

A Concise Companion to  
Milton

Edited by Angelica Duran



A Concise Companion to  
**Milton**

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BLACKWELL PUBLISHING  
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA  
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK  
550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

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First published 2007 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

1 2007

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A concise companion to Milton / edited by Angelica Duran.

p. cm.—(Blackwell concise companions to literature and culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-2271-9 (hardback : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-4051-2271-4 (hardback : alk. paper)

I. Milton, John, 1608–1674—Criticism and interpretation. I. Duran, Angelica. II. Series.

PR3588.C59 2006  
821'.4—dc22

2006006917

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12pt Meridien  
by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong  
Printed and bound in Singapore  
by COS Printers Pte Ltd

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To harp-fingered Jacqueline and mild-eyed Paul





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# Notes on Contributors

**Paul Alpers** (1953 B.A., 1959 Ph.D. English, Harvard). His first book, *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene* (1967), remains a must-read; and his most recent one, *What is Pastoral?* (1996), well earned three prestigious prizes: a Guggenheim Fellowship to fund its research, and the Christian Gauss Award of Phi Beta Kappa and the Harry Levin Prize of the American Comparative Literature Association to recognize its merits. Paralleling his distinguished publishing career, he has earned teaching awards and the undying gratitude of his former students, including this volume's editor, teaching Elizabethan and seventeenth-century literature from 1962 to 2000 at the University of California at Berkeley, where he is Class of 1942 Professor Emeritus. Having relocated from the west coast to the east coast to Smith College, he is now Professor-in-Residence, and his wife, Carol Christ, is President.

**Juliet Lucy Cummins** (1994 L.L.B., 1995 B.A. English, 2001 Ph.D. English, University of Sydney). She lectured in English and Law at the University of Western Sydney from 2000 to 2003 and has been an adjunct fellow in Law at that university since 2004. She held the position of Research Associate to the President of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal of New South Wales in 2004 and 2005, and is now practicing law part-time, working as an independent scholar, and looking after her three children, James, Oliver, and Harriet. She edited and contributed to a collection of essays called *Milton and the Ends of Time* (2003), and is co-editor of another collection of essays, *Science*,

*Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, which is forthcoming. She also writes in the areas of administrative and privacy law.

**Angelica Duran** (1987 B.A. English with Spanish minor, 1988 M.A. English, University of California at Berkeley; 2000 Ph.D. English, Stanford). Her English and Comparative Literature courses at Purdue University reflect the research concerns of her first book projects, *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution* (2007) and studies of Miltonic influence in Hispanophone literature. These and other shorter projects reveal her interest in showing points of unity between groups that are often seen as antagonistic and oppositional, and in extending the readership of seventeenth-century literary texts. Having been born and schooled in California, she (nevertheless and thoroughly) enjoys living in the US Midwest during the school year with her husband Sean, daughter Jacqueline, and son Paul, and traveling nationally and internationally in the summers, most recently to Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, and Thailand.

**Karen L. Edwards** (1973 B.A. English and Comparative Literature, Brown; 1978 M.A., M.Phil., 1979 Ph.D. English, Yale). After teaching for 12 years at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, she moved to England and is now a Senior Lecturer in the School of English at Exeter University. There she teaches courses on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature in general, and on Milton, Shakespeare, and the Bible and Literature in particular. Her first book is *Milton and the Natural World* (1999) and she has just finished a study of the animals that have a presence in Milton's poetry and prose. Entitled *Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary*, the book is being published as a series of special issues of *Milton Quarterly*. By what seems an inevitable progression, she is now working on a study of early modern insults.

**Katsuhiro Engetsu** (1980 B.A., 1982 M.A. English, Doshisha; 1985 M.A. English, Indiana University). Professor of English at Doshisha University (Japan), he has contributed chapters to *Milton and the Terms of Liberty* (2002) and *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden* (2004), and translated into Japanese Roy Strong's *Renaissance Garden in England* and Christopher Hill's *Collected Essays*. He has written extensively on early modern British literature and history in both English and Japanese in order to examine the politics of reading and misreading in intercultural issues. He teaches British literature as well as translation

theory to his undergraduate and graduate students in Kyoto, one of the most historic cities of Japan, where he lives with his wife and two daughters. He often travels internationally to join academic conferences, most recently invited by the Wordsworth Trust to give a lecture on Milton and the Romantics.

**J. Martin Evans** (1958 B.A., 1963 D.Phil. English, Oxford). A native of Cardiff, he emigrated to the United States in 1963 to teach at Stanford University, where he has been on the faculty ever since, most recently as the William R. Kenan Professor of English. His publishing record spans 30 years, starting with *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (1968) and leading to *The Miltonic Moment* (1998). He shared his familiarity with Renaissance and Milton criticism, which emerges so clearly in the “Select Bibliography” of this volume, in editing the five-volume *John Milton: Twentieth Century Perspectives* (2002); and in teaching courses in the English Department as well as the Introduction to the Humanities and Overseas Studies programs. He has earned numerous, well-deserved awards for his service to his students, including the editors of the *Cambridge Companion to Milton* and this volume. He is the 2004 Milton Society of America Honored Scholar.

**Robert Thomas Fallon** (1949 B.S. Engineering, USMA; 1960 M.A. History, Canisius College; 1965 Ph.D. English and Comparative Literature, Columbia). After a career as a commissioned officer in the US Army (1949–70) he joined the English faculty at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, retiring in 1995 as Professor Emeritus. He has published three books on John Milton, *Captain or Colonel* (1984), *Milton in Government* (1993), and *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery* (1995), and served as President of the Milton Society of America. He is a contributing editor to two volumes of *A Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne: The Songs and Sonnets* (in progress) and *The Holy Sonnets* (2005). Since retirement from LaSalle, he has published four books on Shakespeare, the three *Theatergoer's Guide* volumes (2001, 2002, 2004) and *How to Enjoy Shakespeare* (2005), as well as *The Christian Soldier* (2003), an edition of English Civil War political and religious tracts.

**Roy Flannagan** (1960 B.A. English, Washington and Lee; 1966 Ph.D. English, University of Virginia). Roy Flannagan spent 32 years at Ohio University, Athens, avoiding being Chair of his English Department only to retire and assume that position at the University of South

Carolina, Beaufort. The Milton Society of America has recognized his great contributions to Milton studies – founding the *Milton Quarterly*, editing *The Riverside Milton*, and directing the 7th International Milton Symposium in Beaufort, South Carolina, for example – through the Irene Samuel Award and 2001 Honored Scholar award. Listed in *Who's Who in America* for the last ten years, he has also been President of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals and an active member of the Renaissance English Text Society. He is a member of the Parris Island Masters' Swimming Team (which hasn't lost a meet in 12 years) and a regular columnist and photographer for *The Lowcountry Weekly*.

**David Gay** (1977 B.A., 1981 M.A. English, Queen's University; 1989 Ph.D. English, University of Alberta). David Gay teaches at his *alma mater*, the University of Alberta, and researches Milton specifically and early modern literature generally. He also continues to develop interdisciplinary courses in biblical-literary studies and religion and literature. He is drawn to writers like Milton, Blake, and Frye in part because of the central place they give to the creative imagination in both education and religion. He has authored *The Endless Kingdom: Milton's Scriptural Society* (2002) and co-edited *Awakening Words: Bunyan and the Language of Community* (2000). Since 1995, he has served as Secretary of the International John Bunyan Society. Like the Milton Society of America, the Bunyan Society affirms a global sense of community among teachers, students, and the general public, and encourages scholarly work that deepens our understanding of the legacy of early modern literature.

**Achsah Guibbory** (1966 B.A. English, Indiana University; 1970 Ph.D. English, University of California at Los Angeles). After teaching at the University of Illinois from 1970 to 2004, she joined Barnard College's English Department in 2004. Guibbory is a recipient of many honors and awards, including a National Endowment for the Humanities Senior Research Fellowship (2001–2) and the Harriet and Charles Luckman Undergraduate Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of Illinois (1995). She has served as the President of the Milton Society of America and the John Donne Society. Her books include *The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History and Ceremony* (1986) and *Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (1998). Author of many essays and articles on seventeenth-century literature from Donne through Milton, she is editor of *The Cambridge*

*Companion to John Donne* (2005) and is currently writing a book on the uses of Judaism, Jews, and the Hebrew Bible in early modern England.

**Edward Jones** (1974 B.A. English, Central Connecticut State University; 1978 M.A., 1985 Ph.D. English, Ohio University). An Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma State University, where he received the President's Distinguished Service Award (1999), a Regents Distinguished Teaching Award (1998), and the Outstanding Teacher Award in the College of Arts and Sciences on two occasions (1996 and 1993), Jones is the author of *Milton's Sonnets: An Annotated Bibliography, 1900–1992* (1994). In addition to publishing several articles on Milton's biography, he is completing a study of Milton and the Parish Chest and the commentary for Books 7 and 8 of *Paradise Lost* for the Milton Variorum. In 2005, Jones was appointed the editor of the *Milton Quarterly*, was asked to serve as the volume editor of Milton's Letters of State for the Oxford Milton, and was elected the President of the Milton Society.

**Annabel Patterson** (1961 B.A. English, University of Toronto; 1963 M.A. with distinction, 1965 Ph.D. English, University of London). Annabel Patterson was born in England and emigrated to Canada in 1957. She returned to the University of London for her M.A. and Ph.D. She has taught in Canada at the University of Toronto and at York University, and after moving to the US, at the University of Maryland and Duke University. She has spent the last 12 years at Yale, from which she is now retired as Sterling Professor of English, Emeritus. She is a Fellow of the American Arts and Sciences and the 2002 Honored Scholar of the Milton Society of America. She has written or edited about 20 books, and about a hundred articles, many of them on Milton, Marvell, and Donne. She herself is most fond, for ideological reasons, of *Early Modern Liberalism* (1997), now reprinted in paperback, and considers the two-volume *Prose Works of Andrew Marvell* (2003) – a collaborative venture – her most lasting contribution to the field.

**Louis Schwartz** (1984 B.A. English, New York State University–Albany; 1985 M.A., 1989 Ph.D. English and American Literature, Brandeis University). As Associate Professor of Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century English Literature at the University of Richmond (in Virginia), he teaches widely in the Literature of Early Modern

England and in the History of English Poetry and Poetics. He is also a contributing editor to the Milton Variorum Project, has published articles on Milton, Shakespeare, and Thomas Wyatt, and has recently finished a book-length study of Milton's responses to problems surrounding maternal mortality in the seventeenth century.

**John T. Shawcross** (1948 B.A. English and Mathematics, Montclair State University, 1950 M.A. English; 1958 Ph.D. English, New York University; 1975 Litt. D. Montclair State University; 1995 Litt. D. St Bonaventure University). A prolific and careful author and editor, his most recent books are *Paradise Lost* (2002); *Milton and the Grounds of Contention* (2003); *"The Arms of the Family": John Milton and the Significance of Relatives and Associates* (2004); *Thirteen Watercolor Drawings by William Blake Illustrating Paradise Lost by John Milton* (with Robert Essick, 2004); and *Rethinking Milton Studies: Time Present and Time Past* (2005), with other books, volumes, and articles in press. His position as a driving force in Renaissance studies is expressed in various forms, including the publication of *John Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross* (1995) and his induction as the 1981 Honored Scholar of the Milton Society of America. He is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Kentucky.



# Introduction

Angelica Duran

*A Concise Companion to Milton* is the second in the Blackwell Concise Companions to Literature and Culture series (General Editor: David Bradshaw) dedicated to a single author rather than to a literary period or theory. The aim of this volume is to provide readers with key guides to understanding the great influence and endurance of the works of the seventeenth-century British writer John Milton. Introductory and succinct without being cursory, it is intended to complement the award-winning, 29-chapter *A Companion to Milton* (Blackwell, 2001), edited by Thomas Corns and used for advanced study.

The cover illustration speaks to the vitality of interpretations of Milton's complex works and life. Similarly, the essays in this collection provide readers not with one coherent line of interpretation but rather with diverse, authoritative interpretations that will greatly amplify their appreciation of that complexity. Indeed, diversity is one of the hallmarks of this volume's 12 newly commissioned chapters and two reference sections, penned by a wide range of scholars – from exciting neophytes to respected veterans, from native English speakers in England, Australia, Canada, and the United States to non-native-English-speaking scholars in Japan and the United States. The careful selection of the contributors is express recognition of the global network of scholars and institutions that contribute to the transmission of literary works that should not simply endure but thrive.

Because of its brevity, depth, and structure, *A Concise Companion to Milton* can serve as the one companion text to Milton's collected works

required for undergraduate and graduate Milton courses. Its accessibility also makes it an ideal companion for the general reader and for college and university survey courses. This volume's chapters are purposefully brief and written with a minimum of scholarly jargon so that readers at any level can have time to read them alongside weekly primary reading. There are 12 chapters so that those on 10-week quarters and 15-week semesters can easily schedule reading them all, either skipping or doubling up readings assignments – chapters 1–3 will work particularly well for the introductory week(s). In the case of survey courses, an individual chapter can be assigned from a copy kept in library reserve.

In a text dedicated to a single author yet authored by many, it would be remiss to ignore the authors of each chapter. I mention the often bypassed section "Notes on Contributors" in hopes of encouraging readers to perceive of the chapters as written portions of conversations with fellow readers interested in the same author. The subsection titles of my "Chapter 4: First and Last Fruits of Education" – passion, gratitude, hope, and compassion – encompass only some of the emotions that have propelled each of the contributors' immense and humane contributions to both literary studies and this volume. They each care about texts, they care about students, they care about their world. I thank them heartily for making my job as editor so delightful.

The volume is divided into three parts, with titles that reflect the idea of this volume acting as a guiding *companion* to readers on an exciting educational journey. "Part I: Surveys" explains how and why Milton's works established and continue to maintain their central position in the English and international literary canon. Its three chapters survey the relationship of Milton's works to historical, literary, socio-political, and theoretical trends. The nine chapters in "Part II: Textual Sites" clarify important issues that emerge in specific texts or sets of texts, and that are particularly relevant to contemporary society: cultural encounters, ecology, gender, religion, and the value of scholarship. These chapters follow Milton's poetry primarily in chronological order, reflecting the customary organization of college and university syllabuses and the reading practices of general readers. Some chapters focus on a number of texts from various periods of Milton's life, related by topic (education in chapter 4), genre (sonnets in chapter 5), or character (Jesus in chapter 11). Additionally, most chapters incorporate Milton's prose works into their discussions – and by extension into current reading practices and future Milton studies – where those prose works warrant attention. "Part III: Reference Points,"

comprised of the “Select Chronology” and “Select Bibliography,” helps readers in contextualizing the readings in terms of biography, history, literary studies, and Milton studies.

In *Areopagitica*, Milton wrote that “Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are.” When books have led such public lives as have Milton’s, they contain also the lifeblood of the many readers, scholars, and institutions that have dedicated their energies to preserving them, including the collaborators of this volume. In an important sense, the collaboration of this volume extends to its readers. As such, this introduction does not conclude in closure but rather in prospect. Please contact me through Blackwell Publishing at [www.blackwellpublishing.com/contacts](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/contacts) with descriptions of your successes and challenges in using this volume so that we may improve subsequent editions. Together, we will continue to work towards clearer visions of Milton and his works.

### Editor’s note for the 2010 paperback version

The publication of this book in paperback form gives me great pleasure. First, such a publication reflects substantial use of this valuable resource; second, it is more affordable and therefore will increase its accessibility; and third, it gives me the chance to make up for former lapses. Silent emendations have been made to this edition. While I take responsibility for all faults in the text, I cannot take full responsibility for their correction: I thank the various friends, reviewers and contributors who alerted me of minor errors; Marissa Connell, who successfully took up my classroom challenge to detect and notify me of *errata*; and Blackwell-Wiley’s Caroline Clamp for her commitment to producing accurate texts.



*Part I*

# **Surveys**



## Chapter 1

# A Reading of His “left hand”: Milton’s Prose

Robert Thomas Fallon

It should be noted at the outset that John Milton thought of himself primarily as a poet, one who wrote prose, as he put it, with his “left hand,” reserving the right for his chosen calling (1.808; all quotations are from Milton 1953–82 [CPW]). Milton’s first prose works were his *Prolusions*, performed as school exercises during his studies at Cambridge. During his mature years, the English press, released from strict government control, experienced an explosion of printing, and he joined in the lively debate over his country’s fortunes, publishing both as a private citizen and a public servant. Much of his mature prose could well serve as a chronicle of two turbulent decades of English history, the 1640s and 1650s. Milton entered into public print with tracts that ranged widely over issues of his day, publications that, for the purpose of discussion, can be roughly divided into two categories, the religious and the political.

Milton’s seventeenth-century contemporaries looked upon these two spheres of human concern as intimately intertwined: political actions were seen as profoundly influencing the fate of their immortal souls. The poet’s prose works identify him as very much a man of his age since religion is always close to the surface of his political works and politics ever a factor in his vision of religion. But he was ahead of his time in his insistence on the separation of church and state. He returned to the issue time and again during the decades of warfare and governmental innovation, often seizing occasions when England was going through transitional crises to urge his countrymen to end

the state's control over the content and ceremony of their worship. He addressed them during the contentious years at the beginning and the end of the Civil Wars, and again in the early months of the Protectorate. He returned to the cause in 1659 during the final days of Richard Cromwell's Protectorate Parliament and continued his appeal with that body's successor, the restored Rump. He addressed the issue one final time during the last years of his life in the tumultuous aftermath of King Charles II's "Declaration of Indulgences." Each transition, he hoped, provided an opportunity for England to emancipate spiritual belief and religious worship from political oversight, but he was disappointed in each instance, as his countrymen could conceive of no alternative to governmental support of religious institutions.

### **“[R]egaining to know God aright”**

Some of Milton's works are predominantly religious in content. His first prose ventures into public print were his five Anti-Prelatical tracts, *Of Reformation, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, Animadversion upon the Remonstrants Defence, The Reason of Church Government, and An Apology against a Pamphlet*, published successively from May 1641 to April 1642. These were the troubled years prior to the English Civil Wars, when the Long Parliament and King Charles I were locked in a struggle over, among other matters, the shape and authority of the Church of England. The English monarch since the reign of Henry VIII (1509–47) had been recognized as the head of the Church, and Charles I took his responsibilities seriously. He authorized his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, to regularize the doctrine and ceremony practiced throughout the kingdom; but Laud met with impassioned resistance from the various reformed congregations who saw his edicts as a campaign to restore English worship to the control of the Church of Rome, reviled as the dreaded, soul-corrupting Anti-Christ.

The poet joined in Parliament's campaign to wrest power from Charles I, writing to contest the crown's authority over the Church. Parliament contended that Charles had overstepped his prerogative when he authorized Archbishop Laud to impose rigid adherence to the dictates of *The Book of Common Prayer* as the ultimate authority for religious practice in the kingdom. The more radical members of the body endorsed a "Root and Branch Bill," which proposed to sweep aside the traditional ecclesiastical structure of the Church by abolishing the hierarchical offices of the prelates, the archbishops, bishops, deans,



and lower orders that held sway over church affairs, and instead to reserve to individual congregations the right to determine the content and manner of their worship according to the collective conscience of their members. The bill did not pass, but the debate was underway.

Milton's argument against "prelatical episcopacy" was that the hierarchy had no sanction in Scripture and, further, that it was harmful to the religious and political health of the kingdom, its members "the only seducers and mis-leaders of the State" and "the greatest underminers and betrayers of the Monarch" (1.878, 858). At the time, Milton expressed no opposition to the secular power of the king, though his views in that regard changed dramatically after several years of civil war. The pamphlet wars grew acrimonious with disputants engaging in personal assaults, accusing one another of all manner of intellectual deception and personal corruption. In *A Modest Confrontation*, an answer to Milton's *Animadversions*, for example, the anonymous writer characterizes the work as "*a Slandorous and Scurrilous Libell*" and its author as a man who "haunts Playhouses and Bordelloes" (1.862–3, 886). Milton's biographers have reason to be grateful for these personal attacks, since the poet was quick to defend himself with passages relating details of his life experiences, his studies, and his literary ambitions, details that would have otherwise remained unknown (see, e.g., 1.808–23 and 883–93, as well as *A Second Defence*, 4.612–29).

In June 1642, soon after the publication of the political pamphlet *An Apology against a Pamphlet* Milton left London intent upon collecting rents due him from his father's properties near Oxford. A month later he returned, with a wife! – Mary, the young daughter of his tenant Richard Powell. Another month later, she left London for a visit with her family, but larger events intervened to prevent her return to her husband, even should she have wished to, about which there is considerable doubt. On August 22, 1642, Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham Castle, signaling the start of the English Civil Wars, and for years thereafter hostile armies tramped back and forth across the downs and pastures between London and Oxford, the King's capitol, effectively isolating the two cities from one another.

Milton, stung by what he could only conclude was his wife's desertion (the Powells were ardent Royalists), turned his creative energies for two years, 1643–5, primarily to the composition of four tracts arguing for the legality of divorce: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*, *Tetrachordon*, and *Colasterion*. In these works, he contends from the evidence of Scripture, theology, and philosophy that a husband and wife who have become spiritually and

physically incompatible should not be forced by law to remain in their marriage (see also chapter 9). The poet was roundly condemned for his views. All but the most radical of reformers held that marriage vows were inviolable, and he was branded by his enemies for years after as the notorious “divorcer” – in fact, Mary and he reconciled in 1645. (Milton vented his scorn of his detractors in Sonnets 11 and 12, discussed in chapter 5.) It was the charge and countercharge of this controversy that prompted the poet to compose what is perhaps his best known and most widely admired prose work, *Areopagitica*.

*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* was unlicensed. That is, it did not receive official state approval prior to publication, this because government censorship of the press had been suspended since 1641. On June 14, 1643, in a bill designed to reestablish the state’s authority to regulate printing, the English Parliament passed the “Ordinance to prevent and suppress the licence of printing.” In response, the poet published *Areopagitica*, subtitled *A Speech of Mr. John Milton For the Liberty of Unlicenc’d Printing, To the Parliament of England*, a tract couched in the form of a respectful speech to that Parliament, in which he deplored the statute. The primary title reminds the Members of Parliament that they sit in the tradition of the ancient Greek court of Areopagus, the august judicial body of Athenian elders that met on the rocks beneath the sacred heights of the Acropolis. In the work, Milton proposes that, “the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World,” hence that humans experience difficulty distinguishing one from the other. It is only in the free play of ideas, he argues, that we can discern and embrace the good (2.514).

Milton imagines that good and evil are engaged in perpetual state of warfare for dominance of the human spirit. Truth, he says, will prevail only if allowed free expression to arm itself against its insidious enemy, and if left unfettered, it will invariably triumph: “Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the wors, in a free and open encounter” (2.561). God left human beings free to choose between good and evil; but only when they are open to controversy, the poet insists, can they gain enlightened understanding and align themselves with justice and virtue. If printing is left unlicensed, Milton prophesies, England will be a beacon to the world in its fearless determination to allow this struggle to be waged in a free press, and London will become the model of a city where “disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, ev’n to a rarity, and admiration” are a source of strength rather than a danger to civic order (2.557).

Shortly thereafter, in 1644, Milton took the time to compose a short tract that touched on yet another aspect of civic order, *Of Education*. He published his recommendations for the best books and exercises "of a vertueous and noble Education" as a letter to Samuel Hartlib, a contemporary advocate of education reform, in answer to his request for the poet's views on the subject (2.376). In Milton's vision, the end of learning in general is "to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright" (2.366). On a more pragmatic level, but still grand in scope, he defines the specific goal of "a compleate and generous Education" designed for English youth "from twelve to one and twenty" as a course of studies that prepares them "to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and publike of peace and war" (2.378, 406). Milton's program lays heavy emphasis on Greek and Roman authors, as well as sixteenth-century Italian commentaries on "what the laws are of a true *Epic* poem, what of a *Dramatic*, [and] what of a *Lyric*" (2.405). The curriculum is daunting, and made more so by Milton's description of his students' "Exercise." Influenced by the Civil War, then at its height, the poet proposes a program that "shall be equally good both for Peace and warre" (2.408). Included is intense training in the military arts, everything from the students' "exact use of their weapon" to "the rudiments of their Souldiership in all the skill of embattailing, marching, encamping, fortifying, besieging, and battering" (2.409, 411).

During these years of warfare and political upheaval, Milton conducted a school in his home for a select few students. Some time in the late 1640s, Milton wrote, perhaps for his school, the first four (of six) chapters of *The History of Britain*, a chronicle of events from the mythological landing of the Trojan Brutus on the island's shores to the Norman Conquest. The *History* was not published until 1670, and at that time it omitted some few pages in which the poet had digressed from the historical account to comment on the political and religious controversy raging in England during, it is generally agreed, the early months of 1648. The first Civil War resulted in a total victory for Parliament, which then turned its attention to the settlement of the English Church. The Westminster Assembly of Divines had been convened for the purpose as early as 1643 and after lengthy deliberations the body submitted its proposal to Parliament some four years later. But the structure agreed upon favored retention of state control over worship to a degree entirely unacceptable to the more radical Independents, to John Milton, and, of even more significance, to the New Model Army. Both Parliament and the Assembly were dominated by

the Presbyterian party, whose adherents were conservative in their approach to the political and religious issues that divided the country at the end of the war; and the situation in 1648 was complicated by the fact that both Parliament and the army were engaged in negotiations with Charles I in an effort to reach an accord on those issues. The King played one against the other, vacillating and procrastinating while secretly appealing to the Scots to intervene militarily on his behalf. Milton feared that all the blood and treasure sacrificed in the Civil War would prove a fruitless waste if the Presbyterian settlement were put in place.

The *Digression* to the *History* was not published until 1681, several years after the poet's death, under the title *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines*. In it, Milton excoriates both bodies. The Members of Parliament, he charges, have performed their public duty "like Children of the Devil, unfaithfully, unjustly, unmercifully, and where not corruptly, stupidly" (5.448). Further, the "*Church-men*" of the Assembly are "Timeservers, Covetous, Illiterate Persecutors, not lovers of the Truth," and he accuses them of "setting up a Spiritual Tyranny by a Secular power, to the advantage of their own Authority above the Magistrate" (5.448, 446; Milton's view of the Assembly is also reflected in his tailed sonnet, "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," which ends in the memorable line, "*New Presbyter* is but *Old Priest* writ Large"). The *Digression* was considered too incendiary for publication in 1670, but appropriate for print 11 years later, significantly during yet another national crisis, the uproar over the royal succession, in England's long, contentious church-state controversy.

Milton wrote specifically about the religious doctrine of his times in the 1640s as well. One of Milton's students, his nephew Edward Phillips, later wrote a biography of the poet, describing him as continually at work collecting "from the ablest of Divines [ . . . ] A perfect System of Divinity" (Darbishire 1932: 61). Milton's anonymous biographer confirms that he was "framing a *Body of Divinity* out of the Bible" (Darbishire 1932: 29). This "System of Divinity" was apparently a lifelong labor, resulting in the end in a bulky manuscript entitled *De Doctrina Christiana*, a work with a history as controversial as its content. It was not published during Milton's life, indeed was not recovered until 1823, when it was found in London's Public Record Office in the company of a packet of his state letters. Recent scholarship has questioned how much of *De Doctrina Christiana* is actually Milton's, that is, to what extent it represents his thought on Christian belief. It

is mentioned here because, if it is Milton's, it casts further light on his opposition to state control of religion, especially during the contentious decade of the 1640s.

The poet, like many reformers, considered Holy Scripture the ultimate authority on such subjects as the nature of God, the Son, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the practice of religious worship. Humankind, as *De Doctrina* contends, will always have an imperfect perception of God and therefore "ought to form just such a mental image of him as he, in bringing himself within the limits of our understanding, wishes us to form," that is, one that corresponds to "his representation and description of himself in the sacred writings" (6.133). Faith was for Milton a matter to be settled only between God and the individual conscience, and from that belief grew his conviction that the manner of worship should not be determined by an ecclesiastical hierarchy endorsed by the state, not by "Romish" priests, nor by Church of England prelates, nor by the presbyters proposed by the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

Milton regularly injected the issue into his political works, in *A Second Defence of the English People*, for example, advising Oliver Cromwell, the newly installed Lord Protector, to "leave the church to the church" (4.678). He returned to the subject during the unsettled year 1659, when England experienced constant turmoil, coming under the rule of four successive governing bodies while suffering through a Royalist uprising (referred to as the second Civil War), and the army's seizure of power on two separate occasions. He first addressed Richard Cromwell's Protectorate Parliament with *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes*, in which he argues that, "it is unlawfull for the civil magistrate to use force in matters of religion" (7.255). When the Protectorate was replaced by the restored Rump Parliament, he urged that body, in *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church*, to discontinue the practice of assessing tithes, the state-imposed taxes on parishioners for the support of the clergy. He argues from the evidence of Scripture and history from antiquity to his own time that the Bible does not sanction tithes and that the wealth accumulated through them has always been a source of corruption in the church. His pleas went unheeded, however, at a time when his country was preoccupied with the political chaos that preceded the Restoration of Charles II in 1660.

In 1673 Milton took up the cause one final time in *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, and Toleration*. The tract appeared in the wake of the political upheaval that followed Charles II's "Declaration of Indulgence,"