins with her Adam asserts, "Our State cannot be severd" (9:958). To escape the contradiction the editor of the treatise explained that such statements "refer to a time before the fall of man" (*Yale Prose*, 6:371, n. 53); yet this is hardly an interpretation that would occur at these places in the poem to either its author or its readers if, indeed, it has any significance there at all. As a separate point, the rejoicing of the narrative voice over God's great gift of sexuality (4:741-45), joined by Raphael's assertion of its angelic exercise (8:620-29), puts the poem into sharp disagreement with the treatise's disparaging assertion that "Since the fall of Adam, the relief of sexual desire has become a kind of secondary end" of marriage (*Yale Prose*, 6:370).

4. The treatise interprets Old Testament law in an eccentric fashion. Christians of all persuasions have always distinguished the ceremonial laws (typified by those concerning food) from the moral (typified by the Ten Commandments). They agree that the former were abrogated by the New Testament but that the latter remained in force for everyone. The *Christian Doctrine*, on the other hand, argues vigorously that *all* Old Testament laws were abrogated (*Yale Prose*, 6:528-36). Milton himself, however, in *Hirelings* accepts the traditional Christian distinction: "hire to the laborer," for example, is "of moral and perpetual right" (*Yale Prose*, 7:281). His argument in this treatise, which counters legally enforced tithing, is that the Old Testament tax is part of the abrogated ceremonial law, not the moral, whose authority he never questions here though it might have simplified his position to do so. (On the other hand, *Paradise Lost*, 12:297-99, may imply the replacement of the imperfection of all Old Testament laws by the New Covenant.)

5. Again on the moral versus the ceremonial law, Milton observes in *Hirelings* that those who support tithing argue for the analogy that its "tenth of fruits" is equivalent to the Sabbath's "seveanth of days." For Milton this is to make a ceremonial law out of a moral one (the Fourth Commandment), thus "denying

morality [i.e., the moral law] in the sabbath," and so for his opponents "the seaventh day is not moral" (*Yale Prose*, 7:295). But such an anti-sabbatarian stand is exactly that of the *Christian Doctrine* (*Yale Prose*, 6:707-14). Significantly, Milton adds in *Hirelings* that in "denying morality in the sabbath" his tithing opponents are "therein better agreeing with reformed churches abroad then the rest of our [English] divines" (*Yale Prose*, 7:295, emphasis added). One should also note that ideas in *Civil Power* match those in the *Christian Doctrine* far more closely than do those in its twin, *Hirelings* (both were published in 1659). But *Hirelings* appears to have been composed some years earlier (*Yale Prose*, 7:230 n. 6). This contrast suggests that Milton had the treatise in hand by the time he was dictating *Civil Power* late in 1658 or early 1659 and adopted some of its ideas there, a little earlier than the dating argued by Burgess above.

6. An objection that can properly be raised to counter the conclusion presented here, that Milton was not responsible for the *Christian Doctrine*, is its author's statement that he has proved "elsewhere" that "Christ himself, [in] Matt. xix.9, permitted divorce on the grounds of fornication" because fornication "can signify anything which is found to be persistently at variance with love, fidelity, help and society." Furthermore, he adds, John Selden in his *Uxor Hebraea*, "with the help of numerous Rabbinical texts . . . has demonstrated the same thing" (*Yale Prose*, 6:378). The sole antecedent to these assertions that has been identified is Milton's own *Tetrachordon* although, of course, it was published in 1644, two years before Selden's work in 1646. But an important and hitherto unrecognized antecedent appeared on the Continent, *De Sponsalibus et Divortiis* (Basel: 1652), by John Buxtorf the younger (1599-1664). Its author was professor of Hebrew at the University of Basel.<sup>33</sup>

This treatise is a quarto of [2]+166 pages with a "Diatribē" by Isaac Abarbenel appended. In Buxtorf's analysis of the status of concubines (p. 11) he includes the issue of the concubine of Judges 19, which the treatise considers in much the same context as that of the *Christian Doctrine* (*Yale Prose*, 6:278) and draws for its interpretation on the authority of John Selden's *De Successionibus ad Leges Hebraeorum*, which was often associated with his *Uxor Hebraea*.

The first part of the book analyzes Old Testament laws on divorce, relying heavily upon rabbinical interpretations which Buxtorf quotes at length in Hebrew. On page 106 begins the second part of the work, a long discussion of "Whether Christ and Moses are at odds on the issue of divorce, and how one may

reconcile their positions." The argument is much like that in the *Christian Doctrine*, as would be expected, and, for that matter, like the one in *Tetrachordon*, though it mentions neither Milton nor any of his works. As is inevitable, the major biblical texts are the same: from Matthew 19, Genesis 2, Deuteronomy 24, Malachi 2, and so on. In short, *De Sponsalibus* may well be his earlier work to which the author of the *Christian Doctrine* refers. At the same time one must recognize that the works are addressed to quite different audiences: *De Sponsalibus* was evidently intended for experts in Hebrew, the *Christian Doctrine* for less specialized biblical scholars. It covers, of course, a far greater area of religious doctrines. Finally, I have not traced a connection for Buxtorf between Basel and the Dutch authors identified earlier.

With the conclusion of these arguments against Milton's responsibility for the *Christian Doctrine*, one should not be surprised by the hundreds of correspondencies that have been observed between its ideas and those of the canonic works. These are the common heritage of seventeenth-century Protestantism, a fact that fully justifies the use of the treatise to annotate many aspects of Milton's works. But equally apt parallels except for the idiosyncratic heresies exist in the writings of other authors in the Reformed and Arminian traditions on the Continent such as Ames, Courcelles, Episcopius, Limborch, or Wolleb. In any case there is no reason to distort the meanings of Milton's accepted canon to force agreement with those of the treatise.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," with comments by Drs. Barbara Lewalski and John Shawcross, *SEL* 32, 1 (Winter, 1992): 129-66.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Burgess, *Evidence of the Divinity of Christ* (London: 1815).

<sup>3</sup>Copies of the engraving analyzed so perceptively by Dr. Gordon Campbell in my essay cited above, notes 22 and 23, were prepared for and inserted into each volume, together with another from some sonnets of the Trinity Manuscript in a failed attempt to demonstrate who the amanuenses of the treatise were.

<sup>4</sup>*Protestant Union. Of True Religion* (London: 1826). To date no scholar has been interested in considering Burgess's ideas because of the unanimous and unquestioning acceptance of Milton's authorship of the *Christian Doctrine*. Francis E. Mineka, for example, who has published much the most extensive study of the original reception of the book, gives him a single brief footnote in "The Critical Reception of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Studies in English* 23 (1943; rpt. Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1972): 115-47. Maurice Kelley's "The Recovery, Printing, and Reception of Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *HLQ* 31, 1 (November 1967): 35-41, is repeated, mostly verbatim, in volume 6 of

the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953-82), Introduction (henceforth *Yale Prose*). Such thorough scholars as Masson and Parker fail even to mention Burgess.

<sup>5</sup>The argument has been repeated; see Thomas S.K. Scott-Craig, "The Craftsmanship and Theological Significance of Milton's *Art of Logic*," *HLQ* 17, 1 (November 1953): 1-16; Maurice Kelley's edition of the *Christian Doctrine* in *Yale Prose*, 6:216 n. 37; and Walter Ong's less extreme position in his edition of the *Art of Logic* in *Yale Prose*, 8:233 (where the translated quotation appears) and n. 5. Burgess returns to the point several times in the works included in his collection of 1829 cited below.

<sup>6</sup>*Yale Prose*, 8:424-25.

<sup>7</sup>*Yale Prose*, 8:413-14 n. 19.

<sup>8</sup>*Yale Prose*, 7 (revised edition, 1980): 298-99; see also my discussion of the rhetoric, pp. 234-35.

<sup>9</sup>*Yale Prose*, 7:264.

<sup>10</sup>This is sharply at odds with the *Christian Doctrine*, which judges that "Consubstantiation and particularly transubstantiation . . . are utterly alien to reason, common sense and human behavior. What is more, they are irreconcilable with sacred doctrine" (*Yale Prose*, 6:554).

<sup>11</sup>A point supported in the *Christian Doctrine*, e.g. *Yale Prose*, 6:164-65, with which Milton is here disagreeing.

<sup>12</sup>Nowhere in the canonical works does Milton support adult against infant baptism. The treatise argues for it strongly (*Yale Prose*, 6:544-52).

<sup>13</sup>Its title page reads, "*Milton Not the Author of the Lately-Discovered Arian Work De Doctrina Christiana. Three Discourses, Delivered at the Anniversary Meetings of the Royal Society of Literature, In the Years 1826, 1827, and 1828. To Which is Added, Milton Contrasted with Milton, and with the Scriptures*" (London: 1829). It is a rare volume; I have found no copies in the British, Bodleian, or Cambridge University Libraries. Dr. John Carey, himself a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, has written me that its librarian has not been able to locate a copy in its collection (even though the Bishop's Discourses printed in it include his reports of each year's activities). The absence of copies from major English libraries needs to be accounted for. One must observe that the throne had sponsored publication of the treatise as Milton's and made possible the very existence of the Society. I have used a reproduction of the copy in the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio, kindly furnished to me by its Curator of Rare Books, Alfred Kleine-Kreutzmann. The Union Catalogue records another at Harvard. Subsequent page references will appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>14</sup>In "The Theological Context of the *Christian Doctrine*," reprinted in my *The Descent of Urania* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 73-90. Believing that Milton had authored the treatise, I was hard pressed to explain why it "makes no mention whatsoever" of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the most important public statement of any English Puritan group (p. 74). I concluded even then that its author "minimized the *Westminster* position in favor of continental authorities" (p. 79). Totally ignored by the treatise in any case is the other significant affirmation of English faith, the Thirty-Nine Articles.

<sup>15</sup>In Hunter, "Provenance," pp. 137-39.

<sup>16</sup>In an important footnote in the book *Milton Contrasted with Milton*, he anticipated my own wish for a comparative stylistic study of the Latin of the *Christian Doctrine* and Milton's Latin works. Burgess judged that only one of the latter would be suitable for such a test, the *Logic*, because

it is the only Latin *didactic* work that he published. . . . The *Defensiones pro Populo Anglicano* are, from the nature of their subjects, so different from it,—so full of vehement argument and imagery,—that they afford no grounds of comparison. But even in the calmer and simpler composition of his *Logic*, we almost throughout trace the hand of a Poet, in his illustrations of the rules of *Logic* from the language, modes, and adjuncts of Poetry.

(p. 132 n.)

The *Christian Doctrine* is in this respect noteworthy for its rare allusions to literary matters.

<sup>17</sup>As translated in the *Yale Prose* edition the passage runs, “the Syriac version reads *Church of Christ* for *Church of God*: similarly, our recent translation has *the Church of the Lord*” (6:242). Kelley’s notes point up the issue of Arianism between the two different translations.

<sup>18</sup>Burgess, pp. 30-31. Jeremias Felbinger (1616-1690) was author of *Das Neue Testament*. I have not seen a copy. He corresponded with the well-known English Unitarian John Biddle and had been Spinoza’s earliest Latin tutor.

<sup>19</sup>*Novum Testamentum* (Amsterdam: Elzevir, 1658). Ms. Sharon Snow, Curator of Rare Books, has kindly verified this information for me from the copy in the Wake Forest University collection.

<sup>20</sup>For this aspect of religious issues in Holland at this time see E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1947-52), 1:chaps. xli-xliv. For the relations of this group with the more conservative Reformed leaders see C.S.M. Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius* (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1981), pp. 251-52. The Seminary dated from 1634.

<sup>21</sup>He is answering H.J. Todd, who in his *Some Account of the Life and Writings of John Milton* (London: 1826), p. 360, had identified the translation with the Walton edition.

<sup>22</sup>See his annotations throughout *Yale Prose*, 6.

<sup>23</sup>I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Campbell, who called my attention to the complexities of English tithing practices. As he notes in a letter to me, the phrase “to invoke the civil law” suggests a foreign context because in England “the civil courts dealt only with the titles to tithes.” Recoveries of them resulted from “writs brought in the ecclesiastical courts.” An informative study of the interregnum years is by Margaret James, “The Political Importance of the Tithes Controversy in the English Revolution, 1640-60,” in *History* 26, 101 (June 1941): 1-18.

<sup>24</sup>See my “Provenance,” pp. 147, 163-64.

<sup>25</sup>I also have argued this point in the same essay, pp. 131-32, pointing out the very different sets of authorities cited in the treatise and in the canonical writings. Burgess’s list is at p. 66 n. A name that he should have included with Ames and Selden is that of the Scot John Cameron (*Yale Prose*, 6:534) who, however, was firmly identified with the French school of Saumur.

<sup>26</sup>Courcelles had succeeded Simon Episcopius as leader of the Seminary upon the death of the latter in 1641. I have suggested how dependent the *Christian Doctrine* is on the writings of both men in “Theological Context,” pp. 80-84.

<sup>27</sup>*Yale Prose*, 6:489 and 490, nn. 5 and 7. The quotations are from Limborch’s *A Complete System or Body of Divinity*, trans. William Jones, 2 vols. (London: 1702), Book 6, Section 3, Part 2, pp. 838-39. Like Limborch too, the treatise builds its interpretation on Romans (3:28) and Galatians (5:6).

<sup>28</sup>Details are in my “Theological Context,” pp. 75-76.



<sup>29</sup>*Theologia Christiana* (Amsterdam: 1686). I have not seen the entire work but have considered representative sections kindly reproduced for me by Professor Albert Labriola from the copy owned by the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh.

<sup>30</sup>As I have cited from H. Scherpbier in my "Provenance," p. 136.

<sup>31</sup>For the various Dutch associates of Milton see the articles about each by Dr. Paul Sellin in *A Milton Encyclopedia* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1978-83). I am much indebted to Dr. Sellin for his sharing with me his wealth of information about religious developments in the Netherlands during the period under consideration here.

<sup>32</sup>Citations by book and line number of *Paradise Lost* are to the new edition, ed. Roy Flannagan (New York: Macmillan, 1993) and of *Paradise Regained* to *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971).

<sup>33</sup>Through the courtesy of its Curator of Rare Books, Noni Rudavski, I have been privileged to examine the Hebrew Union College copy of the Buxtorf treatise.