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Waiting for God: John Milton's Millenarianism Reconsidered

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Graduate Program in English
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of
Philosophy
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Abstract

“Waiting for God: John Milton’s Millenarianism Reconsidered”

Challenging consensus, I argue that John Milton never adhered to the politico-religious ideology of millenarianism, the belief that in the end times Christ would descend to rule the world with his saints for a thousand years. No definitive evidence for millenarianism exists in Milton’s English poetry and prose. Milton explicitly mentions the millennium only in *De Doctrina Christiana*, his Latin theological treatise. However, my research has demonstrated that even that brief reference is tentative and inconclusive. Consequently, the Oxford editors of *De Doctrina* (2012) have decided to revise a crucial sentence in their translation. I reveal the persistence of distortive, ideologically driven criticism in Milton studies and help demonstrate Milton’s epistemological flexibility.

Milton’s early poetry, which demonstrate a vitalist belief in the immanence of a divine and free vital spirit in nature, preclude adherence to the theocratic millenarian dogma. Throughout his career Milton focuses his eschatology not on Christ’s millennial kingdom, but on the final eternal kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth, wherein divine immanence is fully realized. Even the apocalyptic references in his controversial prose works, which critics have inferred to be millenarian, actually look forward to the final kingdom after the dissolution of the world and the renewal of heaven and earth. Milton cares not for any earthly, fleshly, and coercive kingdom, future or past, even one personally ruled by Christ, but, rather, for the already existing, purely spiritual kingdom of Christ, through which union with God is imperfectly, but sufficiently and presently, attainable.

Paradise Lost demonstrates Milton’s longing for the ultimate end of the Son’s kingdom when God shall be “All in All,” (1 Cor. 15:28) rather than the future beginning of his millennial reign. The Son’s kingdom had already begun at the beginning of time and that beginning is eternally recurring. Finally, I argue that the problem of *Paradise Regained* lies in the failure of scholars to take its title at face value. Paradise, the “paradise within” (*PL* 12.587), has, in fact, been regained. The Son’s kingdom has begun

again and, like all previous recurrent beginnings, the faithful may already enjoy oneness with God.

Keywords

John Milton, millenarianism, millenarian, millennium, early modern English literature, eschatology, apocalypse, apocalypticism, Book of Revelation, end times, end of the world, ideology, epistemology, historical revisionism, new heaven and new earth, New Jerusalem, postapocalyptic theology, spiritual kingdom, vitalism, animist materialism, theocracy, separation of church and state, liberty of conscience, Christian liberty, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *De Doctrina Christiana*

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest and deepest gratitude to Dr. John Leonard, Dr. Madeline Bassnett, Dr. John K. Hale, Dr. J. Donald Cullington, Dr. Douglas Trevor, Dr. Michael Schoenfeldt, the late Dr. William W. Cook, Dr. Claver P. Ramos, Dr. Thelma Tupasi Ramos, Grace Ramos, and Tristan Ramos.

I am also very grateful to the National Archives in London, England for facilitating my request for scans of the manuscript of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana* and to the Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies, the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, the Newberry Library Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, and the Murfreesboro Conference on John Milton for giving me opportunities to present my thesis research and receive feedback.

Finally, I wish to thank the University of Western Ontario, Dartmouth College, and, most especially, my parents, Dr. Claver P. Ramos and Dr. Thelma Tupasi Ramos, for funding this project.

Praise the Lord.

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Introduction

A. Fear, Hope, the Devil, and the Millennium Bug

The decades leading up to the end of the first millennium A.D. and those immediately following witnessed much intense apocalyptic anxiety. In the mid-990s, Abbo, the Abbot of Saint-Benoit of Fleury sur Loire wrote to co-kings Hugh and Robert Capet of France that “a rumor had filled almost the entire world that when the Annunciation [March 25] fell on Good Friday, without any question, it would be the End of the World” (qtd in Landes 250). These two holy days had coincided in 970, 981, and 992, causing the faithful to experience increasing apprehension as the year 1000 approached. This was exacerbated by the fall of the Carolingian line of kings in 987 and the ominous visitation of Halley’s Comet in 989. Cluniac monk Radulfus Glaber, another notable French source for apocalyptic dread in the period, connected the heretical notions that had gained currency at about 1000 to the Book of Revelation (Landes 251-54). He wrote, “All this accords with the prophecy of St. John [Rev. 20:7], who said that the Devil would be freed after a thousand years [following Christ’s birth]” (qtd. in 254-55). Even after 1000 came without event, the subsequent years were, as the modern historian Richard Landes puts it, “unusually rich in distinctly apocalyptic incidents: prodigies near Orléans, a terrible famine, a supernova spotted the world over in 1003-6, and, in 1009-14, more prodigies and disasters, a rain of blood, and the slaughter of Jews in response to [Fatimid Caliph] al-Hakim’s destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem” (255). In our own time, at the dawn of Y2K, we faced our own devil in the millennium bug, and although it might not have been quite as harrowing as Satan, the two-digit glitch did terrorize us with very real fears of worldwide economic recession, the breakdown of infrastructure, the inadvertent launch of ICBMs, computer induced drought, death and famine, and planes falling from the sky (Beckett).

Landes points out that “believers in a specifically imminent end in fact redate and reformulate their failed prophecies in order to preserve and extend them” because “awaiting the end is a time not merely of fear and trembling but also of great hope and anticipation.” For the common people at the turn of the first millennium, the anticipated apocalypse also meant the end of their suffering at the hands of the nobility (244-45).

Hence, when no apocalypse came to pass in 1000 A.D., the faithful looked to the few years that followed, and when still nothing happened, they happily anticipated, in lieu of the thousand years after the incarnation, the thousand years after the Passion, which came to pass in 1033. Events including another deluge of blood, which occurred in Aquitaine in 1028, “the death of great and pious men,” “famine and anthropophagy,” and “Peace councils,” where large throngs of people who were attracted by “messianic hopes of a transformation of this worldly society into a realm of Peace and Justice” gathered, helped keep up the excitement (256, 258). Fortunately for us, after the disappointment of Y2K, we would experience various other Armageddons, including climate change, the war on terror, the “great” recession of 2007-09, and the doomsday prognosticated by the Mayan calendar, for the fear and the hope we required.

Miltonists have not escaped the bite of millennial anxiety and mania. A resurgent interest in the old issue of John Milton’s eschatology emerged from the Sixth International Milton Symposium of 1999, which featured “Milton and the Millennium” as one area of topical interest, and the publication of the anthology *Milton and the Ends of Time* (2003), which included enhanced versions of papers presented at that symposium as well as other work inspired by the scholarly conversation that ensued. The anthology seeks to examine Milton’s “lifelong preoccupation with the ends of time— with the second coming, the millennium, Judgment Day, the new heaven and earth, and the eternity which follows,” but its primary concern is “a major revision of the traditional assessment of Milton’s millenarianism” (Cummins, “Introduction” 1-3).

In seventeenth-century England, the politico-religious ideology of millenarianism was the belief that in the end times Christ would physically descend to rule the world with his saints for a thousand years (Lewalski, “millennium” 13, Revard, “millenarianism” 42, Shawcross 108). It is inspired by a single passage in the bible, Revelation 20:1-7. In this passage, St. John sees an angel descend from heaven and bind Satan for a thousand years in the Abyss. He then envisions the resurrection of saints, that is, martyrs and other faithful souls, unto whom “judgment is given.” These saints then “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (20:4), after which Satan is released and the final apocalyptic war is instigated by him (20:7-9). Then Christ decisively defeats

Satan and begins the Last Judgment (20:9-15). This belief in a terrestrial, thousand-year reign of Christ and his saints had been universally considered heretical by Protestants in the sixteenth century, but gradually gained acceptance in the following century (Hotson 159-61, 166-81). According to the late Stella Revard, one of the contributors to *Milton and the Ends of Time*, the doctrine had emerged as divisive and extremely controversial by the turbulent 1640s (42, 47). It became an important ideological buttress for antiprelatical and anti-monarchical forces in parliament.¹ The doctrine was, however, less contentious in the 1630s. Revard makes a crucial distinction between English Protestants who “viewed Revelation as describing the last days before the Judgment” and Puritans who looked forward to “the coming of the Messiah as an earthly king” (42-43, 47). The majority of the former believed that the millennium had already concluded. While there was no agreement about the start or end points of the thousand years, events that were thought to have inaugurated the millennium included the birth of Christ, his active ministry, his resurrection, and “Constantine’s victory over the pagans.” It was widely believed that the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-85) saw the end of the thousand years (43-44).² As Revard puts it,

In the 1630s little divided those who were proclaiming that Christ’s earthly kingdom was at hand and those who believed the Last Judgment was imminent. Both groups were anti-Catholic and anti-Laudian³ and would have agreed that Satan was unbound and raging, persecuting the saints, whom many identified with the martyrs of the church named in Revelation.⁴

¹ Cummins, “Introduction,” 2-3, Lewalski, “millennium” 15, Revard 47, Hunter 96-97.

² Those who were non-millenarian or anti-millenarian could therefore still believe in the millennium, that is, one that had occurred in the past. The millennium was real, as Revelation 20 asserts. The question was whether it had been already occurred or whether it had yet to come in the future. I use the term “millenarian” to denote those who believed in a future millennium.

³ See page 12 below for a definition of Laudianism.

⁴ In this decade, millenarians thought that Satan had yet to be bound and so the thousand years had yet to begin. Meanwhile, Protestants who anticipated only the Last Judgment (as the millennium for them was in the past) thought that Satan had already been released and that the final apocalyptic war was underway. Both groups thought Satan worked through the pope, whom they identified as the Antichrist (Hotson 159-81, esp. 177-78).

By contrast, “In the 1640s millenarianism became an issue that defined and separated Puritans, Presbyterians, and the orthodox oldtimers of the Church of England” (47). Both champions and opponents of millenarianism produced significant publications on millenarianism during the 1640s and 1650s, a time when “though many Christians believed literally in the prophecies of Revelation 20, just as many denied that these verses in any way predicted Christ’s personal kingship” (42-55). Opponents of the dogma, particularly from the Anglican Church, adopted the Protestant position on it from the previous century, and derided it as a heresy (Hotson 159-61, 166-81, Revard 42-55).

The “traditional assessment” of scholars holds that Milton was a millenarian from about 1640 to about the time of the Restoration, when the downfall of the republic caused him to rethink this belief or abandon it altogether (Cummins, “Introduction” 3). The alternative view offered by *Milton and the Ends of Time*, particularly by prominent Miltonists Barbara Lewalski, Stella Revard, and David Loewenstein, proposes that Milton adhered to millenarianism from his early years prior to 1640 and continued to do so well beyond 1660 (Cummins, *Ends* 1-95). As Linda B. Tredennick has written elsewhere, “the extent, exact nature, and endurance of Milton’s millenarian beliefs are matters of considerable debate” (240). According to Lewalski, Milton “appealed from the beginning to the end to the idea of the millennium to urge personal, ecclesiastical, social, and political reformation, and also certain kinds of political action as preparation for that eventuality.” She explains that after 1660 Milton continued to believe in the coming of the millennial reign but, considering the failure of the Commonwealth, no longer regarded it as imminent. She writes that “changing political circumstances led Milton to adjust his views on the timing of the millennium” and that “His core belief, sometimes intimated, sometimes stated explicitly, is that the millennium will come when the English (and presumably others) have become virtuous and free, rejecting all the forces that promote servility” (15). Stella Revard, meanwhile, contends that because of the repressive monarchy of Charles II, Milton could only covertly hint at millenarianism through suggestive scriptural allusion in the epics (56-71). For his part, David Loewenstein writes in his afterword to the collection that “Milton may have remained officially silent after 1660” but “he never rejected radical millenarianism in the late poems . . . as previous scholars have claimed” (241).

Juliet Cummins, the editor of *Milton and the Ends of Time*, credits the “recent reassessment of [Milton’s] political and religious radicalism” by writers including Lewalski and Loewenstein, as well as Stephen Dobranski, John P. Rumrich, Thomas N. Corns, Stephen M. Fallon, Elizabeth Sauer, and others, with inspiring this alternative opinion.⁵ According to her, millenarianism was “often generally associated with radical Puritanism” (3). Of course, the seminal work of Christopher Hill on the radical Milton looms large behind this body of research.⁶ Hill strengthened the connection of millenarianism with radicalism in Milton studies (*Revolution* 279). As these scholars suggest, the fervent hope for fundamental change and a better future that might soon be realized drives radicalism and radical ideology. In 2017, as the year 2000 recedes into the past, it might be a good time to reconsider the heady criticism on Milton and the millennium.

In this thesis, I shall challenge both the traditional and alternative positions on millenarianism in Milton’s work. I argue that Milton never believed in millenarianism and that no definitive evidence for millenarianism exists in Milton’s English poetry and prose. I contend that throughout his career, millenarianism was antithetical to Milton’s deeply held convictions, particularly, his belief in the liberty of the individual conscience. As I will show, Milton’s early prose and poetry, which demonstrate a vitalist belief in the immanence of a divine and free vital spirit in nature, preclude adherence to the theocratic millenarian dogma (Chapter 1). Moreover, throughout his career Milton focuses his eschatology not on Christ’s millennial kingdom, but on the final eternal kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth, wherein divine immanence is fully realized. Even the apocalyptic references in his controversial prose works, which critics have inferred to be millenarian, actually look forward to the final kingdom after the dissolution of the world and the renewal of heaven and earth (Chapter 2, sections 2.1-2.6). Deliberately ambiguous, these pronouncements are, however, open to millenarian readings. Through this tactical millenarianism, Milton avoided losing support for his views from those who believed in the thousand-year reign. Milton explicitly mentions the millennium only in

⁵ Cummins, “Introduction” 1-2, 8; note 3, Simpson 202. See Dobranski and Rumrich, and Loewenstein, *Representing*.

⁶ See Hill, *Revolution*.

De Doctrina Christiana, his Latin theological treatise. However, my research has demonstrated that even that brief reference is tentative and inconclusive. Consequently, the Oxford editors of *De Doctrina* have decided to revise a crucial sentence in their translation (Chapter 2, section 2.7). Milton acknowledges the millennium because of its presence in scripture, but he does so in a perfunctory, disinterested, and non-ideological way. Milton cared not for any earthly, fleshly, and coercive kingdom, future or past, even one personally ruled by Christ, but, rather, for the already existing, purely spiritual kingdom of Christ, through which union with God is imperfectly, but sufficiently and presently, attainable.

In my following analyses of his great epics, I shall further elucidate how Milton sustained and developed his non-millenarian emphases on the final and spiritual kingdoms and on unity with an immanent God. In *Paradise Lost*, at the end of history, when millenarians expected the Son's thousand-year earthly kingdom to begin, his kingdom ends when God is "All in All" (*Paradise Lost* 3.341) (Chapter 3). The Son's kingdom had already begun in the beginning of time, and began again and again with each humiliation and exaltation the Son underwent in order to mediate communion between creator and creation. As *Paradise Lost* shows, what Milton believes in most deeply, is that in the end, there will be only one king in the universe, the Father, whose glory and bliss will be indistinguishable from those of all things. Finally, I argue that the problem of *Paradise Regained* lies in the failure of scholars to take its title at face value. Paradise, the "paradise within" (*Paradise Lost* 12.587), has, in fact, already been regained (Chapter 4). The Son's kingdom has begun again and, like all previous recurrent beginnings, the faithful need not wait for the millennium to attain union with God. Milton's epics are thus not about defeat, disillusionment, or quietism, but about "utmost hope" (*PL* 12.376) and fulfillment, towards which all of Milton's political efforts strived to ensure continual access. For Milton, hope did not lie in future worldly progress, but in a present oneness with God that progress made possible.

Hsing-hao Chao, in his unpublished dissertation "Milton and Seventeenth-Century Millenarianism" (2008), has also critiqued the alternative assessment of Milton's millenarianism, but he affirms the traditional view that Milton renounced millenarianism

after 1660. We agree that in his early poetry and prose and in his great epics, Milton looked forward to the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth, and not to an earthly and physical thousand-year reign of Christ with his saints. However, we part company in our analysis of the revolutionary period. Chao maintains that Milton was caught up in the millenarian fervor of the revolutionary years and thus espoused during that period a belief, though sporadic, in the millennium. He rightly underscores the importance of the final kingdom in Milton's eschatology, which many leading Miltonists have failed to do, but does not go into detail about how Milton was drawn to the immanence of God both in the renewed heaven and earth of the future and in the natural world of the present. Furthermore, Chao suggests that Milton is willing to accept the theocracy that the millennial kingdom would entail, and he incorrectly restricts Milton's emphasis on the spiritual kingdom, which spanned his entire career, to just the late 1650s and the period of the epics.

B. Beginnings, Ends, and Ideology

The second interest of this dissertation is to suggest that the tendency of critics like Lewalski, Revard, and Loewenstein to extend the duration of Milton's belief in millenarianism beyond previous estimations, despite the lack of textual evidence, betrays the dangers of an overreliance on ideologically oriented interpretation and the need for historical revisionism. Their own ideological priorities are at stake when they suggest that Milton's radicalism helped shape modern Western liberal democracy.⁷ I discern in their work the influence of Whig and Marxist scholars who have appropriated the millenarian emphasis on radical apocalyptic transformation, which had been motivated by political and economic oppression, as a core component of their grand narratives of progress, enlightenment, class conflict, and socio-economic upheaval (Jue, *Heaven* 1-4, Cohn 14-15). Norman Cohn's ideas about class war as exemplified by "revolutionary millenarianism" in the medieval period contributed much to this scholarly tradition (Cohn 14-15, 286).

⁷ Lewalski, "radical," 49-50, Lewalski, "millennium" 15, Lewalski, *Life* 357-59, Revard 54, 56-57, Loewenstein, "Afterword" 246, Walker 55-59, 105-08, 182-84, Cummins, "Introduction" 3-4.

In my dissertation I will build on the revisionism of William Walker's recent monograph, *Antiformalist, Unrevolutionary, Illiberal Milton: Political Prose, 1644-1660* (2014). Allying himself with other revisionist historians, particularly John Morrill, who have disputed that a socio-political revolution occurred in England during the middle decades of the seventeenth century, Walker questions our received ideological assumptions about Milton as an anti-monarchical republican, radical revolutionary, and proto-liberal. To support his case, he analyzes Milton's prose of the revolutionary period from 1644 to 1660. For Walker, Milton was an orthodox Christian whose main concern was ensuring the success of the English Reformation, which had been threatened by the ceremonious, ritualistic, and papist innovations and the corrupt hierarchical church government of Charles I and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury (58, 78-82, 99, 182, 94). Milton's objective could thus be seen as narrowly conservative. As Morrill writes, "the English civil war was not the first European revolution: it was the last of the Wars of Religion" (qtd. in 58). Walker also argues for a limited conservatism in Milton's anti-tyrannical discourse, which confronted Charles's authoritarianism by demanding the restoration and preservation of the "ancient constitution of England" and "the English people's rights and liberties" (75-78), but he takes care not to categorically label Milton as a conservative. He writes that Milton "also calls for and supports extensive change to the religious and political institutions of the day" (102) but that, ultimately, understanding Milton in terms of modern-day ideologies, categorizations, or "-isms," including radicalism and conservatism, has misled scholars by anachronistically oversimplifying the complexities of his experience of seventeenth-century English politics, religion, and society and of the manner in which his rhetoric and art engaged with this experience (1-7). Although millenarianism is by no means a modern ideology, scholars have used it, and appealed to contemporary vestiges of it in socialism, in support of their vision of a radical Milton. In this dissertation, by comprehensively questioning millenarianism in Milton's work, I hope, like Walker, to demonstrate how Milton might be appreciated in his own terms, which I argue are spiritual and theological, rather than ideological, whether radical or conservative. I shall go beyond Walker's focus on Milton's non-ideological preoccupation with the Reformation and explore how Milton's eschatological views influenced his fundamental epistemology.

But first, I shall use Walker's assessment of Milton's radical millenarianism in most of his political prose (Walker does not deal with the antiprelatical tracts, for example) as a starting point in this reconsideration of Milton's attitude towards the millennium throughout his career. According to Walker, there exists "some evidence in these tracts of commitments to the *specific* doctrines and practices that his contemporaries listed under the general term 'heresy' and that they stigmatized as distinct ['] -isms [']. But the evidence is slight; Milton is openly hostile to some aspects of them; and in some cases his endorsement of them hardly qualifies him as a radical" (83). Walker identifies millenarianism as one of these heresies, the other two being Arminianism and antinomianism (82-94). In considering Milton's adherence to the doctrine, he challenges Christopher Hill's definition of the core tenets that constituted "radical millenarianism":

(1) that the end of the world is imminent; (2) that the Pope is the Antichrist whose overthrow will immediately precede the millennium; (3) that God's Englishmen are the main opponents of Antichrist; (4) that the poor and humble have a special part to play in the battle against Antichrist which (5) is being fought in England now; (6) that in the millennium Christ and his saints will reign on earth for a thousand years. (*Milton and the English Revolution* 279)

Walker argues that using Hill's criteria, only very limited indications of millenarianism are present in Milton's political prose published between 1644 and 1660.

He considers how Hill's definition applies to Milton's millenarianism point by point and finds it wanting. According to him, Milton discusses the end of the world only twice in *Areopagitica*, and "The references to the last days in the later tracts are few and far between." As to the "Kingdom of Christ," Milton only "occasionally refers" to it, and "never explicitly says it will last for a thousand years" (91-92).⁸ Moreover, rather than looking forward to an imminent second coming, Milton, in Walker's analysis, is

⁸ Walker might have acknowledged that Milton does explicitly mention the millennium in his theological prose work, *De Doctrina Christiana*, which, though never published in his lifetime, is thought to have been composed during the period Walker studies. But, as I shall argue in Chapter 2, this reference does not necessarily mean that Milton was a millenarian.

indifferent to the timing and the details of Christ's return and is preoccupied with the impending fulfillment, or possible failure, of a Reformation that, while divinely inspired and guided, is being accomplished by human agency. Religious and political activism "matters in part because the world is *not* going to end tomorrow" (Walker 92). In addition, Milton does not consistently or exclusively target the pope by equating him with the Antichrist, the beasts in Revelation and Daniel, and the whore of Babylon. Instead, Milton deploys these hellish figures to attack a range of enemies besides the pope, including Salmasius, Salmasius's wife, Anglican bishops, "*any* state-maintained church," the Roman church endowed with worldly dominions, and anyone who assumes too much civil and religious authority. In Milton's view, the Catholic Church in Rome was not so much an organization of Christian believers as it was a tyrannical, oppressive, superstitious and avaricious nation-state. Finally, Milton's elitist disdain for what Hill calls the "poor and humble" also disqualifies him as a radical millenarian (91-93). All in all, Walker suggests that Milton shows "some evidence of sympathy" for millennial beliefs and that his is a "restrained" millenarianism (181, 113).

As Walker has shown, analyzing Milton's perspective on the millennium using an ideological lens is thus problematic. This becomes apparent as Lewalski and Revard struggle to trace Milton's radical roots in what they believe is the emergent millenarianism of his early years. Placing Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" of 1629 in the context of the impending birth of Charles II, which was promoted as the beginning of a "Stuart golden age," Lewalski confidently argues that the Nativity Ode "insists that the divine child, not the royal one, foreshadows the millennial golden age, but that the millennium can arrive only when idols old and new have been cast out." However, the only other work she mentions from the early poetry that might be engaging with the end times is "Lycidas" (16). Stella Revard, on the other hand, identifies only isolated indications of millenarian belief in the young Milton's poems, including "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," but acknowledges that they do "not speak unequivocally of Christ's coming to rule on earth. It apparently took the events of the 1640s to awaken Milton's millenarian expectations fully" ("millenarianism" 56). For his part, John Leonard argues that critics cannot identify when Milton began to believe in a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ, but, as he sees it, millenarianism was part of Milton's system

of religious convictions “By the time that he came to write *De Doctrina Christiana*” (“Millennium” 263), which was almost certainly after 1640. Maurice Kelley points to evidence that Milton was actively conducting theological research, and had even produced a shorter, early version of the treatise in the 1640s (Wolfe I.16), though, as Milton himself tells us in the epistle that prefaces *De Doctrina*, the project “began in [my] youth” when he “stud[ied] assiduously the books of the Bible, both testaments, in their original tongues” (5). According to Kelley, “concentrated work” on the manuscript of *De Doctrina* itself commenced much later, after 1655 (23). John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington, however, believe this occurred earlier. According to them, at about the time Milton had totally lost his vision in 1652, a “working manuscript of [his] gradually accreted systemic theology” was already in existence and required the hiring of an amanuensis (xxiii). Miltonists generally believe that Milton made his first explicit references to the millennium in his antiprelatical tracts *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England: And the Causes that hitherto have hindered it* and *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnuus*, both of which were published after his early years in 1641.⁹ As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, Milton’s attitude to the millennium in *De Doctrina* was non-ideological and millenarianism in the two antiprelatical tracts was tactical.

In fact, Milton might have been quite the opposite of a radical prior to the 1640s. A few scholars have also recently argued that the young Milton had conservative leanings, in particular, leading Miltonists Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns. They write in their recent biography *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (2008), which is supported meticulously by materials from historical records, that “all available evidence indicates that [Milton] was . . . an ecclesiastical and theologically conservative” when he was a twenty-year old undergraduate at Cambridge (43). According to them, because of the influence of his conservative father and Cambridge tutors (40), he was a “contented Laudian both in his personal loyalties and in his theology” through 1637, and only then underwent a “gradual” “radicalization” in reaction to the increasingly oppressive

⁹ Lewalski, “millennium”, 16-18, Revard 42, 55, Hunter, “millennial,” 97-98, Loewenstein, *Drama* 13, 30-31, Leonard, “Millennium” 270-71, Hill, *Revolution* 281, Barker 195.

authoritarianism of the church leadership (91-100, 131-3). Laudianism refers to the Arminianism, which “attributed a role to the free will or the merit of individual believers” in the salvation of the faithful, and the ceremonialism, which was perceived as “redolent of superseded Catholic practices,” championed by Archbishop William Laud (13, 40). According to Campbell and Corns, the young Milton’s conservative sympathies also manifested in some of his early poetry, that is, his Latin funeral elegies, his devotional poems, and, especially, *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634),¹⁰ which they describe as “the most complex and thorough expression of Laudian Arminianism and Laudian style within the Milton oeuvre” (32-34, 51-54, 84, 75-85). Graham Parry has also commented on the Laudian qualities of these elegies and devotional pieces (154-55).

Even so, ideological conservatism does not rule out belief in the millennium. Despite what too many Miltonists have asserted, millenarianism was not necessarily a radical dogma or ideology. According to religious scholar Jeffrey Jue, Joseph Mede, the “Father of British Millenarianism” who wrote the highly influential Latin treatise *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1627) on the subject, was no radical. Mede’s other writings suggested he supported the Laudian Church (35, 19-35) and that aspects of his thought were contrary to Puritanism (35). Mede’s interest in the millennium was religiously academic (114, 89-107). Campbell and Corns agree with Jue, saying that Mede was of Arminius’s party and even inclined towards ceremonialism (26).

Crucially, Joseph Mede was the most illustrious fellow at Christ’s College, Cambridge when Milton was an undergraduate there. In fact, he completed *Clavis Apocalyptica* while Milton was in residence and studying at Christ’s, though he never served as Milton’s tutor in an official capacity (Rumrich 137). According to John Rumrich, Mede’s work led “the academic rediscovery of the millennium in the 1630s” and made millenarianism “intellectually respectable” (139). In the 1640s, Parliament published an English translation of the *Clavis Apolalyptica* as propanganda in support of their opposition to Laud’s church government (Jue, *Heaven* 33-34). Sometime after the

¹⁰ Except for “Naturam non pati senium,” dates of publication or composition of Milton’s minor poems are from John Carey’s edition. For “Naturam,” I use Sarah Knight’s dating of 1629 (“Student” 38).

mid-1640s, probably in the 1650s, when Milton wrote about the millennium in *De Doctrina Christiana*, he adapted Mede's idea that Judgment day would last for the entire thousand-year period of the millennium (Revard 54-55). In the late 1620s, as Rumrich notes, "the ambitious and dedicated lesser pensioner"¹¹ John Milton would have had studiously to avoid the eminent Joseph Mead in order not to have developed some kind of student-teacher bond with him," but there is a curious lack of evidence that suggests any relationship at all existed at the time between the allegedly nascently millenarian Milton and one of the leading promoters of the thousand-year worldly reign of Jesus. Rumrich writes that Milton talked about receiving "letters full of kindness and loving respect", no longer extant, from Cambridge Fellows (qtd. in, 137, Wolfe I.884), and critic J. M. French has speculated that, given what Milton has stated about these letters and the comprehensiveness and copious amount of Mede's correspondence that have been preserved, these messages from the College Fellows probably included some from Mede (137). However, Rumrich has "not located letters, nor any other evidence, that definitely links Mead with Milton" (137). Nevertheless, taking for granted Milton's association with the dogma, Rumrich does not doubt that Mede's millenarianism influenced Milton in these early years. He even suggests that some of Milton's readings of scripture, as evident in two of his works, are comparable to those of Mede, though the works he mentions are from Milton's mature years, that is, *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* (137-39). In a similar vein, Sarah Hutton says in her *Milton and the Ends of Time* essay that "Not only did Milton live at a time when millenarianism was integral to religious culture, he was also educated at a college which made a distinctive contribution to apocalyptic theory" and argues that Mede's millenarianism did in fact shape Milton's own, though "Whether Milton was fully conversant with the millenarian studies of Mede and [Henry] More [the other later prominent Cambridge millenarian] is hard to say with certainty." The best Hutton can say is "as members of Christ's College, Mede, Milton, and More are likely to have known of one another's existence." (34). Tellingly, as the concordances and the Columbia Index show, Milton never explicitly mentions Mede in his prose or poetry (See Cleveland, Sterne and Kollmeier, and Patterson). Milton's silence is

¹¹ A paying student at Cambridge (*OED* 5).

significant, considering Mede's critical contribution to seventeenth-century English millenarianism.

Therefore, as in the revolutionary period, when a radical Milton in mid-career would most likely have been excited by millenarianism, but was not, a young conservative Milton who might have easily gravitated to a conservative and leading authority on millenarianism, an ideology that was not necessarily radical in nature, did not demonstrate any interest in this religious ideology on this occasion either. There is no compelling evidence in the historical record of this period, or in his early poetry, that he did so. From the beginning to the end of his career, with the sole, possible exception of *De Doctrina Christiana*, there is a conspicuous absence of a definitive engagement with the millennium on Milton's part, whether he is perceived as a radical, a conservative, or non-ideological.

Chapter 1

1 Imminent or Immanent Kingdom? The Question of Millenarianism in the Early Poetry and Academic Prolusions

Chapter Abstract: Continuing the argument began in my introduction that Milton had no significant association with the millenarian Joseph Mede during his undergraduate days at Cambridge, I explore possible references to Mede in the poem “At a Vacation Exercise in the Colledge”¹² and in Prolusion 6. I then proceed to close readings of “Naturam non pati senium” (“That Nature does not suffer decay”) and “On the Morning of Christ Nativity” and contend that Milton engaged with vitalism or animist materialism as a young poet. I argue that he maintained the emphasis of his eschatology on the final kingdom, rather than on the millennium, throughout his early poetry and beyond. The pervasiveness of ordinary providence, that is, the vital divine spirit, in the natural world anticipates the union with an immanent God in the final kingdom and allows for the operation of liberty of the individual conscience, which would be compromised by the external, coercive millennial reign of Christ with his saints. I further submit that the presentation of “Naturam” at a public debate during an important visit to Cambridge by a close associate of King Charles in 1629 and Milton declamation of the Latin poem during a meeting of a prestigious literary academy when he visited Italy in the late 1630s suggest the lasting importance of Milton’s non-millenarian perspective. This perspective is also evident in his other minor poems, which the conclusion of this chapter shows.

1.1 “His thirty Armes along the indented Meads”

While there is no explicit evidence that might indicate how Milton regarded Mede and the millenarianism he developed at Cambridge, there may be some indirect references that might provide insight. Leonard writes that Marjorie Nicolson has “plausibly” argued that Mede is “old Damoetas” in “Lycidas” (line 36) (Leonard, “Millennium” 262). I suggest that there is a possibility that Milton alluded to Mede in

¹² For this poem, I use the 2012 Oxford edition (*The Complete Works of John Milton, Vol. III: The Shorter Poems*) edited by Barbara Keifer Lewalski and Estelle Haan.

line 94 of “At a Vacation Exercise in the Colledge” (“His thirty Armes along the indented Meads”) and in Prolusion 6, which were both performed during the same Christ’s College hazing rite, where there was much punning on names. During this student “salting” ceremony or initiation ritual when he might have referred to Mede, Milton presided and spoke. His speech during this event, generally dated in 1628 though Campbell and Corns say there is some evidence for 1631, comes to us as the comic Latin Prolusion 6 and the English poem *At a Vacation Exercise in the Colledge*. The former is the beginning Latin prose section of the speech, and the latter, the vernacular verse continuation. They were printed separately during Milton’s lifetime in 1674’s *Epistolae Familiarium* and Milton’s 1673 poetry collection, and until John K. Hale published the complete version in 2005, they had been never been reconnected (See Campbell and Corns 58-60 and Hale, *Cambridge* 195-219, 237-93). Lines 91-94 of *At a Vacation Exercise* read

Rivers arise; whether thou be the Son,
Of utmost *Tweed*, or *Oose*, or gulphie *Dun*,
Or *Trent*, who like some earth-born Giant spreads
His thirty Armes along the indented Meads.

Milton engaged in a lot of humorous punning on the names of students and college servants during the salting, particularly in the Latin portion, which Hale characterizes as a prolonged mock academic exercise (209), but there is also some of that in the poem. The “Rivers” in line 91, for instance, has been identified as a student, either George or Nizell Rivers, two brothers who had been admitted in 1628. One of the freshmen about to be hazed at the event, Rivers¹³ had earlier in Milton’s recitation of the poem absurdly played the part of one of Aristotle’s abstract “categories,” that is, a general quality of a certain thing that might form part of a preposition. In line 91, he is presented as the offspring or tributary of one of the great English rivers in a parody of the catalog of rivers in Spenser’s *Fairie Queene* (Campbell and Corns 58, Lewalski and Haan 503, note 91, and Hale, *Cambridge* 199-202, 214-17, 285, 200; note 15). In addition, Line 75 on “Substance,” the chief category who “O’re all his Brethren . . . shall reign as King,” might also be alluding to a student. According to Campbell and Corns, there were

¹³ According to Campbell and Corns, the lines refer to only one of the brothers, but it could also refer to both of them since they entered Cambridge at the same time.

brothers with the surname King studying in Milton's college at the time (Campbell and Corns 58). This student might have been Edward King, who would be the subject of "Lycidas" about a decade later (96-99). Following the reading of these other words as puns on names, I suggest that it might be possible that the word "Meads" in line 94 refers to Joseph Mede. In this context, any word that had any similarity to a college persona had potential to be a mocking or playful allusion.

If "Meads" is a reference to Mede, it is not a flattering mention by a millenarian devotee. "[I]ndented Meads" literally means meadows whose banks are "deeply cut with angular incisions" by the river or are "deeply, strongly, or coarsely serrated" (*OED* 1.a); in fact, the *OED* includes this verse line of Milton as one of the examples in its "indented" entry. However, "indented" can also mean "bound or engaged by an indenture or formal covenant" (*OED* 4), as in "indentured servant". Although the *OED* records the earliest occurrence of this sense in 1758, "indenture" as "a deed between two or more parties with mutual covenants" goes as far back as 1423. Thus, during in this mock academic exercise, the "indentured" Mede is divested of his college fellowship. As Hale puts it, "the salting rite belongs to the *immediate* seniors, not the tribal elders; and hence . . . those authorities may be parodied and pilloried. This was in fact central: the master of these revels posed as a college tutor presenting his bunch of pupils for University examination or graduation." During the salting, the power structure is reversed in an "allowed and ritualized parodying of the hierarchy (in the name of safety-valve or equilibrium) [that] upholds rather than subverts the hierarchy, because it involves a parallel inverted hierarchy" (199). Milton remarks that the students had expected to feast on "some rams, with fine spreading horns, but our cooks have not yet brought them in from town." As Hale explains this quip, the fellows had left to sup away from the university in order to give their charges some liberty to have their fun (211-12). Mede is temporarily demoted to a servant, and Milton becomes simultaneously the interim head of the college for the night and, as Hale observes, the great river that fathers the freshman student, or tributary, Rivers (Hale *Cambridge* 218, note 48) in the final lines of *At a Vacation Exercise*. It is as that great river that Milton has "indented [i.e., indentured]" Mede. It is interesting to note that the term "indenture" derives from the document being "executed in two or more copies, all having their tops or edges correspondingly indented

or serrated for identification and security” (*OED* “indenture” 2a.). Thus, while the jaggedness in the imagery that might connect Milton to Mede seems to only potentially signify a relationship between master and student, in this context it is a playfully subverted relationship that pokes fun at authority. Though it does not suggest anything definite about Milton’s attitude towards Mede or Mede’s millenarianism, it says nothing to suggest that Milton had a positive or negative regard for him.

Milton might also refer to Mede in the Prolusion itself, wherein he puns on the name of the college porter “Sparks” and possibly that of an undergraduate named “Furnice” (273, note 11).

But how lucky and safe we shall be for ever! For at Rome they guarded the eternal fire with religious care to preserve the empire to long life; but *we* are guarded by vigilant living fires. Why did I say “living” and “vigilance”? The words slipped out unexpectedly, because now I remember aright, these lamps go out at the first approach of dusk, and only rekindle in bright conditions. But I do have hopes that this house can be brightly lit again, since no one can deny that two of the University’s brightest lights preside over it. They would be nowhere more honored than at Rome, mind you, because there either the Vestal Virgins would keep them blazing and wide awake all night or else these fiery brethren would be initiated into the order of the Seraphim (275).

Hale comments that Milton might be jibing at the college porters, who “(like the policemen in the saying) are never to be found except when you don’t need them” (275; note 13). However, “two of the University’s brightest lights” might be also be an indirect allusion to actual University faculty members or officials, and one of these may be Mede. By this time, Mede might have already achieved an international reputation for his millenarianism, but his *Clavis Apocalyptica* had only been published the previous year (See Jue 14). Nevertheless, Campbell and Corns write that by the time Milton enrolled at Cambridge in 1625, Mede was already the “most distinguished” of the Christ’s College fellows (28). That these University stars would be “nowhere more honored than at Rome” might be a critique of their Laudian leanings. If this is the suggestion Milton intended, it

presents a problem for the controversial argument proposed by Campbell and Corns that the young Milton was a Laudian.

What about other poems authored by Milton that Mede might have read or heard recited? Might anything more definite about Milton's perspective on Mede or millenarianism be gleaned from them? Did Milton take the opportunity to publicly comment on the millennium at what had just become the birthplace of English millenarianism? I suggest that there is one such poem, the Latin "Naturam non pati senium" ("That Nature does not suffer decay") of 1629, and that Milton found the ideal opportunity to present it. But to contextualize my discussion on this piece and my thesis generally, I shall briefly return to the perspective of scholars on the question of millenarianism in Milton's early work.

As I mentioned in my introduction, Lewalski and Revard believe that millenarianism is evident in Milton's early poetry. William B. Hunter, in his own contribution to *Milton and the Ends of Time*, disagrees with Lewalski and Revard. He acknowledges Milton's millenarianism in the antiprelatical tracts and the possibility that it persisted, despite a substantial loss of confidence in the immediacy of Christ's Kingdom around the restoration, beyond the fall of the Commonwealth government ("millennial" 97-99, 102-04). But according to him, there is nothing that indicates millenarian convictions during Milton's years as a student at Cambridge. Associating millenarianism with radicalism like many other critics have done, Hunter says that "Proof of [Milton's] support of the current political and religious regime is obvious" in his funeral elegies to Anglican bishops and "In Quintum Novembris," which, as I shall discuss below, commemorates James I's deliverance from the Gunpowder plot. In addition, Milton made the oaths to abide by the "standards of the Church of England," which were necessary for his B.A. and M.A. In particular, Hunter takes Lewalski and Revard to task for the millenarianism they argue exists in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." He argues that most of the apocalyptic imagery in the Nativity Ode is not from Revelation 20:1-10, the only scriptural source that mentions the millennium, but from 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. For Hunter, the Nativity Ode really focuses on the

incarnation rather than the second coming, and the young poet “seems indifferent” to the millennium. “A dissident position” begins to emerge only with *Lycidas* (97).

Lewalski and Revard might also be overlooking an important insight about Milton’s poetry before the 1640s made by Michael Fixler many years ago in his *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (1964). Fixler is quite certain that Milton was not a millenarian prior to the early 1640s. His “eschatology became apocalyptic” only by the time he wrote *Of Reformation* (1641) (48). Then he started to display “those tendencies which have been called utopian, a term no less frequently used to describe the visionary idealistic tendency in the whole of Puritan social and political thought” and “social and political programmes which expect[ed] a divine intrusion into worldly affairs” (83-84).

According to Fixler, the early days demonstrated

the constant preoccupation of Milton’s poetry with the themes of virtue, fulfillment, fame, and heavenly reward. . . . images in his poetry are at first more immediately eschatological in the sense that the persistent theme of reward and fulfillment is invariably referred beyond life to the celestial union of the soul with divine glory. *No apocalyptic shade touched these images, for apocalyptic eschatology is dramatically marked by the insistence that God’s justice will be made immediately manifest in the face of human injustice and blindness. . . .* His earliest poetic reliance on the imagery of eschatological bliss, the glory of *the final Kingdom*, is conventional. (47-48, emphases mine)

One example Fixler explores is the poem “On Time” wherein “universal eschatological finality,” or, in other words, “the eternity of the heavenly kingdom” accessible only through a fanciful transcendence of time, is not only devoid of any socio-political implication but is merely “some sensuous equivalent for apprehending what Augustine describes as the soul’s state of sorrowless bliss in the knowledge of God and perfection” (48-49). Hunter argues along similar lines when he observes that in the Nativity Ode, perfect spiritual fulfillment will be attained “only at the Last Judgment, foreseen now with the birth, not at the millennium” (“millennial” 97). Later in his essay, in the section on *Paradise Lost*, Hunter connects the Last Judgment to the “New Heav’ns, new Earth,” which comes to be in the wake of the destruction of the world (101). However, he fails to

recognize the great emphasis Milton places on this final kingdom. As Milton himself tells us in the Nativity Ode, in that kingdom, “our bliss / Full and perfect *is*.” A millenarian might say this bliss *will be* perfect during the millennial kingdom, but Milton’s surprising use of the present tense suggests that, while complete fulfillment is yet to come, it resists being subject to any temporal limitation of a thousand years or indeed to time itself. Moreover, this bliss is imperfectly and presently accessible in the Christ’s inward spiritual kingdom.

As opposed to the position of Lewalski and Revard, I agree with Fixler that in the early poems Milton focuses not on the millennium but on the “final Kingdom,” what Revelation 21 calls “a new heaven and a new earth.” After this great renewal, which will follow the Last Judgment and the passing of “the first heaven and the first earth” (21:1), “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying” (21:4). Milton uses the same language in *Paradise Lost*. In Book 3, the Father tells the Son that

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
New heav’n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell,
And after all their tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
With joy and love triumphing, and fair truth. (3.334-38)¹⁴

As Fixler sees it, internal, religious, civic, and even artistic virtue on earth is the basis of “celestial union with divine glory” in the final kingdom (47-48, 131). As Douglas Trevor has shown, building on the work of William Empson, the renewed heaven and earth had profound importance and centrality in Milton’s eschatology and theology in *Paradise Lost*. Trevor, however, does not call it “the final Kingdom.” Instead, as he sees it, Milton’s eschatology suggests an ultimate “oneness” (77-79, 82-83). As the Father goes on to say in *Paradise Lost*, in the lines that immediately follow those I just quoted above:

Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
For regal sceptre then no more shall need,
God shall be All in All (qtd. 81, *PL* 3.339-41)

¹⁴ For *Paradise Lost*, I use the 1998 Penguin edition (*John Milton: The Complete Poems*) edited by John Leonard unless otherwise indicated. When quoting *Paradise Lost* passages within secondary sources, I revert to the Penguin edition to normalize the text.

To put it in another way, in the new heaven and the new earth, God will become absolutely immanent such that, in a troubling way, individuality will cease to exist, and all that will remain will be an eternal, pervasive, and unified state of total and divine love and happiness (Trevor 81-92, 102-03). For Trevor, this idea is the “radical and doctrinally unstable, . . . ideological center point” of the epic (82). I argue that Milton focuses on union with an immanent God in the final kingdom throughout his career, including the period of the early poetry. As I shall discuss in the following chapters, I also part company with Trevor on loss of individuality in the renewed heaven and earth, and, thus, in my analysis, the Miltonic emphasis on divine immanence is not as radical as Trevor imagines. In addition, Trevor questions neither the traditional view about Milton’s millenarianism nor the current vogue to see it as persisting beyond 1660. He does mention the recent scholarship on the doctrine though, writing that “While Milton’s millenarianism might very well be ‘entirely consistent’ with the works of Protestant scholars of the apocalypse such as Mede, his postapocalyptic theology is not” (78).

I submit that “Naturam non pati senium” (“That Nature does not suffer decay”) calls to mind Milton’s concern with the immanent final kingdom and thus constituted a non-millenarian statement by Milton in Mede’s Cambridge. As a recent discovery by Sarah Knight has shown, “Naturam” was first presented at a public debate during an important visit to Cambridge by a close aristocratic associate of King Charles in 1629, just two years after the publication of Mede’s millenarian *Clavis Apocalyptica* (“Student” 37-39 and “Royal” 15). I suggest that Milton took advantage of the occasion to express the non-millenarian position on end times. As the Anglican Church and the Jacobean court saw it, the millennium had been in the past. Mede’s millenarian ideas ran counter to this orthodox position and Milton, perhaps encouraged by university officials, might have wished to reiterate the orthodox view. This would be consistent with the argument that Milton was theologically conservative at this time. Moreover, as Estelle Haan points out, Milton declaimed “Naturam” during a meeting of a prestigious literary academy when he visited Italy in 1638 and 1639 and published encomia from the Italian Academicians alluding to the poem in his 1645 and 1673 poetry collections. These suggest that Milton remained steadfast to the non-millenarian perspective in the “Naturam” (“Academies” 26-28). We now turn to my close reading of “Naturam.” Scholars like Stephen Fallon and

John Rogers have suggested that vitalism or animist materialism emerged in Milton's work later in his career (Fallon, *Philosophers* 79-110, Rogers 1-38, 103-76). Milton's early engagement with this idea in "Naturam" and in some of his other early poems illuminates his perspective on millenarianism. Shortly after writing "Naturam" in 1629, in that same year, Milton would reinforce his non-millenarian standpoint in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." He would maintain the emphasis of his eschatology on the final kingdom and union with an immanent God, rather than on the millennium, throughout his early poetry and beyond.

1.2 The Proto-Vitalist "Naturam"

One of the key aspects of millenarianism was the belief in the impending end of the world. However, nature as depicted in "Naturam non pati senium"¹⁵ ("That nature does not suffer from decay") is not on its last legs. As Chao has pointed out, the poem challenges the notion that, as a result of the fall of man, nature is in a state of decay that will progressively worsen until the end of the world. This had captured the imagination since the medieval period (Chao 67, Harris 3-5). In lines 8-10, Milton asks

will the face of Nature wither away, covered by furrowing wrinkles, and
will the common mother of creation contract her all-productive womb and
become sterile with age? [*Ergone marcescet sulcantibus obsita rugis /
Naturæ facies, & rerum publica mater / Omniparum contracta uterum
sterilescet ab ævo?*] (qtd. in 67).

Chao writes that "Milton does not agree" and "flatly denies the theory at the end of the poem" (67), and quotes the concluding lines of the poem:

Thus in short will the most perfected order of all things proceed for ever
until the final flame ravages the world, embracing all about the poles and
the heights of vast heaven, and the fabric of the universe will blaze upon a
huge funeral pyre [*Sic denique in ævum / Ibit cunctarum series justissima
rerum, / Donec flamma orbem populabitur ultima, latè / Circumplexa*

¹⁵ For Milton's Latin poetry, I use the 2012 Oxford edition (*The Complete Works of John Milton, Vol. III: The Shorter Poems*) edited by Barbara Keifer Lewalski and Estelle Haan.

polos, & vasti culmina caeli; / Ingentique rogo flagrabit machina mundi.]
(65-69, qtd. in 67).

He concludes his brief analysis by stating that because “the young poet believed that the order of the universe would go on to the Day of the Lord, when everything would be consumed by the conflagration,” as 2 Peter 3.10-12 prophesies, “There is no trace of the millennium in the poem”. I certainly agree with this, but a skeptic might reply that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Chao also writes that despite rejecting the decay of nature, Milton “did not deny the possibility of the imminence of the world’s end,” referring to Milton’s Seventh Prologue, which suggests as much (67).

However, despite Milton’s reputation as a millenarian, the tone, language, and argument of the poem do suggest that neither the apocalypse nor the millennium is at hand: “*At Pater omnipotens ... certoque peregit / Pondere fatorum lances, atque ordine summo / Singula perpetuum jussit servare tenorem,*” that is, God “has established the scales of destiny with a definite weight and has commanded that each thing in the supreme order should preserve its course forever” as long as there is historical time. Milton then provides an exhaustive description of unchanging aspects of providential nature (lines 33-36).¹⁶ There is no need for a millennial earthly kingdom of Christ. “The most perfected order of all things [*cunctarum series justissima rerum*],” one that is predetermined and original, will already be “proceed[ing] forever [*in aevum / Ibit*]” so if there should be another perfected order externally imposed by a physical king Jesus, that would be oddly redundant (65-66). Instead, the cycles of the universe will harmoniously continue “*Donec . . . Ingentique rogo flagrabit machina mundi,*” until “the fabric of the universe will blaze upon a huge funeral pyre” (67,68). As opposed to envisioning the millennium, Milton focuses on what he would later call in his theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* “*Huius. . . mundi conflagratione,*” the final “Conflagration of this World” (868/869, line 8).¹⁷ Although he does not say so directly in “*Naturam,*” this conflagration will lead up to, as Milton puts in in *De Doctrina*, “Our glorification [that]

¹⁶ For Milton’s Shorter Poetry, I use the 2012 Oxford edition edited by Barbara Lewalski and Estelle Haan unless otherwise indicated. Chao uses a different translation, but for the passages he quotes that I cite in the previous paragraph, I also use the Oxford translation.

¹⁷ For Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, I will be using the 2012 Oxford edition edited by John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington unless otherwise indicated.

will have as its companion the renewal and possession of heaven and earth and of things created in them, those at least which could be of use or delight to us” (897, lines 15-17).¹⁸ “Naturam” is incompatible with millenarianism. Even if millenarianism and “Naturam” might be reconciled so that the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom still fall within historical or natural time, the millennium is omitted in the poem.

By referring to the last conflagration, “Naturam” obliquely refers to what Fixler calls “the final Kingdom,” what Milton himself would term the “New heav’n and earth,” and ultimately what Trevor describes as “oneness.” (Fixler, however, fails to mention “Naturam.”) Similarly, David Quint has recently argued that “Naturam” refutes the entropy and random destruction of the world proposed by Lucretius in *De rerum natura*. For Milton, such a conclusion amounts to an erroneous acceptance that death is an absolute end and that there is nothing after it. God thoroughly regulates a universe that does not decay and will end it only when the appointed time for the Last Judgment arrives; for Milton, this offers the reassurance that Christ will defeat death itself (*Inside* 82-85). Andrew Escobedo has argued that in the sixteenth-century, when millenarianism was universally rejected as heretical, Protestant apocalyptic expectation centered on the destruction of the world and its subsequent renewal (13-14). This was the orthodox position on the end times at the beginning of the seventeenth-century (Revard 43-47). In the context of the recent publication of a seminal millenarian text in his own university, Milton in “Naturam” is thus squarely aligning himself with this conventional eschatological perspective.

Of course, “Naturam” has been long considered an academic exercise by editors, and in fact has recently been proved to have been part of a Cambridge disputation (See Knight, “Student” and “Royal”), so Milton might not necessarily subscribe to any ideas expressed there. According to Campbell and Corns, students could either speak for positions that were actually their own in these disputations or for standpoints they did not adhere to at all; there is no clear pattern that now might help determine whether or not a

¹⁸ “*Glorificationis nostrae comes erit coeli et terrae rerumque in iis creatarum, quae quidem nobis usui aut oblectationi esse possint, renovatio et possessio*” (896, lines 11-13).

certain position was truly that of the speaker (36); I shall come back to this point shortly in this chapter.

Nevertheless, in 1953, Joseph Allen Bryant, Jr. writes convincingly that “there is nothing in either *Christian Doctrine* or *Paradise Lost*—or, for that matter, in any other work by Milton—which precludes our regarding the description of the universe in *Naturam non pati senium* as an accurate and adequate statement of Milton’s mature opinion” (6). To support his point, he quotes from the section in *De Doctrina* on ordinary providence, and although he does not explicitly say so, the passage closely echoes lines 33-36 in “Naturam.” Here is the passage from *De Doctrina* in full:

The ordinary kind [of providence] is that whereby God maintains and preserves that consistent order of causes which was established by himself in the beginning.

This is commonly, and also too frequently, called Nature, for indeed nothing else can be nature except that marvellous force and efficacy of the divine voice sent forth at first, which thenceforth all things obey just like a perpetual command. (*De Doctrina* 339)¹⁹

And here are the corresponding lines from “Naturam,” which I quoted in part above:

But the omnipotent Father has taken thought for the sum of things by fixing the stars more firmly, and has established the scales of destiny with a definite weight and has commanded that each thing in the supreme order should preserve its course forever. (“Naturam,” lines 33-36)

The parallels are striking. In *De Doctrina*, “God maintains and preserves [*servat*] that consistent order [*ordinem*] of causes which was established by himself in the beginning”; in “Naturam,” the “Father has taken thought for the sum of things by fixing the stars more firmly, and has established the scales of destiny with a definite weight and has commanded that . . . the supreme order [*ordine*] should preserve [*servare*] its course.” Most importantly, in *De Doctrina*, Nature or ordinary providence is “that marvellous

¹⁹ “*Ordinaria, qua Deus constantem illum causarum ordinem qui ab ipso constitutus in principio est, retinet ac servat. Haec vulgo et nimis etiam frequenter Natura dicitur, neque enim aliud quicquam natura esse potest, nisi mirifica illa vis et efficacia divinae vocis primitus emissae, cui dehinc omnia veluti mandato perpetuo parent.*”

force and efficacy of the divine voice sent forth at first, which thenceforth all things obey just like a perpetual [*perpetuo*] command; in “Naturam,” the Father has created nature by having “commanded that each thing in the supreme order should preserve [*servare*] its course forever [*perpetuum*].” “Naturam” therefore contemplates the end of the world in the context of a celebration of the operation of ordinary providence in the universe. I suggest that this is significant to Milton’s attitude to millenarianism because ordinary providence is intimately related to liberty of the individual conscience, which would be compromised by the external, coercive millennial reign of Christ with his saints. Ordinary providence in “Naturam” is also important for my thesis because it suggests Milton’s preoccupation with the immanence of God in the natural world, which anticipates the immanence of God in the final kingdom, rather than an imminent millennial kingdom on earth.

These connections will be come clear if we consider the poem through the lens of Milton’s vitalism or animist materialism, which, according to John Rogers, challenges the traditional dualism that held that body and soul were distinct with a monist view that sees body and soul as made of the same fundamental matter that has been filled by God with free living force (1-2). Rogers does not mention “Naturam” because he sees this vitalist scientific, intellectual and artistic trend that Milton was a part of occurring much later, around 1650 (1). I suggest that the roots of Milton’s vitalism can be traced back to as early as 1629, in “Naturam,” wherein Milton privileges a conception of nature that is antithetical to the idea of the millennium from both theological and political points of view. First of all, like Bryant, Rogers points out that “the providential force known as ‘nature’ received its original empowerment by God. But since its inception by the divine voice, the law of nature is nonetheless said to uphold perpetual sway over all things.” However, unlike Bryant, Rogers highlights the fact that Milton makes a distinction between “ordinary” providence (i.e., nature), and “extraordinary providence” (154): that is, in Milton’s words from *De Doctrina*, “that whereby God produces some effect out of the usual order of nature, or gives the power of producing the same effect to whomsoever

he may appoint. This is what we call a miracle” (qtd. in 154).²⁰ According to Milton, as the new Oxford edition of *De Doctrina* renders it, “The aim of miracles is the manifestation of divine power, and the confirmation of our faith . . . And . . . a sterner condemnation of unbelievers . . .” (341). Crucially, Rogers vigorously questions the existence of two profoundly different, opposing strategies of divine governance (166), and concludes that there is not radical conflict, but, rather, a kind of progress in history towards a decentralization of God’s rule over the universe. The emphasis is shifting from extraordinary providence by a meddling deity to ordinary providence benevolently enveloping man’s free will (170). Rogers writes that Milton emphasizes “‘large Grace’ [*Paradise Lost* 12:305] rather than its particular supernatural dispensation.”

Consequently,

Insofar as Michael is functioning as a Mosaic lawgiver to Adam, his description of the law as ‘imperfect’ or incomplete announces the planned obsolescence of his own historical discourse. . . . his lesson of the continual judgment from above must necessarily give way to a sense of the individual whose existence as an absolute free agent depends on the regularity of natural law. (170-71)

Rogers contends that “In response to assumed systemic homologies between nature and polity” thinkers like Milton “began to distance themselves from the rhetoric of arbitrary authority at the heart of the determinist discourse,” and that “The figure of autonomous material agency peculiar to animist materialism provided conceptual backing for a range of identifiable groups seeking a liberatory conception of individual political agency, and others, motivated less by political than economic concerns, pursuing a principle of free agency in a hypothetically free market” (9). Considered in the light of Mede’s *Clavis Apocalyptica*, which had been published just two years prior to the public presentation of “Naturam”, the poem thus implicitly rejects an earthly kingdom of Christ because such a

²⁰ Rogers uses the Columbia edition of *De Doctrina*. Oxford edition: “that whereby God produces something outside the usual order of things, or else gives the power of producing it solely to whom he wishes. Among human beings this is called a Miracle” (339, lines 36-39) or “*qua Deus quicquam extra solitum rerum ordinem producit, aut producendi dat facultatem ei solum cui vult. hoc inter homines Miraculum dicitur*” (338, lines 30-32).

kingdom would necessarily entail extraordinary providence in external, and interventionist administration of a physically present Christ and his saints over human affairs.

“Naturam” may have been written twenty years or so before what Rogers calls the “Vitalist Moment,” but the ideas of Paracelsus, which informed the vitalists in the middle of the century (10), were certainly available to Milton. According to Charles Webster, Paracelsus’s “animistic interpretation of the earth and the celestial bodies, and the guiding concept of *anima mundi*, rendered it easy to posit a connection between the physical and organic and psychic world” (qtd. in 10). Moreover, Rogers also traces vitalism’s roots in England to “the economic paradigm of the self-regulating market that had been theorized for the first time in the 1620’s to promote a nearly laissez-faire program of foreign trade” in a work by Thomas Mun (1621) and in another by Edward Misselden (1623); again, Milton would have had access to these works or at least would have seen the economy they described in action. Even if it can only be regarded as a strictly a proto-vitalist poem then, I would argue that “Naturam” suggests Milton already held strong vitalist beliefs in the 1620s and 1630s or at least was already well on his way to forming them.

“Il Penseroso,” which Campbell and Corns date to the summer of 1631 might also contain proto-vitalist language. Milton mentions:

. . . those Daemons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With Planet, or with Element (93-95)

These lines have been interpreted as drawing from the Neo-Platonic and Hermetic traditions of daemon spirits, which have their source in a cultural well that Paracelsus drank deep from (Woodhouse and Bush 324-26, Lewis 130-35, 1-5). As such, the “Daemons” can plausibly be read as aspects or representations of a Paracelsan “animistic interpretation of the earth [i.e., Nature].” Debora Shuger has, more recently, discussed Milton’s Daemons in his early poetry and prose, but she does not connect them with vitalism or extraordinary providence. She sees them instead as a strange, almost

secularized glorification of the vatic artist-scholar's self: "humanistic study as deiform self-fashioning" (i.e., Lycidas in heaven) (143) or as an estrangement from any and all factions of English Christianity at the time (i.e., the Attendant Spirit as a puzzling sort of Grace reminiscent of Plutarch) (140-44, 148). However, she does note that Milton's Daemons would have "appalled" Mede, who in one work wrote that belief in such creatures was a form of end times, pre-millennial apostasy (140, 144).

It might be objected that the early poetry, particularly *A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634), presents a dualist world, rather than the monist one of the vitalists (Fallon, *Philosophers* 79-81). As Stephen Fallon writes, the *Masque* "suggests the distance between Milton's early dualism and late monism" (81) and provides the example of the sharp contrast between the Attendant Spirit's heavenly abode "where those immortal shapes / Of bright aerial Spirits live insphere'd / In Regions mild of calm and serene air" and the "smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call Earth" (qtd. in 81, *Masque* lines 2-6). According to Fallon, this passage, from Plato's *Phaedo* (109b-110a), "underscores the gap between the terrestrial and the celestial and between the bodily and the spiritual" (81). However, there are signs of monism later in the work. At one point, referring to the Lady, the Elder Brother speaks as if the "barriers between soul and body are dismantled" (82):

Till oft converse with Heav'nly habitants
 Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
 Till all be made immortal: but when lust
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,
 Embodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
 The divine property of her first being. (459-69, qtd. in *Philosophers* 82)

Fallon suggests that “seeds of change” from dualism to monism can be seen in the “intuition of the spiritualization of body and the materialization of soul” present in this passage, but he does not consider the text closely. (82-83).

Moreover, lines 462-69 were also inspired by the *Phaedo* (81b-d) (Woodhouse and Bush 916), which Fallon does not mention. The lines that immediately follow are from that section of Plato’s dialog as well:

Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel vaults, sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it loved,
And linked it self by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state. (470-75)

The passage thus also contributes to the *Masques’s* association with Milton’s dualism. In the parallel passage in the *Phaedo*, Socrates tells his disciple Cebes

take a case where a soul has been defiled and is impure when it is separated from the body [upon death], because it has always been coupled with the body, waited on it, loved it and been bewitched by it—by its desires and pleasures—so that the soul thinks nothing is real except the corporeal, what one can touch, see, drink, eat and enjoy sexually. . . . Do you think that a soul in this condition will be unalloyed and alone by itself when separated [from the body upon death] Instead, I suppose it will be intermingled with the corporeal, which the body’s company have made part of its nature, because of their constant coupling and because of its long practice? (72-73)

Although the soul of the deceased is “part of the [body’s] nature,” because it is merely “intermingled” with the body, unable to separate from the corporeal “unalloyed,” the dualist distinction between body and soul of the original is maintained. Consequently, because “the corporeal is heavy, weighty, earthy, and visible” souls like this are “weighted down and drawn back into the visible region by fear of the unseen and of Hades, drifting, as it is said, around monuments and tombs, the very places where certain shadowy apparitions of souls really have been seen” (73). In *The Masque*, the soul that

becomes “clotted by contagion” and “subject to defilement to the inward parts” because of “lust” is similarly “Oft seen in charnel vaults, sepulchers / Lingerin, and sitting by a new-made grave.” However, the spiritual does not become mixed with the corporeal. Rather, the soul “Embodies, and imbrates, till she quite lose / The divine property of her first being,” suggesting that the spiritual substance of the soul undergoes a process of “materialization,” as Fallon has it, rather than a process of intermingling with an altogether different substance, the body. The distinction between body and soul is therefore undermined. Consistent with the vitalist and monist view that body and spirit consisted of the essentially the same kind of matter, the soul becomes more corporeal, but it remains fundamentally the same substance as it was before the materialization occurred.

The earlier part of this section in *The Masque* (lines 459-63) points more clearly to an emergent monism in its “intuition of the spiritualization of the body.” In the corresponding passage of the *Phaedo*, Socrates relates to Cebes what happens, upon death, to the soul that is “in a pure condition, bringing with it nothing from the body, because it did not associate with the body at all in life, at least when it had a choice, but instead avoided the body.” For the dualist Socrates, a soul of this nature will completely and abruptly disconnect itself from the body upon the demise of that body and “go off into what is similar to it, the unseen, the divine, the immortal and wise, where after its arrival it can be happy, separated from the wandering, unintelligence, fears, and savage sorts of love and other human evils” (72). *The Masque*, on the other hand, does not talk about death but the effect of spiritual intercourse with angels or “converse with Heav’nly habitants.” Spirituality will “cast a beam” on the body, that is, the “outward shape, / the unpolluted temple of the mind,” and transform it “by degrees to the soul’s essence, / Till all be made immortal.” The gradual, monist spiritualization of the soul “by degrees” is absent in the dualist *The Phaedo*, where the distinct substance of the spirit suddenly and completely decouples from the body upon death. These lines from *The Masque* prefigure Raphael’s definitively monist-vitalist manifesto to Adam in Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, which include the following lines:

O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,

If not depraved from good, created all
 Such to perfection, one first matter all,
 Endued with various forms, various degrees
 Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
 But more refined, more spiritous, and pure,
 As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
 Each in their several active spheres assigned,
 Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
 Proportioned to each kind. (5.469-79)

In these lines, ordinary providence can be seen to originate in how “All things proceed” from God and “one first matter.” They also suggest that the righteous, those “not depraved from good,” will “return” to the creator in the final kingdom after a faithful life on earth that gradually spiritualizes them. Because all of creation is made of the same substance, a continuum that ranges from levels of the basest corporeality to “degrees” of the most sublime spirit, the free, vital spirit from God of ordinary providence can saturate the universe, to an extent that would not be possible in a dualist world, wherein spirit merely coexists or “intermingles” with matter. For the vitalist and monist Milton, spirit is matter.

The Seventh Prologue, written in 1631, as Campbell and Corns estimate (62), is another work that suggests Milton’s early proto-vitalism. Towards the end of that piece, Ignorance is banished to the animal world, but Milton wonders whether it will find acceptance even there, where ordinary providence or “the mysterious power and efficacy of that divine voice” is seemingly figured by Orphic imagery and speculations on bestial intelligence:

To the beasts, did I say? they will surely refuse to receive so infamous a guest, at any rate if they are either endowed with some kind of *inferior reasoning power, as many maintain, or guided by some powerful instinct*, enabling them to practice the Arts, or something resembling the Arts, among themselves. . . .What then? To stocks and stones? Why even trees, bushes, and whole woods once tore up their roots and hurried to hear the skilful strains of Orpheus. Often, too, they were endowed with *mysterious*

powers and uttered divine oracles, as for instance did the oaks of Dodona. Rocks, too, show a certain aptitude for learning in that they reply to the sacred words of poets; will not these also reject Ignorance? (303, 305, emphasis mine)

Like “Naturam,” this early prose work also sets ordinary providence against the decay of nature. Milton writes, seeking to prove that “Learning brings more Blessings to Men than Ignorance” (Wolfe I.288), that

Ignorance is breathing her last, and you are now watching her final efforts and her dying struggle. She declares that glory is mankind’s most powerful incentive, and that . . . we live under the shadow of the world’s old age and decrepitude, and of the impending dissolution of all things, so that even if we leave behind us anything deserving of everlasting fame, the scope of our glory is narrowed, since there will be few succeeding generations to remember us. It is therefore to no purpose that we produce so many books and noble monuments of learning, seeing that the approaching conflagration of the world will destroy them all. I do not deny that this may indeed be so; but yet to have no thought of glory when we do well is above all glory. The ancients could indeed derive no satisfaction from the empty praise of men, seeing that no joy or knowledge of it could reach them when they were dead and gone. But we may hope for eternal life, . . . in which, . . . those who have lived temperately and devoted all their time to noble arts, and have thus been of service to mankind, will be rewarded by the bestowal of a wisdom matchless and supreme over all others. (301-02)

It is also notable that Milton makes no mention of the millennium in the Seventh Prologue either: Milton discusses only the “conflagration of the world” and the “eternal life” that follows, wherein the faithful might enjoy heavenly rewards. The Seventh Prologue thus strongly suggests that two years after Milton wrote “Naturam,” he continued to believe in the concepts he expressed in the Latin poem, which included both the notion that nature does not suffer from the decay as well as the idea that the end of the

world was not imminent.²¹ With the exception of the belief that the end times were not impending, which changed in the 1640s and 1650s, these convictions would endure. Even if his ideas on ordinary and extraordinary providence would be published much later in *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost*, as I mentioned above, Milton worked on his theology throughout the course of his lifetime. With vitalist ideas so important to him already in place, or already well on their way to carving their place, in Milton's thinking in the late 1620s and 1630s, it difficult to imagine Milton ever believing in the millennium.

Bryant suggests that considered in isolation "Naturam" might be "disregarded, as being only a piece of *juvenilia* and at best a risky guide to the poet's mature opinions" (4). Rogers, for his part, oddly overlooks the poem and misses an opportunity to note early vitalism in Milton. However, I argue that research done by Sarah Knight not long ago in 2010 and by Estelle Haan in 1998 demonstrates that Milton regarded the poem as a significant piece and therefore that the vitalist ideas and the position vis-à-vis millenarianism expressed in the poem were indeed strong and important in the late 1620s and in the 1630s. Before Knight published her findings, the composition date of "Naturam" was undetermined. Some scholars thought it might be the poem Milton refers to in a 1628 letter to Alexander Gill; in that letter Milton writes that he composed the poem upon the request of a College Fellow who needed it for a commencement disputation. Because Milton characterizes the piece as "*leviculas . . . nugas* ('trivial nonsense')" and "Naturam" is thoughtful and almost solemn, John Carey argues instead that the poem Milton refers to is the "De Idea Platonica quemadmodum Aritoteles intellexit," the tone of which fits the description better. Of course, Milton might be just ceremoniously feigning humility (Leonard, *Complete* 960).

²¹ As I mentioned above, Chao refers to this proslution when suggesting that in "Naturam" Milton still allowed for the possibility that the end of the world might be impending, despite rejecting the notion of the decay of nature (67). Milton writes that ignorance "declares that . . . we live under the shadow of the world's old age and decrepitude, and of the impending dissolution of all things" and that he does "not deny that this may indeed be so." But he does not seem to be particularly committed to this qualification. The fact that he assigns both the notion of universal decay and the idea that the end of the world is imminent to ignorance suggests that he did not subscribe to either.

Sarah Knight discovered in 2010 that “Naturam” and “De Idea Platonica” were indeed academic exercises, but the occasion was no ordinary one. According to her, “Notitia Academiae Cantabrigiensis,” a Lambeth Palace Library manuscript document (MS 770), specifically indicates that the poems were created for a public debate held during the very important visit of University Chancellor Henry Rich, first earl of Holland, who was “Charles I’s cavalier favourite,” and French Ambassador Charles de l’Aubespine, Marquis de Châteauneuf.²² It seems that John Forster, a Fellow of the College who was the debate respondent, tasked Milton to prepare these “act verses” (i.e., summaries of the debater’s arguments in poetic form). These were declaimed by Forster during the debate, and they were printed and given out then as well. Knight argues that Milton’s participation “implicates Milton, later, famously, a republican defender of regicide, in a royalist university showcase” (“Student” 37-38). According to her, “This significant event in Milton’s student career . . . substantiates the claim of his recent biographers, Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns, that he was ‘conservative’ while at Cambridge” (“Royal” 15). The visit was very important indeed, as it occurred on September 24, 1629, as Charles’s “Personal Rule” began:

just as he sought to control the national government, the King also tried to micro-manage the universities, through direct censorship of controversial sermons and examination questions, the granting of many degrees by royal mandate . . . and the appointment of court favorites like the Duke of Buckingham, then the Earl of Holland (after Buckingham’s assassination).
(15)

Knight notes “the frantic activity” associated with such a visit. Being asked to write the poems for this occasion was particularly significant for Milton because it demonstrated his increasing renown as a writer within Cambridge (15). I argue that the immediate public and personal importance of “Naturam” suggests that Milton, as a serious poet, would not have simply summarized the College fellow’s debate arguments; he would have had an artistic and intellectual investment in the poem. Even if the circumstances constrained any intellectual discourse, the Lambeth manuscript records that Milton added thirteen new lines to the original “Naturam” given out during the 1629 Cambridge debate

²² A photograph of the manuscript is in Jones 144.

and that revised poem is what we have today (“Student” 38). Unfortunately, the document gives no clue as to what those thirteen lines are.

I further submit that, at a time when Charles was conducting “direct censorship of controversial sermons and examination questions” at the university and in the wake of Mede’s 1627 publication of *Clavis Apocalyptica*, “Naturam” might have possibly been a part of an effort by university officials to reassure the Chancellor, and through him, the king, that Cambridge subscribed to the orthodox position on the end of time. Milton’s role was to assist College Fellow John Forster, who as respondent in the public debate would have articulated this reassurance, by writing “Naturam,” which Forster recited during the event. The debate questions listed in the manuscript that Knight discovered are “Nature does not suffer old age,” which is of course the full title of “Naturam,” and “Universal nature perishes when individual things die.” They do not explicitly touch on Mede’s millenarian ideas, but perhaps they only obliquely refer to them, given that they departed from the orthodox position that the millennium had already passed and that the ends times were to consist of the end of the world and renewal of heaven and earth. Though Mede was a peaceful and serious scholar, and not a radical, as I have discussed, at least one other theologian had already challenged his ideas at around the time of the Chancellor’s visit. Between June and October of that year, Thomas Hayne and Mede were exchanging correspondence concerning Mede’s millenarian views. Adhering to the traditional position that the millennium had passed, Hayne specifically contested the notion of a future millennium. (Jue, *Heaven* 145-49). Charles might have had a special interest in combatting millenarianism. His father James had written a sermon on Revelation 20 in 1588 (republished in 1603) called *A Fruitful Meditation, Containing. A plaine and easie Exposition, or laying open of the 7.8.9. and 10. verses of the 20. chap. of the Revelation, in forme and maner of a Sermon* (Revard 71; note 4). In it, James affirmed that the millennium, having encompassed “the happy estate of the Church, from Christes dayes to the dayes of the defection or falling away of the Antichrist,” had been in the past (qtd. in 43). Of course, the notion of a future earthly kingship of Jesus was itself a challenge to Charles’s royal authority, and many would use it against him in the 1640s.

That “Naturam” remained a significant work for Milton through the 1630s can be supported by Estelle Haan’s very plausible argument that he recited the poem during a session of the prestigious and exclusive Accademia degli Svogliati on 6/16 September 1638 during his Italian trip (“Academies” 10-28). Because “The Academy’s statutes were very specific in their proviso that only visitors of distinction be admitted” and because “the fact that [Milton’s] poems were granted a performance is in itself a tribute to their author’s erudition, for . . . the methods by which academic officers selected individual contributions for performance were extremely rigorous” (12, 19), Milton surely presented poems that he believed had literary quality and intellectual importance. The typical selection process as described below provides an idea of just how selective the academies were:

From two to six censors in each academy met in secret every fortnight or so to examine the contributions deposited, usually anonymously, in a locked box known as the *tramoggia* or the *zucca*. The best were those selected for a formal line-by-line criticism (*critica*) and then an equally detailed defense (*difesa*) . . . Finally a vote of the assembly decided either to return them to the authors for appropriate correction or to transcribe them into one of the permanent books. (qtd. in 20)

The Academy’s records show that Milton was present in at least four of the Academy’s meetings and likely sat in at several more (22). On 7/17 March 1639, he “read some noble Latin verses” (qtd. in 20), on 14/24 March 1639, he “recited. . . various Latin poems” (qtd. in 21) and on 6/16 September 1638, he “read a very erudite Latin poem of hexameter verses.”

Haan believes that this last poem was “Naturam.” First of all, according to Haan, “Naturam” was one of only three poems of hexameter lines (the other two being “In Quintum Novembris” and “Ad Patrem”) that Milton had written before setting out for Italy. Because Milton was “very scrupulous about gathering for publication all the works (especially Latin works) which he had composed,” Haan discounts the possibility that Milton wrote one, which is today no longer extant, while on his journey (27). Secondly, in the *Reason for Church Government*, written much later, Milton indicates that the poems he recited at the Academy (which, incidentally, he had “in memory,” thus

demonstrating their importance) were “composed under twenty or thereabout” (qtd. in 22) and that he received “written encomiums” from the academicians for them. Of the three poems in hexameter, Haan easily eliminates “In Quintum Novembris” because of its “anti-papal content” (26). On the other hand, “Ad Patrem” is “erudite,” “would have served as an excellent form of self-introduction to Italian academicians” because of its “defense of poetry . . . [and] outlining an ideal education,” and possibly did earn for Milton encomiums from the Svogliati regarding his linguistic skill, which “Ad Patrem” touches on. However, Haan favors “Naturam.” From her 1998 vantage point, when the poem still had an estimated date range of 1628-32 (vs. 1631-2 for “Ad Patrem”), the “probability of [“Naturam[‘s]”] slightly earlier date” was more aligned with Milton’s estimation of the poems being “composed under twenty or thereabout.” Moreover, the poem’s “erudite treatment of the theme of nature’s decay, its dramatic use of the rhetoric of persuasion, all embraced by a methodology that would certainly have found a home in the debating forum of the Italian academy” make it the extremely strong candidate. In addition, Haan quotes one encomium, by Carlo Dati, which Milton would print in his 1645 and 1673 poem collections: according to Dati, Milton “with Philosophy as teacher selects the marks of *Natura*’s wondrous deeds, through which the greatness of God is shown.” Haan concludes that “weighing up the evidence in relation to the wording of the minutes, the content of the respective poems, and Milton’s own statement,” as well as considering the dating she had available to her, “Naturam” was what the Svoglioti called a “very erudite Latin poem” (27-28). Knight’s new date of 1629 adds even more support to Haan’s argument—while Milton is estimated to be 23 or 24 when he wrote “Ad Patrem,” he can now be precisely said to have been 20 years old when he wrote “Naturam.” In addition, in the new Oxford edition of *The Shorter Poems* of Milton, Haan notes another encomium, by Antonio Francini, that may include a reference to “Naturam” (Lewalski and Haan 418). In this encomium, which also appears in Milton’s 1645 and 1673 poems, Francini writes, “The most profound mysteries which nature conceals both in heaven and on earth, which too often she greedily closes and bars to superhuman geniuses, you have clearly understood, and have reached at last the great limit of moral virtue” (113). If Haan is right, the remarkable intensity of Francini’s praise and almost mystical response to the poem testify further to the importance of “Naturam” and its ideas

to Milton himself at this point in his career. That Milton would later proudly include these encomiums in his poetry collections hints at the lasting significance of “Naturam” after the 1630s.

1.3 “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” and the Final Conflagration

About four months after writing “Naturam”, in December of 1629, Milton would produce another important poem: “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity.” While some critics see this poem as millenarian, I agree with Michael Fixler when he includes this as one of the early poems whose eschatological emphases are on the “final Kingdom.” Fixler writes that the Nativity Ode, by “associat[ing] redemption, the harmonious music of the spheres and the recovery of the Age of Gold,” like “On Time” and “At a Solemn Musick,” “only affirm[s] the essential promise of Christianity phrased with a special emphasis upon the merit and the beatific reward of sharing in the divine glory” of the “final Kingdom” (48-49). As I mentioned above, in Fixler’s view, Milton connects the practice of virtue in life, whether it be personal, religious, civic, and even artistic, with “celestial union with divine glory” in the final kingdom (47-48, 131), which had fundamental doctrinal importance for Milton. There are continuities between “Naturam” and “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” which directly refers to the “New heav’n and new earth,” as opposed to “Naturam,” which only implicitly does so. These continuities further support my ideas about the positioning of “Naturam” as far as millenarianism is concerned, about the importance of “Naturam,” and about the young Milton’s proto-vitalism.

Before I proceed, I would like to briefly discuss how the mystery of the incarnation, as foregrounded by the poem’s slightly ambiguous genre, also renders a millenarian reading of the poem problematic. Scholars have traditionally referred to the poem as the “Nativity Ode” because its complete title is a mouthful. I also use this short version for the sake of convenience, but with the following caveat: calling the poem the “Nativity Ode” obscures the thorny theological issue of the incarnation to which the poem itself calls attention. Milton identifies the poem both as an ode, which suggests its addressee is a man, and a hymn, which indicates that its subject is a divine being. If it

dealt with an individual, a classical ode was normally addressed to a human being,²³ though some odes were for gods. Classical hymns were for gods or heroes, but the context of the Nativity Ode clearly suggests the “Hymn” addresses Christ as a divinity. In the brief four stanza proem, wherein Milton employs a variation on the rhyme royal stanza, he rashly imagines himself arriving at the manger ahead of magi in order to be the first to pay homage to the Christ child with his “humble Ode” (line 24). However, the subsequent twenty-seven stanzas that form the majority of the poem fall under the subtitle “*The Hymn.*” Millenarians hoped that Christ would rule humankind as a physically present man on earth for a thousand years. Therefore, the Nativity Ode, as an ode, seems to initially gesture towards millenarianism, the rhyme royal stanzas hinting at Christ’s future earthly and human kingship. However, as a Hymn, the remainder of the poem problematizes this suggestion through the worship of Christ as a deity, rendering him more distant than a terrestrial monarch. Since the Hymn makes up the bulk of the poem, the Nativity Ode seems to favor the non-millenarian perspective, quickly rejecting the initial millenarian impulse. But, ultimately, Milton does not conclusively take a position on the mystery of the incarnation. Christ is both God and man, and the poem is both a hymn and an ode. Consequently, the Nativity Ode should certainly not be read as if it were like one of Horace’s odes to Augustus, that is, as a political panegyric to an earthly king.

I now return to my close reading of the poem itself. One scholar who has argued for millenarianism in the work, for example, is Thomas Corns. In *Uncloistered Virtue* (1992), he discusses “The millenarian impulse, with its emphasis not on flux but on a linear progression to a finity, [that] ran strongly throughout the early seventeenth century”; Milton, he says, “responded . . . with exhilaration” (96) when in the Nativity Ode he implores the “crystal spheres” to “Ring out” (line 125). Corns, however, writing more than a decade later in the 2008 biography he authored with Gordon Campbell, which posits a Laudian young Milton, seems to have changed his mind: in the Nativity Ode, Milton “does not appear to be especially millenarian in his orientation, or at least he

²³ Only nine of Horace’s 103 odes address a god or divinity. Most are addressed to men or women. All of Pindar’s odes address men. Odes can also be addressed to abstract things.

is not exceptionally inclined to expect imminently the Second Coming” (52). Corns, and Campbell, seem to be willing to accept the possibility that the young Milton was not in fact millenarian, especially in the light of their general argument about his conservatism as a young man. Moreover, if Milton is millenarian to some degree, he does not believe that the thousand-year reign, which accompanies the second coming, is impending. For her part, Revard writes that Milton “may be alluding indirectly to the millennium . . . when he envisions the establishment of a classical Golden Age with Astraea’s return to earth” but he shies away from any prognostication of its immediate realization (“millenarianism” 55-56) when he says “wisest Fate says no, / This must not yet be so” (149-50; qtd. in 56). Revard is suggesting that these lines refer to both the original Christmas morning, which they do on a purely literal level, and that of 1629. Critics generally see Milton as conflating the two timeframes, at least to some extent. However, the conflation itself may suggest that the cycle is culminating, and hence, that the second coming (though not necessarily the millennium) is indeed at hand.

Lewalski, writing about this same conflation of the first and second advents of Christ, emphasizes how Nature reacts to the nativity (lines 29-108). She might have pointed out that this is an echo of “Naturam,” but only since Knight’s discovery has it been known that “Naturam” was written just three to four months before the Nativity Ode:

The poet at age twenty-one portrays awestruck Nature responding to Christ’s first coming as if it were his second, and depicts himself as similarly misled, as his enraptured imagination evokes the music of the angelic choirs and the music of the spheres and is led by that music to leap forward to the millennial golden age. But then he reproves such readiness to expect the millennium soon, abruptly recalling himself to the nativity moment—“But wisest Fate says no” (l. 154)—to take account of all the history that must transpire before the moment when “our bliss / Full and perfect is” (ll. 165-66). (Lewalski, “millennium” 16)

In “Naturam,” Nature, along with the world, ends “upon a huge funeral pyre.” The Nativity Ode also evokes this end, when Nature hears the heavenly music and begins “To think her part was done, / And that her reign had here its last fulfilling” (lines 105-06).

But Lewalski suggests that Nature will eventually cease to exist in order to make way for a “millennial golden age.” She ingeniously argues that the extended section on the pantheon of old pagan deities, which scholars “used to think . . . much too long,” is actually “a kind of formal mimesis” that represents “the long and difficult process that must precede the millennium” (16). But just as the renewed heaven and earth implicitly follows the final conflagration in *Naturam*, they will do the same after Nature’s “reign” ends (line 106), as the *Nativity Ode* suggests. The two lines that follow explicitly refer to the new heaven and earth that will emerge after the final fire: Nature “knew such harmony alone / Could hold all *heaven and earth* in happier union” (lines 107-08, emphasis mine). These lines on nature thus suggest that Milton looks forward to the final kingdom rather than the millennium.

Taking a different line of argument altogether, Campbell and Corns write that “Milton is not proclaiming that the terminal event would happen soon, though he does celebrate it as something dearly wished for and vividly imagined” (52). After all, like Ignorance “declar[ing] . . . the impending dissolution of all things” in the *Seventh Prologue*, it is human pride to claim to know that the end times have come. The Kingdom of God is certainly imminent—both Mark 13:29 and Matthew 24:33 of the Geneva Bible proclaim that “*the kingdom of God is neere, even at the doors.*” We can know and affirm that the kingdom is near, but it is arrogance to say that it is now. There is a subtle but significant difference. Milton is not predicting a millennium that is to come later than he would wish, as Lewalski contends. He realizes this would be brazen if not blasphemous; rather, he reminds himself and his readers of Matthew 24:42-44: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” As the *Ode* tells us, “The babe lies yet in smiling infancy / That on the bitter cross / Must redeem our loss” (151-53) and implies that we must also continue to bear our own crosses with vigilance and humility, not with expectancy and entitlement. There is nothing wrong, however, with a deep longing for the end and the blessings it promises.

The Nativity Ode, rather than being subtly millenarian, aligns squarely with the apocalyptic vision of “Naturam,” which, instead of calling into mind an imminent personal reign of Christ on earth, calls to mind the end of nature and, hence, indirectly evokes the “New heav’n and earth.” As I mentioned above, Hunter has noted that the “bliss / Full and perfect” that the Ode envisions is not that of the millennium, but of a fulfillment to be had after the Last Judgment (“millennial” 97). However, he does not quite fully develop his point. While he finally does refer to the “New heav’n and earth” later on in his article, he discusses its appearance only in *Paradise Lost* (101). Milton puts a significant focus on the idea of the final kingdom in the early poetry, which Hunter overlooks. This emphasis, I argue, makes the notion of a truly millenarian Milton in the 1640s, or at any time in his career, questionable.

In Fixler’s view, however, Milton suggests in the Nativity Ode that the millennium had begun in the past and is still occurring:

The central prophetic vision of the poem . . . is that of the restoration through Christ of the Golden Age. *Millennial consummation is deferred by “Wisest Fate,”* but at his birth Christ’s slow conquest of th’old dragon begins and would in centuries to come be completed. *No utopian image here is suggested by the Golden Age.* It is principally the divine harmony restored as a law of life, as that harmony still is, in *Arcades*, the law which draws “unsteady nature. . . / And the low world in measur’d motion . . . / After the heavenly tune, which none can hear / Of human mold with gross unpurged ear.” (55, emphasis mine)

The thousand years had already commenced with the nativity, and it has initiated the imperfect recovery of the classical “age of gold,” wherein there is a re-harmonization of heaven and nature and a “progression toward perfect glorification [that] would gradually transform not only men, but also the conditions under which they lived” (213). However, while the Nativity Ode might be acknowledging a millennium *in the past*, according to Fixler, it also clearly represents the final kingdom as the separate recovery of a *perfect* Golden Age in the future, or, more accurately, after time—the “age of gold” when “Truth, and Justice then / Will down return to men . . . *must not yet be so*” (lines 135, 141-42, 150, emphasis mine). But when Christ is born, our “bliss,” which will be “Full

and perfect” in the final kingdom, “now begins” as an imperfect, but progressively improving state of blessedness. A millennial kingdom has been inaugurated by the incarnation, but “Millennial consummation is deferred by ‘Wisest Fate.’” At this time, according to Fixler, “in Milton’s mind neither the divine music nor the more suggestive of Revelation’s images centered necessarily upon the recovery of the Age of Gold. This was merely a concomitant and intermediate aspect of the full recovery of perfection,” that is, in the final kingdom (49, 56). However, the notion that Milton envisions a progression towards perfection here is questionable. The final kingdom can only come once the entire world has been abruptly destroyed “upon a huge funeral pyre [*Ingentique rogo flagrabit machina mundi*]” (“Naturam” 69), and the linear progress of history will be disrupted by this event. Men might “gradually transform” in the imperfect Golden Age of Christ, but the “conditions under which they lived” will not.

Fixler’s use of the terms “Golden Age” and “millennial” is slippery. Milton does not explicitly mention the millennium, whether it be in the past or the future, in “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity.” But the lines on the dragon do hint at a past millennium:

from this happy day [i.e., Christ’s day of nativity]

Th’old Dragon under ground

In straiter limits bound,

Not half so far casts his usurped sway,

And wroth to see his kingdom fail,

Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail. (168-72, stanza XVIII)

This is usually glossed as referring to Revelation 20, which was so foundational for the millenarians: “the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan” (Revelation 20.2). Crucially, the millennium that these lines evoke clearly begins at the moment of Christ’s birth, and hence had already passed by 1629. As Crawford Gribben writes in *Puritan Millenarianism*, in line with Hunter and Fixler, these lines indicate that the young Milton thought that the millennium had already concluded (150). Chao agrees (74). Though Milton, in the early 1640s, would severely criticize Constantine’s reign and the nefarious state of the church that resulted from it (Revard, “millenarianism” 44), the Nativity Ode does seem strongly to suggest that in 1629 Milton concurred with the Protestant majority’s belief that the millennium had spanned the thousand years after

Christ's birth. Revard herself links these lines on the "old dragon" to David Pareus, a German religious thinker who held this orthodox view on the millennium. She says that while Milton seems to be aligned with Pareus in believing that Satan was not completely fettered during Christ's first coming, he did not subscribe to a past millennial kingdom as Pareus did (44, 56). Nonetheless, it should be noted that Milton would later reference Pareus's work in a positive light (45). In 1642's *Reason for Church Government*, for example, when discussing Pareus' commentary on Revelation, he lauds "the grave authority of Pareus" (Wolfe I.815).

Earlier in the poem, in lines 61-63 (stanza V), Milton also seems to be alluding to a millennium in the past:

But peaceful was the night

Wherein the Prince of Light

His *reign of peace upon the earth* began. (emphasis mine)

Christ sends "Meek-eyed Peace" to comfort "awestruck" Nature and fortify the ordinary providence that "Naturam" had emphasized with "large Grace" (*Paradise Lost* 12.305, Rogers 170-71). According to *De Doctrina*, the component of Christ's kingdom that it calls the "kingdom of grace" begins with the incarnation (487-89, 505-07). Moreover, Christ's kingship is a "function" of his mediatorial office, through which Christ "willingly performed and still now performs all those things by which *peace* with God and everlasting salvation may be obtained for the human race" (495, emphasis mine). Stanzas V to VII echo the catalog of the forces of nature that constitute "the supreme order" that "should preserve its course forever" in "Naturam," but these forces are temporarily frozen in their tracks as they become endued with God's grace. For example, in "Naturam," the Father had "taken thought for the sum of things by fixing the stars more firmly" and "Hence the *primum mobile* rotates with daily motion [*Volvitur hinc lapsu mundi rota prima diurno*]" (line 37), but in the Nativity Ode the "stars with deep amaze / stand fixed in steadfast gaze" (lines 69-70). Whereas the Phœbus "with his ever friendly light speeds along the same tracks of his wheels" [*sed semper amicâ / Luce potens eadem currit per signa rotarum*] (43-44) in "Naturam," the "sun himself withheld his wonted speed" (79) in the Nativity Ode. "Naturam" also depicts "fierce Aquilo [the north-east wind]" [*Trux Aquilo*] continually blowing and "Corus [the north-west wind]

raging” [*furit leviori . . . Corus*] (53-55), but because of arrival of the Christ child in the Nativity Ode “The winds with wonder whist [silent] / Smoothly the water kissed” (64-65). In the presence of the savior, the stars hesitate to “to take their flight. . . But in their glimmering orbs did glow / Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go” (75-76) to resume the operation of a now grace-filled ordinary providence along with the rest of nature. Now “our bliss” can begin. “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” thus completes the argument of the Latin poem.

Moreover, that the perfect “age of gold” (135) does not allude to the earthly millennial kingdom in the future, as Revard and Lewalski suggest, nor to the culmination of a gradual transformation of the world, as Fixler intimates, can be seen in the world’s final fiery death which lines 136-38 (stanza XIV) allude to:

And speckl’d vanity

Will sicken soon and die,

And leprous sin will *melt* from earthly mould, (emphasis mine)

The period of perfect “bliss” (165) will follow the final conflagration. The key word here is “melt,” which evokes the dissolution or melting of the world through incineration.

Although it might seem like Milton might be asking too much of a single word in making it stand for what “Naturam” calls the universe’s “huge funeral pyre” (Carey 68, Lewalski and Haan 189), I suggest that being less economical would have ruined the solemn, ecstatic, and peaceful tone of this section of the ode. In any case, he revisits the world’s destruction a few stanzas later:

With such a horrid clang

.....

The aged earth²⁴ agast

With terror of that blast,

Shall from the surface to the centre shake;

When at the worlds last session,

²⁴ “Aged” earth does not necessarily suggest that the world, or nature, decays. Nature is merely moving forward in time, accumulating years, and has aged in that sense. “Aged earth” also evokes a contrast between the old earth and the new earth that will emerge along with the new heaven after the final conflagration. “Aged” fits the meter of line better than “old.”

The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne. (157,160-64,
stanza XVII)

After the melting in line 138, and “hell itself . . . pass[ing] away” (139), “Truth and Justice then / Will down return to men” (141). Moreover, Milton, in line with the Revelation chronology, also stresses that the final judgment must precede this “age of bliss”:

But wisest Fate says no
This [i.e., the Golden Age] must not yet be so
.....
Yet first to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.
(149-50, 155-56, stanza XVI)

As I mentioned above, Hunter points out that some of the lines just discussed are from the Pauline epistles, rather than from Revelation. Lines 155-56 are from 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (“we shall all be changed . . . at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible”) and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (“the trump of God” causes all humanity, dead or alive, to be “caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air”) (qtd. in “millennial” 97). Hunter does detect some language from Revelation mixed in with that of the Thessalonians passage in line 164, but it is the “great white throne” from Revelation 20:11, which begins the section on Last Judgment in Revelation 20 (97). In Revelation, the Last Judgment occurs after the millennium, not before it.

Years after 1629, Milton would imagine a very similar order of events in *Paradise Lost* as lines 135-166 of the Ode. The Father describes the end of days to the Son in Book 3:

forthwith from all winds
The living, and forthwith the cited dead
Of all past ages to the general doom
Shall hasten, such a peal shall rouse their sleep.
Then all thy saints assembled, thou shalt sink
Beneath thy sentence; Hell, her numbers full,
Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
 New heav'n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell,
 And after all their tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With joy and love triumphing, and fair truth.
 (326-38, emphasis mine)

Here, as in the Nativity Ode, the Golden Age follows the final conflagration; it is not a future millennium. Fixler claims that in Milton's mind, "between imperfect and perfect glorification there was not an absolute abyss, but rather a gradually ascending bridge of individual and social renovation" (213). Fixler does cite the passage above, similar ones on the final conflagration and the renewal of heaven and earth in *Paradise Lost*, and the Nativity Ode's stanza XIV (213; note 1) and presents them as evidence of the progressive transformation of the world, but they refer, rather, to one definite, violent transformative event that will prelude the Golden Age. There is, as Milton sees it, an "absolute abyss" "between imperfect and perfect glorification" and only a process of divine renewal can enable the blessed to cross it.

Furthermore, opposed to what Revard and Lewalski suggest, the Golden Age that Milton imagines in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" will not be an age limited by a thousand years or any amount of time, as "Hell, her numbers full, / Thenceforth shall be *for ever* shut" (*PL* 3.332-33, emphasis mine) and the general tone and finality of the passage on "our bliss / Full and perfect" imply. Later, in Book 12, Milton is explicit: the Son will

raise

From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
 New heav'ns, new earth, ages of endless date
 Founded in righteousness and peace and love,
 To bring forth fruits joy and *eternal bliss*. (547-51, emphasis mine)

Besides, the "joy and love triumphing, and fair truth" of the Golden Age Milton has in mind will make kingship and the external order it imposes unnecessary.

At this juncture, a brief look at two of Milton's Latin Elegies, "Elegia quarta. Ad Thomam Junium" (1627) and "Elegia sexta. Ad Carolum Diodatum" (1629), written around this same time as "Naturam" and the Nativity Ode will be instructive. "Elegia quarta" has been interpreted as a piece that speaks to Milton's radical Puritanism. It concerns Milton's Puritan-leaning former tutor, Thomas Young, with whom Milton would work when he engaged in his polemical war with the Anglican prelacy in the 1640s (Shuger 137-38). Campbell and Corns contest this, arguing that Young, along with Milton, was still on the side of the established Anglican Church when the elegy was written in 1627 (38). In any case, if the elegy is radical or Puritan, one might expect some suggestion of millenarianism. But instead of any mention of the thousand-year reign, the speaker in the poem refers to the conflagration and the final kingdom. In lines 83-104, the speaker, as Shuger has put it, is "denouncing England for persecuting the very men whom God had sent to 'bring glad tidings from heaven' (93), and comparing Young to Elijah wandering 'the rough sands of Arabia when he fled from the hands of King Ahab' (97-99) and to St. Paul 'driven out of the Emathian city with his flesh bleeding from the hissing scourge'(101-02)" (137-38).²⁵ Nevertheless, we encounter the key lines 93-94 within this passage. In them, the speaker laments England's expulsion of men like Young, "who . . . teach the way that leads after death to the stars [*qui. . . / Quae via post cineres ducat ad astra, docent*]." Haan translates "*cineres*" as death, as does Leonard ("beyond death"). Similarly, Carey and Hughes both render "*post cineres*" as "beyond the grave." However, Kerrigan et al. have it as "after ashes." "Cinis" can indeed mean the "ashes of a corpse that is burned," but it can also mean simply (i.e., in gen.) "ashes." Moreover, it can also mean the "ruins of a city laid waste and reduced to ashes" and have the figurative sense of "an emblem of destruction, ruin, annihilation" (see Lewis and Short). In these lines from "Elegia quarta," therefore, Milton not only discusses what will happen after any individual's death, but also touches on what will happen after the final incineration of the entire world. As he would later say in *Paradise Lost*, "The world shall burn, and from her *ashes* spring / New heav'n and earth" (3.334-35, emphasis mine). Finally, the way [*via*] after death or ashes leads to the stars [*ducat ad astra*]. In other words, these lines do not look forward to a kingdom on earth after the destruction of, say,

²⁵ Shuger uses the Hughes edition of Milton's shorter poems.

earthly monarchies, but, as do the Pauline references in the Nativity Ode, to an ascent to the divine, which I take to be a reference to the final kingdom.

Meanwhile, in “Elegia sexta,” wherein Milton tries to get his friend Charles Diodati out of a writer’s block through a discussion of classical lyric and epic poetry, he also mentions that he is in the process of writing “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” and describes the poem briefly. In particular, he says that “we [i.e., he] are singing of [*canimus*] the blessed ages promised in Holy Writ [*Fausta . . . sacratis saecula pacta libris*]” (line 82). These blessed ages do not allude to the millennium, but rather to the “ages of endless date / Founded in righteousness and peace and love / To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss” that will accompany the “New heav’ns, new earth” and rise “From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined” in *Paradise Lost* (12.547-51, emphasis mine). In *De Doctrina Christiana*, we can see where precisely in the “Holy Writ” these “blessed ages” are promised. Milton writes in Book 1 Chapter 33 of the treatise that “Complete glorification consists in eternal and utterly blessed life, which arises most of all from seeing God” (893, line 32-33).²⁶ As proof-texts, he includes “you make known to me the path of life, an abundance of the pleasantest joys in your sight, at your right hand for *eternity*” (Psalm 16:11);²⁷ “those who instruct will shine as though with the shining of the firmament, and those who justify many, like *stars*, for *ages everlasting*” (Dan. 12: 3); “we shall be caught up together with them [i.e. those who died in Christ] into the clouds, to meet the Lord, into the air, and so we shall be *forever* with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4: 17); and other similar passages (893, lines 32-34, lines 35-37, 895, lines 21-23, emphases mine). Note that the Daniel 12:3 passage supports my contention that line 94 of “Elegia quarta” (“the way that leads after death to the *stars*,” emphasis mine) calls to mind the final kingdom. Also, 1 Thess. 4:17, which Hunter hears in the Nativity Ode, is here related to the great renewal and not to the millennium. A lot of wording in these proof-texts indicates bliss—“abundance of the pleasantest joys in your sight” (Psalm 16, 893, line 33); “an eternal weight of excellent, excellent glory” (2 Cor. 4, 895, lines 13-14);

²⁶ “*Glorificado perfecta est in vita aeterna ac beatissim[a,] quae oritur potissimum ex vision Dei*” (892, lines 23-24).

²⁷ Proof-texts are in italics in the text. I have rendered them in regular font here in order to accommodate my emphases.

“God is going to wipe away every tear from their eyes: and death will exist no more; neither grief nor crying nor toil will exist any more” (Rev. 21: 4, 895, line 36-38); etc. In addition, in another section of *De Doctrina* (889, lines 7-8), Milton refers to the ages prior to the conflagration, which include the millennium, as “the *world’s* ages” (889, line 14) or “*mundi secula*” (888, line 11). This suggests a contrast with “the *blessed* ages promised in Holy Writ” (emphasis mine) in “Elegia quarta” and “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”.

The influence of the church father Lactantius (c. 250 – c. 325) on the Nativity Ode, however, presents a problem for my non-millenarian interpretation of the poem. Lactantius believed in the millennium. According to Charles Osgood, Lactantius’s theological treatise *Divine Institutes* was Milton’s primary source for the allusion to the “age of gold” (79). The rejection of the pagan gods (lines 173-236) and the return of justice to the world can also be traced to that work (79, Tuve 61). To overcome this objection, I shall consider in detail Chapters LXXI, entitled “Of the Last Times,” and Chapter LXXII, entitled “Of Christ descending from heaven to the general judgment, and of the millenarian reign” of Lactantius’s *Epitome of the Divine Institutes*. As opposed to the far more concise Revelation 20:1-7 and Milton’s own depiction of the Last Judgment in the Nativity Ode, Lactantius’s elaborate description of the millennium will illustrate just how redundant and almost absurd the idea of a physical, earthly reign of Christ is. According to the church father, in the end times there will be a terrible period of wickedness, apostasy, war, earthquakes, floods, famine, pestilence, and heavenly omens. At this time, the Antichrist will rise to power, gather an army, and “besiege the mountain to which the righteous have fled.” Then the second coming occurs: Christ will “descend with great power” and “all that multitude of the wicked shall be destroyed, and torrents of blood shall flow.” The Antichrist “shall be delivered up to be burnt,” Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, and Christ “will institute a great judgment on the earth respecting the living and the dead, and will deliver all the nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive, and will raise the righteous dead to eternal life, and will Himself reign with them on the earth, and will build the holy city, and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years” (Lactantius). Lactantius’s description of the

millennial Golden Age calls to mind the classical models of Hesiod, Ovid, and Virgil (Levin 16-21):

Throughout that time the stars shall be more brilliant, and the brightness of the sun shall be increased, and the moon shall not be subject to decrease. Then the rain of blessing shall descend from God at morning and evening, and the earth shall bring forth all her fruit without the labour of men. Honey shall drop from rocks, fountains of milk and wine shall abound. The beasts shall lay aside their ferocity and become mild, the wolf shall roam among the flocks without doing harm, the calf shall feed with the lion, the dove shall be united with the hawk, the serpent shall have no poison; no animal shall live by bloodshed. For God shall supply to all abundant and harmless food. (Lactantius)

However, after the thousand years, Satan, upon his release, instigates a second war against the righteous. Then a second “judgment of God will come to pass against the nations,” that is, the “last judgment” as opposed to the first “general” “great judgment” of the “living and the dead.” What follows is a second wave of earthquakes, this time accompanied by a rain of fire and brimstone, and for a second time the ground is “covered with carcasses” of the wicked. Ultimately, another earthquake will tear apart the mountains and “God will renew the world, and transform the righteous into the forms of angels, that, being presented with the garment of immortality, they may serve God for ever.” This second Golden Age “will be the kingdom of God, which shall have no end.” Meanwhile, the wicked shall resurrect, only to be condemned to hell.

As Lactantius would have it, there will not only be *two* final judgments in the end, but also *two* mass destructions, *two* apocalyptic wars, and *two* Golden Ages. There does not seem to be any reason or doctrinal logic for why these doublings should take place. I would argue that Chapter LXII of the *Divine Institutes*, as an attempt to flesh out Revelation 20:1-7, demonstrates just how superfluous from a practical and theological point of view the millennium is; the thousand year earthly reign of Christ is simply a redundancy from an overly literal reading of Revelation 20:1-7. Such superfluity is easily overlooked in the general and sweeping language of those biblical verses, but it is painfully obvious in Lactantius. In Revelation 20:1-7, a first final judgment does not

occur prior to the millennium. We are simply informed, with very minimal imagery, that in St. John's vision, Satan was restrained for the duration of a millennium, certain unspecified judges are granted judicial authority, and that the "blessed and holy" resurrected martyrs "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Chapter LXII of the *Divine Institutes* betrays the difficulties a theologian like Lactantius faced when dealing with the thorny idea of the millennium, difficulties that Milton himself would wrestle with tellingly in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, as I shall show in a next chapter. But in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," Milton departs from Lactantius. There is only one final Golden Age that follows one mass destruction (163) and one Last Judgment (163): "And then at last our bliss / Full and perfect is" (165-66). These lines implicitly deny an initial Golden Age or millennial reign, because such an age or reign by virtue of its temporality is not "at last . . . / Full and perfect."

I argue that Milton drew from Lactantius selectively. Milton himself warns against the "over-awfull esteeme of those more ancient then trusty [Church] fathers whom custome and fond opinion, weak principles, and the neglect of sounder and superior knowledge hath exalted so high, as to have gain'd them a blind reverence" (*Animadversions* 698). In fact, Kathleen Ellen Hartwell points to one section on Lactantius's theodicy in Milton's *Commonplace* book wherein Milton finds Lactantius questionable (24); according to her, in another section, on Lactantius's rejection of drama and music, Milton strongly opposes the church father (43-44). Even when critics have discussed the influence of Lactantius on the *Nativity Ode*, very little is mentioned about the millennium. Tuve merely writes in a footnote that "the final 'Golden Age' after Judgment is described" (i.e., Lactantius's millennium) somewhere in the *Divine Institutes* (61; note 11). Charles Osgood, meanwhile, only mentions the second coming, which will "in time, put an end" to "the injustice, falsity, and cruelty of paganism" (80). Their concern is with how Lactantius viewed the return Golden Age vis-à-vis the incarnation. The Christ born in Bethlehem was a "messenger" tasked "to bring back that old age," and "the appearance of that golden time returned." However, "God has not yet taken away evil" (qtd. in Tuve 61 and in Osgood 80). Osgood quotes Lactantius as saying that "virtue can neither be discerned, unless it has vices opposed to it; nor be perfect unless it is exercised by its adversity . . . [God] might retain that diversity which alone preserves the

mystery of divine religion” (qtd. in 80). Moreover, both Tuve and Osgood pay more specific attention not to “the final ‘Golden Age’ after Judgment” but to a less literal interpretation of the return to a paradisiacal era, that is, in the kingdom within the spirit of the free, individual believer:

Lay aside every evil thought from your hearts, and that Golden Age will at once return to you, which you cannot attain by any other means than by beginning to worship the true God. . . . How happy and how golden would be the condition of human affairs, if throughout the world gentleness, and piety, and peace, and innocence, and equity, and temperance, and faith, took up their abode!” (qtd. in Osgood 80).

According to Tuve, for Lactantius, “the temple of true justice is within man” (61). Indeed, this sentiment is to a large degree reflected in the Nativity Ode. The poem, after all, concerns the demise of the pagan deities upon Christ’s incarnation, that is, the victory of “the true God” over a falsified pantheon. Because the “Golden Age will at once return” to the heart of the believer upon the rejection of sin and paganism and the commencement of real spirituality, “our bliss” according to the Nativity Ode at least “now begins.” Through Lactantius, Milton in the Nativity Ode thus displays his concern with the inner spiritual kingdom. The only other Golden Age clearly referenced in the poem is the “full and perfect” Golden Age that will be fulfilled, not during the millennium, but in the “final Kingdom.” There is no evidence of a future, temporal, thousand-year kingdom of Christ in the Nativity Ode.

1.4 Other Minor Poems: “ready to smite once, and smite no more”

Besides the Nativity Ode, Stella Revard also mentions other minor poems that are eschatologically inclined and prelude Milton’s writing in 1640s, a decade that was, as she sees it, “to awaken Milton’s millenarian expectations fully” (“millenarianism” 56). These works include “In Quintum Novembris,” the gunpowder epigrams, “On Time,” “At a Solemn Music,” and “Lycidas.” Revard admits that these poems do not point to the millennium “unequivocally.” This is an understatement. Like “Naturam” and the Nativity Ode, they are not in the least bit millenarian. The early poems focus on the “final

Kingdom,” not the thousand-year reign. Along with certain other poems in the 1645 *Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin, Compos'd at several times* and Milton's 1673 *Poems, &c. Upon Several Occasions*, and “Elegia quarta” and “Elegia sexta,” which I have already discussed, they either showcase a deep yearning for or at least hint at the eternal Golden Age to come after the final conflagration.

Let us begin with “On Time,” which Fixler does not fully examine. Carey conjectures that it was written in 1633 (170). The poem rapturously describes a paradisiacal state wherein

joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When every thing that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With truth, and peace, and love shall ever shine
About the supreme throne. (13-17)

This ideal condition will come only after Time has “consumed” its “greedy self” (10). If “On the Morning of Christ's Nativity” was not explicit on this point, “On Time” makes it unambiguously clear. The poem's early positioning in both the 1645 and the 1673 collections, just a few poems after the Nativity Ode (the first poem in each collection), and the poem's thematic and imagistic affinities with the earlier poem (Woodhouse and Bush 164) suggest that perhaps Milton was emphasizing this important point with reference to the Ode. As Tuve puts it, the Nativity Ode concerns “a peace both in and not within created time” (39). In “On Time,” Milton himself tells us that “long *eternity* shall greet our bliss” (11) and “Attired with stars, we shall *forever* sit, / Triumphant over Death, and Chance, and *thee O Time*” (21-21, emphases mine). Again, because this paradisiacal state fundamentally lacks temporality, it cannot be the millennium, which is by definition circumscribed by a thousand years. Moreover, lines 18-20, “to whose [God's] happy-making sight alone, / When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb, / *Then all this earthly grossness quit,*” echo lines 135-138 of the Nativity Ode:

Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
And speckled vanity
Will sicken and die,
And lep'rous sin will *melt from earthly mould.* (emphasis mine)

In other words, line 20 in “On Time” hints at the final conflagration.

Another poem that acutely expresses a longing for the final kingdom is “At a Solemn Music,” which Carey also dates at about 1633. As Fixler puts it, “the prophetic hope of restoration to primordial bliss is phrased in terms of the longing for the full concord of the human and the divine” (55). This poem is also similar in theme and imagery to the Nativity Ode (Woodhouse and Bush 164) and is also positioned close after it (and close after “On Time” as well). However, as Arthur Barker observes, “the place of the Nativity angels is taken by the hundred forty four thousand ‘not defiled by women,’ who sing before the Lamb in Revelation” (qtd. in Fixler 55). Leonard rightly points out that Revelation’s angels and not its virgins are actually the singers here. After all, it is a “cherubic host” (“Vow” 189-90). But, nevertheless, we see Milton building on the eschatology of the Nativity Ode by emphasizing that the Golden Age referred to in the earlier poem is eternal:

And the cherubic host in thousand choirs
 Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
 With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
 Hymns devout and holy palms
 Singing *everlastingly*. (12-16, emphasis mine)

Milton decides on theological grounds to avoid mentioning the Golden Age, and to deemphasize the music of the spheres. The “Sphere-borne harmonious sisters, Voice, and Verse” merely evoke in human “phantasy” the music of God (2-9), and “nature’s chime” only gets a passing mention (20). Once Milton had purged himself of the pagan gods in the Nativity Ode, he could imagine the end times from a primarily Christian perspective. He conspicuously yearns not for the music of the spheres to accompany the Nativity angels as he had done in the Ode, but, for the first time since “disproportioned sin / Jarred against nature’s chime, and with harsh din / Broke the fair music that all creatures made,” to “with *undiscording* voice . . . rightly answer that melodious noise” (17-18, emphasis mine) of the “the cherubic host in thousand choirs.” Milton might be implying that the music of the spheres, being part of a soon to be incinerated universe, can no longer sing with the angels. On the other hand, each believer, along with his or her identity, will

survive the great renewal and be part of that music. As “On Time” tells us, “Then long eternity shall greet our bliss / With an individual kiss” (11-12).

That Milton refers to the “final Kingdom” rather than the millennium is made absolutely clear by the final lines:

O may we soon again renew the song,
 And keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long
 To his celestial consort us unite,
 To live with him, and sing in *endless morn of light*. (25-28, emphasis mine).

Like “On Time,” “At a Solemn Music” overtly paints a picture of what “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” implies: the eternity of the “New heav’n and new earth.” Moreover, like the Nativity Ode, line 26 suggests not a “progression toward perfect glorification [that] would gradually transform not only men . . . [and] the conditions under which they lived” (Fixler 213) but a single transformative event: “till God ere long / To his celestial consort us unite” through the final conflagration. “O may we soon again renew the song” reminds us that we need to be vigilant as Matthew 24:42-44 tells us, underscoring the urgency of always being spiritually prepared for the second coming, and evokes the renewal of heaven and earth in the final kingdom.

Finally, “At a Solemn Music” glances at ordinary providence and Milton’s proto-vitalism with its early Orphic allusions and towards its conclusion. The speaker tells the “harmonious sisters” to “Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ / Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce” (3-4). God’s creatures are similarly filled by

their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
 In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
 In first obedience, and their state of good. (22-24)

I would argue that this love constitutes ordinary providence that was not withdrawn after the fall. It persisted, but ceased to produce “perfect diapason.” In any case, the suggestion is that the final conflagration will be the last occurrence of extraordinary providence. When we “To his celestial consort . . . unite,” the only providence will be the ordinary providence that “At a Solemn Music” celebrates.

“In Quintum Novembris,” which Revard describes as having, along with the gunpowder epigrams, an “apocalyptic fervor” (55), suggests that the millennium has already concluded, or is concluding, rather than that a future thousand-year earthly reign of Christ is close at hand. The Satan in the poem that “arms invincible nations for internal strife one against the other, overturning kingdoms flourishing in olive-bearing peace; and whoever he sees in love with pure virtue, these he longs to join to his empire” (lines 14-17),²⁸ the Satan that targets England in particular (lines 25-30), corresponds to the Satan of Revelation 20:7-10 who “shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle.” Satan is unleashed and builds his multinational army for the final confrontation with God and his people directly after the millennium described in Revelation 20:1-6, not before. Milton hints that the reign of “pious James,” who is “Peace-bearing, blessed, and wealthy” (line 5)²⁹ is the tail end of a millennium-like Golden Age in England, where we see the “land blessed in its riches and festal peace, and fields fertile in the gifts of Ceres and . . . the people worshiping the holy divinity of the true God” (lines 31-34).³⁰ Indeed, as William J. Grace has noted, James I was in his own mind a great peacemaker that was to usher in a Christ-centered era of peace. However, while Grace connects this aspiration of James to millenarianism and the adherence he believes Milton had to the doctrine (39), James, as I mentioned above, was among those who believed that the millennium had already occurred. In fact, according to Revard, James believed that Satan had been unchained and was now running amok on earth. In his published sermon on Revelation 20, he suggested that the Pope was the Antichrist (43). The language from it that Revard quotes—“Playeth hee [the Pope] not the parte of *Apollyon*, and *Abaddon* the King of Locusts” (qtd. in 43)—calls to mind the Pope’s visit in “In Quintum Novembris” to “the cave of grim Murder and double-tongued Treachery” (line 141)³¹ a lair “confined in night’s eternal darkness” (line 139)³² (Lewalski and Haan

²⁸ “*Armat & invictas in mutual viscera gentes; / Regnaque olivifera vertit florentia pace, / Et quoscunque videt puræ virtutis amantes*”

²⁹ “*Pacificusque . . . felix divesque*”

³⁰ “. . . *opibusque & festâ pace beatam / . . . & pingues donis Cerealibus agros/ . . . venerantem numina veri/ Sancta Dei populum . . .*”

³¹ “. . . *spelunca Phoni, Prodotæque bilinguis*”

175). Abaddon or Apollyon of course is not only the King of Locusts but “the angel of the bottomless pit,” as Revelation 9:11 tells us. “In Quintum Novembris” then represents England during the Guy Fawkes affair in a post-millennium Armageddon. The Pope in Italy has deployed “Murder” and “Treachery” against the godly English, who are surrounded like the blessed of Revelation 20:9. “The fierce Gaul or the Savage Iberian” is ready to finish the job (line 126).³³ Moreover, the “fire [that] came down from God out of heaven” and “devoured” the army of Satan that had “compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city” in Revelation 20:9 is mirrored in “In Quintum Novembris” by “God, who regulates the motion of the eternal fires [and] sent forth his thunderbolt and as the earth quaked” to bid Rumour to warn the king about the impending assassination attempt (lines 199-201).³⁴

As to “Lycidas” (1637), Revard writes that “it has its apocalyptic moment,” without being specific. She is probably referring to the famous crux of “that two-handed engine at the door, / [that] Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more,” which St. Peter mentions in lines 130-31. Lewalski notes that while this line is “not explicitly apocalyptic,” it alludes to the Last Judgment. Leonard, in “‘Lycidas’ and the Millennium at the Door,” advances the “possibility of a millenarian interpretation,” considering the fact that Milton, emulating Medea, wrote of an extended Judgment Day that spanned the thousand years of the millennium in *De Doctrina*, but cautiously warns that “we do not know when he first espoused these views” (“Millennium” 263-64). In the article, he persuasively illuminates the mysterious “two-handed engine” as a fecund image that triggers manifold symbolic associations intimately connected in scripture with the Last Judgment, as opposed to one, distinct symbol that eliminates the validity of all others. He finds David Sansone’s argument that the engine is Mathew 3:12’s winning fan (that separates damned chaff from the blessed wheat) the “pre-eminent” solution to the crux (252), but believes that the engine “also does the work of an axe, a sword, a rod, a scepter, a sheep-hook, and a threshing flail” (277). Despite his initial circumspection

³² “. . . *æterna septus caligine noctis*”

³³ “. . . *Gallus atrox, vel sævus Iberus*”

³⁴ “*Te Deus æternos motu qui temperat ignes, / Fulmine præmisso alloquitur, terrâque tremente: / Fama siles?*”

about Milton's millenarianism, Leonard finally contends that the engine, as an "instrument of judgment," is a "reference to the millennium" (261, 274). Besides the image of the engine itself, the "the door" where the engine is situated suggests a connection with the Last Judgment and the millennium. It is not any particular physical door, as critics have suggested. Leonard writes that "'at the door' is a biblical locution that denotes Christ's imminent return" (258-61). To support his case, he cites pertinent passages from the New Testament and a note on the crux by eighteenth-century editor Thomas Newton, which reads "In his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence*, addressing himself to the Son of God [Milton] says—*but thy kingdom is now at hand, and thou standing at the door*" (qtd. in 261). The other Miltonic text Newton refers to in his note is the antiprelatical tract *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, Against Smectymnuus* (1641), which contains, as Leonard points out, an apocalyptic prayer that many scholars believe is "imploing Christ to begin his thousand-year reign on earth" (270). For Leonard, the echo of "at the door" in a millenarian tract written just four years after "Lycidas" clinches the argument that the "engine" refers to the millennium. I shall discuss *Animadversions* and this biblical locution in detail in the following chapter.

However, Leonard connects a convincing solution to the crux to the wrong apocalyptic moment. The final kingdom, not the millennium, is "at the door." The crux itself attests to this. That the engine "Stands ready to *smite once, and smite no more*" (emphasis mine) echoes and overturns another apocalyptic moment in the poem, one that would have appealed to millenarians. This moment occurs in the very first line: "Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more." This is an allusion to Hebrews 12: 26-7 (Woodhouse and Bush 639), which reads, "[God's] voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." These verses in turn evoke Haggai 2.6-7 (Kerrigan et. al. 100, note 1), "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." These biblical passages clearly evoke the final destruction of the world. For millenarians, "Yet once

more” would call to mind the repeated last judgments that Lactantius is forced to imagine, that is, the first “general” or “great judgment” at the beginning of the millennium and the “last judgment” at the end of the thousand years. As I shall discuss in the following chapter, John (or Henry) Archer’s *The Personall Reigne of Christ upon the Earth*, a popular millenarian tract of the early 1640s, which readers of the Milton’s 1645 *Poems* might have been familiar with, also prophesies this double judgment. However, the engine in “Lycidas” that will “smite once, and smite no more” as an instrument of divine justice suggests that there will be only one Last Judgment and that, therefore, the millennium has already occurred. In other words, in “Lycidas,” Milton does not long for a penultimate judgment, followed by a millennium and a final divine tribunal, as “no more” sonorously declares. He longs for the final kingdom.

The poem evokes this final kingdom in lines 172-81:

So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
 Through the dear might of him that walked the waves,
 Where other groves, and other streams along,
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
 There entertain him all the saints above,
 In solemn troops, and sweet societies
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

This third apocalyptic moment highlights the “new heaven and new earth” of Revelation 21:1-7, rather than the millenarian Revelation 20: 1-10. In these “blest kingdoms,” Saints “wipe the tears for ever from [Lycidas’s] eyes” (181). This is a reference to Revelation 21:4, where, in the renewed heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1), “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes [i.e., those of the saved], and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Line 181 also alludes to Revelation 7:17: “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed [the saved], and shall lead them unto the living fountain of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” This passage mirrors

Revelation 21:1-7, which mentions not only the wiping away of tears but also God giving “unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” In addition, Revelation 7:16, which reads, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat,” echoes the end of pain and death in Revelation 21:4. Furthermore, Lycidas in “the blest Kingdoms” “hears the unexpressive nuptial song” (line 176) of Revelation 19:5-7:

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Revelation 19 does come before the millenarian verses in Revelation 20, but the heavenly marriage of the Lamb and his bride does not culminate in the millennium but in the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21. In fact, the bride is herself in a real sense the new heaven and new earth as figured in the New Jerusalem. As Revelation 21:2 has it: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In short, Lycidas completely ignores the millennium and profoundly meditates on the Last Judgment and the great renewal. As Fixler writes, “In 1637 Milton was no millenarian” (61).

As Leonard observes, the wedding of Cupid and Psyche the end of *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* similarly employs “the *sponsa Christi*” metaphor of Revelation 19 and 21 (Leonard, “Vow” 194):

But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid her famed Son advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced
After her wand’ring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,

And from her fair unspotted side
 Two blissful twins are to be born,
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn. (1003-11)

As Leonard puts it, Cupid corresponds to Christ, while Psyche is “the church as bride, setting the pattern for all earthly brides,” her “fair unspotted side” echoing Ephesians 5:25-28 (195):

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present to himself a glorious church, *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but it should be holy and without blemish*. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. (qtd. in 195, emphasis mine)

Leonard, incidentally, also identifies the *sponsa Christi* figure in line 27 of “At a solemn Musick: “To his celestial *consort* us unite, / To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light” (27-28) (190-191, qtd. in 190). *A Masque* then, like *Lycidas* and “At a solemn Musick,” gives the new heaven and new earth a prominent place, and ignores the millennium.

Previous lines within *A Masque* prepare us for this culmination in the Cupid and Psyche image in lines 1003-11. For example, in the beginning of the entertainment, the Attendant Spirit talks about “some there be that by due steps aspire / To lay their just hands on that golden key / That opes the palace of eternity” (12-14). The Lady and her brothers do not have the millennium foremost in their noble minds, but rather the eternal final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth. As I quoted in another section of this chapter, the Elder Brother imagines the Lady’s “unpolluted temple of the mind” ascending “by degrees to the soul’s essence, / Till all be made immortal” because of frequent interaction with “Heav’nly habitants” (459-63). In fact, the Attendant Spirit is markedly repulsed by having to descend onto earth and “the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould” (17), where humankind “with low-thoughted care / Confined, and pestered in this pifold here, / Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being” (5-8). This distaste for the earth does little to suggest that Milton hopes a millennium kingdom upon it will improve matters; his eyes are clearly directed upwards. Later on in the play, the final

conflagration of this “sin-worn mould” is called to mind when the Lady confronts Comus with “the sage / And serious doctrine of Virginitie” (786-87):

Yet should I try, the uncontrolle'd worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head. (793-99)

If Leonard is right that “‘Virginitie’ in Reformed doctrine could include chaste marriage” (*Complete* 680, see also “Vow”), then this apocalyptic moment in *A Masque* might also be seen as a *sponsa Christi* metaphor. In other words, the “sage / And serious doctrine of Virginitie” alludes to the wedding of the Lamb and the church in Revelation 19 and 20, a unification wherein to the destruction of the world is a necessary condition.

As I mentioned above, there are other poems in the Miltonic canon that energetically meditate upon the final kingdom as *A Masque*, “Lycidas,” “At a solemn Musick,” and “On Time” do, by contemplating heaven. In “Ad Patrem,” for example, the poet rhapsodizes to his father about their future glorification:

when we return to our homeland in Olympus and when the *eternal ages of unchanging time stand still*, we will proceed through heaven’s regions with golden crowns, uniting our sweet songs to the pleasant sounds of the lyre, songs with which the stars and the vaults of the twin hemispheres will resound. And the fiery spirit which encircles the swift spheres is itself now also singing amid the starry choirs an immortal melody and an inexpressible song, while the glowing serpent curb sits scorching hisses, and fierce Orion lowers his sword and grows gentle, and Mauretanian Atlas does not feel the weight of the stars. (lines 30-40)³⁵

³⁵ “. . . patrium. . . cum repetemus Olympum, / Æternæque moræ stabunt immobilis ævi, / Ibimus auratis per cæli templa coronis, / Dulcia suaviloquo sociantes carmina plectro, / Astra quibus, geminique poli convexa sonabunt. / Spiritus & rapidos qui circinat igneus orbes. / Nunc quoque sydereis intercinat ipse choreis / Immortale melos, & inenarrabile

Similarly, in “Epitaphium Damonis,” Damon, that is, Milton’s late friend Charles Diodati, now

inhabits the pure ether; pure in himself he possesses the ether and has thrust away the rainbow with his foot, and among the souls of heroes and eternal divinities *he draws draughts from celestial waters* and drinks joys with his hallowed lips. . . . You [Damon] yourself, your shining head girt with a gleaming crown and wearing the joyful branches of the leafy palm, will enact for *all eternity immortal marriage rites* where there is singing and where the lyre, mingled with the dances of the blessed, sounds energetically, and the festive revels rave in bacchic frenzy under the Thyrsus of Zion. (lines 203-07, 215-19, emphases mine)³⁶

Haan (500) and Bush (323) note that “immortal marriage rites” evoke Revelation 19, but as I suggested above with reference to “Lycidas,” this also alludes to the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21. Moreover, so does “celestial waters” (Revelation 21:6), which critics seem to have missed. Neither of these poems even touches on the millennium. “Ad Joannem Rousium,” Milton’s ode to his own poetry collection, which was written for Oxford Librarian John Rouse along with a second copy of the collection itself, as the first had been lost (Lewalski and Haan xcvi-viii), also soars to the heavens, and thus evokes the final kingdom. In the first Antistrophe, for example, Milton imagines the first book’s “journey” [*iter*], before its disappearance, to the university, “where the sacred bacchic dance³⁷ is known to the world and will be famous for all eternity while the heavens revolve though Time’s vast tracts” (20-24).³⁸ As to the second, new copy, the librarian “has . . . expressed the wish that [it] be placed in the sacred sanctuaries over

carmen; / Torrida dum rutilus compescit sibila serpens, / Demissoque ferox gladio mansuescit Orion; / Stellarum nec sentit onus Maurusius Atlas.”

³⁶ “*purum colit æthera Damon, / Æthera purus habet, pluvium pede reppulit arcum; / Heroúmque animas inter, divósque perennes, / Æthereos haurit latices & gaudia potat/Ore Sacro. . . . Ipse caput nitidum cinctus rutilante corona, / Letáque frondentis gestans umbracula palmæ / Æternùm perages immortales hymenæos; / Cantus ubi, choreisque furit lyra mista beatis, / Festa Sionæo bacchantur & Orgia Thyrsos.”*

³⁷ Haan notes that wine god Bacchus was also associated with learning (519).

³⁸ “*ubi . . . / . . . thyasusque sacer / Orbi notus per immensos / Temporum lapsus redeunte cælo, / Celeberque futurus in ævum”*

which he personally presides as faithful custodian of eternal works” (52-54).³⁹ Interestingly, Milton hopes the book might be read by “distant descendants and a more sensible age [that] will with honest hearts apply fairer judgements to all things” (81-84)⁴⁰ as if, as in “Naturam,” the second coming is not imminent. For Milton the scholar, knowledge itself is a manifestation of the eternal and the heavenly that will in the end become the final kingdom. Even the gunpowder epigrams that Revard mentions fixates on the heavens. In “In prodicionem Bobardicam,” for example, Milton mocks the Fawkes “perverse sense of devotion” [*mala cum pietate*] that was going to “send [the King and Parliament] to the halls of high heaven” [*hos alti missurus ad atria caeli*] (4-5). In another epigram, Milton jokingly writes that the late King James has now “reached the starry confraternity . . . without [the plotters’ explosive] help [*Ille . . . sine te consortia . . . adivit / Astra*]” (5-6). One other epigram jests that the Catholics had once excommunicated James, damning him to hell (Lewalski and Haan 448), but now they wish, through the blast, to “raise him to the stars and . . . to elevate [him] all the way to the gods above [*gestit ad astra, / Et cupit ad superos evehere usque Deos*]” (3-4). Despite the humor, these epigrams help sustain the obsession with the heavenly, and hence with the final kingdom, in the early poetry. Again, there is nothing in these epigrams or in the “Ad Joannem Rousium” about the millennium.

“On the Death of a fair Infant dying of a Cough,” written in the winter of 1625-26 according to Carey (14), further provides an enlightening perspective on the question of millenarianism in the early poetry. I argue that this piece is actually quite anti-millenarian. In a stanza VIII, which feels like a prototype of stanza XV of “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” wherein “Truth and Justice then / Will down return to men” (lines 141-42), the speaker wonders whether the deceased child was “that just Maid who once before Forsook the hated earth [i.e., Astraea (Justice)],” “that crown’d Matron sage white-robed Truth,” or some other ideal abstraction (lines 50-56). Calling to mind

³⁹ “*Teque adytis . . . sacris / Voluit reponi quibus . . . ipse praesidet / Aeternorum operum custos fidelis*”

⁴⁰ “*At ultimi nepotes, / Et cordatior aetas / Judicia rebus aequiora forsitan / Adhibebit integro sinu.*”

the physical thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, the speaker imaginatively wishes that this “just Maid” had remained on earth to maintain a kind of millennial peace:

But oh why didst thou not stay here below
 To bless us with thy Heav’n-loved innocence,
 To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe
 To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,
 Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence. (lines 64-68)

But, as in the Nativity Ode, when “wisest Fate says no” (line 149), the speaker stops himself. He knows that no external force, however divine, or extraordinary providence should “stand ‘twixt us and our deserved smart” (line 69). Only truly human effort, helped by “large grace” (*Paradise Lost* 12.305) within the context of ordinary providence can help us “learn to curb [our] sorrows wild” and achieve salvation and glorification (line 73). Thus, the child “canst best perform that office where thou art,” that is, as an agent of free Grace and ordinary providence. Indeed, the poem’s last lines hint at the final conflagration that precedes salvation and glorification: the speaker reassures the mother of the deceased child that if she has such “patience,” God will provide her with another “offspring . . . That till the worlds last end shall make thy name to live” (lines 76-77).

The final poem I would like to discuss is one of the Psalm translations that Milton wrote in 1648 but first published only in the 1673 edition of his poems. Lewalski claims that she hears “some millenarian language” in “several” of these translations through which Milton “underscores . . . the theme that at last the Kingdom of God will be established in a repentant and reformed (English) Israel” (Lewalski and Haan ixvii). According to her, through these Psalm renderings “Milton voiced his mounting anxiety over the unsettled state of England just before the outbreak of the Second Civil War” in 1648 (lxvi-vii). I find her argument about millenarianism in the Psalms unconvincing. I shall explore her strongest example, Psalm 85, the only one her endnotes specifically comment on as being millenarian. As she sees it, there are “millenarian overtones” in Milton’s addition of the phrase “ere long appear” in line 39 (Lewalski and Haan 515):

And glory shall *ere long appear*
 To dwell within our Land.
 Mercy and Truth *that long were miss’d*

Now *joyfully* are met;
 Sweet Peace and Righteousness have kiss'd
 And hand in hand are set.
 Truth from the earth *like to a flowr*
 Shall bud and blossom *then*,
 And Justice from her heavenly bowr
 look down *on mortal men*.
 The Lord will also then bestow
 Whatever thing is good;
 Our Land shall forth in plenty throw
 Her fruits *to be our food*.
 Before him Righteousness shall go
 His *Royal Harbinger*,
 Then will he come, and not be slow,
 His footsteps cannot err. (39-69)

Tuve observes that Psalm 85 is one of the sources of stanza XV of “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” which, as I discussed above with reference to “On the Death of a fair Infant dying of a Cough,” also refers to the return of Truth and Justice. According to Tuve, Psalm 85 is an “overt statement” not only of the “return of Justice (*Sol iustitiae*, Christ) to the earth at the Incarnation” but also of Astraea’s “parallel return at the Second Coming.” But the second coming need not be the same thing as the millennium. Milton’s Psalm 85 primarily calls to mind the first coming, but hints at the final kingdom, rather than the millennium. Lewalski presumably believes that the “glory [that] shall *ere long appear*” in line 39 refers to the “kingdom of glory [*regnum. . . gloriae*]” in *De Doctrina*, which includes the millennium (883-85). Instead, like the Nativity Ode, it refers to the “Complete glorification [*Glorificatio perfecta*]” (*De Doctrina* 893) that “will have as its companion the renewal and possession of heaven and earth and of the things created in them, those at least which could be of use or delight to us [*comes erit coeli et terrae rerúmque in iis creatarum, quae quidem nobis usui aut oblectationi esse possint, renovado et possession*]” (897). This idea is echoed in Milton’s Psalm 85, wherein

The Lord will also then bestow

Whatever thing is good;
Our Land shall forth in plenty throw
Her fruits *to be our food*.

In other words, as an allusion to the final Kingdom, these lines imagine a renewed earth, along with a renewed heaven, rather than one that constitutes a millennial kingdom.

1.5 *Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin, Compos'd at several times*

In the 1645 and 1673 poetry collections, therefore, “Naturam” and the Nativity Ode in particular establish an emphasis on the conflagration and the final kingdom that is based on Milton’s theological beliefs, and several other poems sustain this focus. The millennium is conspicuously absent. What is the significance of this?

To answer this question, it will be useful to consider a discussion related to the debate on Milton’s early political position, that is, attempts by scholars to explain the publications of these collections in the first place. As Ann Baynes Coiro puts it, in “Milton and class identity: the publication of *Areopagitica* and the 1645 *Poems*,” the book is “the most puzzling gesture of Milton’s early career.” Published not long after *Areopagitica*, it is “a volume of poems under official license, a volume freighted with court markers and associated in its form as a miscellany with royalist writers.” Moreover, “Milton made what may seem the astonishing choice to publish [it] with Humphrey Moseley, an important and politically explicit publisher” with royalist ties (264). Thomas N. Corns, in “Milton’s Quest for Respectability,” has provided the most persuasive explanation. According to him, Milton’s writings on divorce as well as his antiprelatical tracts “had made him obnoxious to moderate Protestants” (771) and the publication of the poems was, in addition to other prose works, “a further attempt to dissociate himself from the archetypal sectary” that he was coming to be associated with (777). The idea was for the poems to demonstrate “the eminent respectability of its author. Over and over again the volume declares his wealth, his establishment connections, his contact with European culture, and his scholarship” (778). Despite the recent scholarship of David Norbrook, Michael Wilding, Leah Marcus, and Barbara Lewalski, Corns still stands by his argument, though is “irenic” towards these critics (“*Lycidas*,” 23-24). Annabel Paterson,

in “Why is there no Rights Talk in Milton’s Poetry,” agrees with Corns (199). Coiro, on the other hand, believes that Milton published the poems in this manner in order to “let go of class privacy and turn to openness, and so to petition the parliament of women and other vulgar sorts.” After all, the social-climbing masses were devouring courtly miscellanies at the time (289). As she sees it, Milton was presenting himself as respectable, but retains a strategic radical edge. For her part, using her assessment of Corns as a springboard, Patterson argues that “Milton made a sustained effort, during his entire life, to prevent his poetry from being contaminated by— that is to say, read in the light of— his polemical prose” (199). This makes sense, but Patterson is unable to account for it:

Did Milton see his poetry as truly belonging to a different, transcendent realm of thought, the realm that literary studies *used* to assume was indeed that to which all true literature aspired? Or was he afraid that it would not survive if it fought the battles of the day? Or fought them openly? Was he tempting his readers to read it against the grain? Was he training us to be better readers, a thesis held by Suzanne⁴¹ Woods and by others? Each of you will answer these questions differently. (209)

I would like to suggest that questioning millenarianism in Milton’s poetry and prose, early and late, will help answer these questions. Milton never believed in millenarianism, and I argue that his position on this religious ideology aligned in 1645 with the need to restore “respectability.” As Christopher Hill has suggested, millenarianism was one of the ideas that connected Milton with the radicals of his time (*Revolution* 279). The sustained emphasis on the final Kingdom in the collection was therefore a strongly implied rejection of the radical millenarianism that had contributed to his association with “the archetypal sectary.” Scholars generally believe that Milton made strongly millenarian statements in the antiprelatical tracts of the 1640s. As I shall argue in the following chapter, Milton leaves references to the final kingdom in his controversial prose open to millenarian readings in order to avoid alienating those who believed in the thousand-year earthly reign. However, by publishing his poetry in 1645, Milton successfully clarifies his

⁴¹ Patterson incorrectly spells Woods’ first name. The correct spelling is “Susanne.”

non-millenarian theological position, which helped distance himself from the radicals of his time.

Chapter 2

2 Tactical Millenarianism and Doubt: The Final Kingdom in Milton's Prose

Chapter Abstract: Commencing with a re-examination of words like “monarchy” and “Kingdome,” which have been read too dogmatically and through an ideological lens by scholars, I investigate *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England: And the Causes that hitherto have hindered it* (1641) and *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, Against Smectymnuus* (1641), two of Milton's antiprelatical tracts. I argue that Milton's omission of the millennium and emphasis on the final kingdom in the apocalyptic prayers in these works is consistent not only with the vitalism in his early poetry and prose, but with his aversion to the corrupt prelacy and his focus on the spiritual kingdom. I then turn to John Archer's *The Personall Reigne of Christ upon the Earth* (1641) to illustrate how Milton's adherence to the spiritual kingdom is difficult to reconcile with millenarian doctrine. I contend further that Milton, influenced by St. Augustine and David Pareus, was inclined to believe in a past millennium that was internal and spiritual in nature and that had put an end to the external persecution of the Church by pagans, but did not prevent internal corruption and schism. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a reconsideration of the millenarian reference in *De Doctrina Christiana*, the only explicit one in Milton's work, to suggest that it is more tentative, exploratory, interrogative, and cautious than scholars have hitherto recognized. Focusing on the works above, I shall call into question Milton's adherence to millenarianism in his prose generally.

2.1 “Thy universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth”

Scholars widely, though not unanimously, regard the “apocalyptic prayer” (Fixler 89) that concludes Milton's antiprelatical tract *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England: And the Causes that hitherto have hindered it* (1641) as strong evidence of his millenarianism, at least in the 1640s, when he began his career as a polemicist. By then, he had, as Campbell and Corns suggest, been sufficiently

radicalized. He joined the struggle against the authoritarian Personal Rule of King Charles, which had begun in 1629, and the ritualistic Anglican Church. At this time, England was destabilizing and headed towards Civil War, and millenarianism was becoming a pervasive and powerful belief (95-100, 131-3, Revard 42-43, 47-48). Allied with a group of Presbyterian clergymen, including Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young (Milton's former tutor), Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstow, whose initials made up their collective *nom de plume* "Smectymnuus," Milton began publishing controversial prose pamphlets attacking the secular power structure of the bishops. The movement calling for the elimination of the episcopacy "with all its dependencies, roots, and branches" involving public petitions and legislation in parliament had just emerged (qtd. in Lewalski *Life* 127-28). *Of Reformation*, his first independent pamphlet, blames the worldly bishops for the failure of the English Reformation, tracing the roots of their corruption in the histories of the English and early churches. At the end of the work, Milton prays that the prelates "be thrown downe eternally into the *darkest* and *deepest Gulfe of Hell*." Just before he does so, however, he directly invokes Christ in a prayer that eagerly anticipates an imminent time

when thou the Eternall and shortly-expected King shalt open the Clouds to judge the severall Kingdomes of the World, and distributing *Nationall Honours* and *Rewards* to Religious and just *Common-wealths*, shalt put an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*, proclaiming thy universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth. Where they undoubtedly that by their *Labours*, *Counsels*, and *Prayers* have been earnest for the *Common good* of *Religion* and their *Countrey*, shall receive, above the inferiour *Orders* of the *Blessed*, the *Regall* addition of *Principalities*, *Legion*, and *Thrones* into their glorious Titles, and in supereminence of *beatifick Vision* progressing the *datelesse* and *irrevoluble* Circle of *Eternity* shall clasp inseparable Hands with *joy*, and *blisse* in over measure for ever.

(616)

According to Barbara Lewalski, the passage describes "Christ's millennial kingdom, where there will be no earthly kings and yet all who have labored for the 'Common good of Religion and Countrey' will exercise kingly rule" (*Life* 145). For his part, Michael

Fixler discerns in it “the millenarian contrast of earthly tyranny to the Kingdom of Christ, wherein are arranged those to whom degrees of beatitude are to be awarded” (102). And even Campbell and Corns, who argue for a conservative young Milton, write that the prayer is a “heady millenarian fantasy” of a now radicalized activist wherein the “millennium seems imminent” (142, 132). Other scholars who have read this passage and others in Milton’s prose as millenarian include Stella Revard, William B. Hunter, David Loewenstein, Christopher Hill, Arthur Barker, and John Leonard.⁴²

In challenging this redoubtable consensus, I shall begin with a brief digression on the term “monarchy,” which appears in the passage, and suggest that when scholars have confidently identified millenarian belief in Milton’s prose, they have taken insufficient care with dogmatic readings of certain words, which also include “Kingdome” in *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, Against Smectymnuus* (1641) (707), another one of Milton’s antiprelatical tracts, and “thousand years” (Latin: *mille annos, anni mille*) in *De Doctrina Christiana* ([Oxford] 887, 889), his Latin theological treatise. By focusing on these three works, which are the most important prose pieces presented as evidence for Milton’s millenarianism,⁴³ I shall call into question Milton’s adherence to this doctrine in his prose generally. I shall be building upon the work of Janel Mueller, C. A. Patrides, John T. Shawcross, Andrew Escobedo, and Michael Fixler. Mueller and Patrides cast doubt on millenarianism in *Of Reformation*, and Shawcross raises a question on Milton’s attitude to the doctrine in *De Doctrina Christiana*. Escobedo and Fixler, meanwhile, qualify Milton’s overall perspective on the millennium in his prose. My research on millenarianism in *De Doctrina* is particularly significant. The treatise presents the most formidable obstacle for my argument, as it makes the only explicit reference to the millennium in Milton’s writings. The questions I raise about this millenarian reference in *De Doctrina* have been significant enough, however, to lead the Oxford editors of the treatise to revise a crucial sentence in the online version (2012) of their translation.

⁴² Revard 42, 55, Hunter, “millennial” 97-98, Loewenstein, *Drama* 13, 30-31, Leonard, “Millennium” 270-71, Hill, *Revolution* 281, Barker 195.

⁴³ Fixler 89-106, Lewalski 14-15, 17, Revard 42, 54-55, Hunter, “millennial” 97-98.

C. A. Patrides notes “one peculiarity” in Books 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost*, “Satan’s consistent refusal to speak of the Son of God,” and he finds “Equally strange” that “neither Mammon nor Belial names the Son” when recalling the recently concluded War in Heaven (“Godhead” 32).⁴⁴ The devils’ failure utter the Son’s name, or even to admit that he exists, seems especially surprising when we discover in Book 5 (600-16) that it was his exaltation by the Father that had triggered their insurrection (5.617, 657-710, 743-876) and learn that the Son himself, “Grasping ten thousand thunders, which he sent / Before him” from “his fierce chariot,” (6.836-37, 829), had soundly defeated them and driven them out of heaven and into hell (5.824-92). Without specifically referring to the Son, Satan mentions “our grand Foe, / who now triumphs, and in th’ excess of joy / Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav’n” (1.121-24); “the potent Victor in his rage” (1.95); “He with his Thunder” (1.92); and “he who reigns / Monarch in Heav’n” (1.637-38). Similarly, as Patrides observes, Mammon talks about “the fierce foe” who “pursued us through the deep” and Belial fearfully recalls “Heav’n’s afflicting thunder” (2.78-79, 166).⁴⁵ The evasive pronouns and general language make the identity of the devils’ heavenly opponent unclear, though in the view of most Miltonists, the pronoun referent is the Father (Leonard, “Fw”). The narrator himself does not refer to the Son in Book 1; he speaks of how Satan had challenged “the throne and monarchy of God” (1.42) and how the “Almighty Power” had cast the rebel angels down to hell (1.44-48). He does, however, mention the Son in Book 2, at the point in the narrative when Satan encounters Sin and Death at the gates of Hell:

Th’ undaunted Fiend what this might be admired,
Admired, not feared; God and his Son except,
Created thing⁴⁶ naught valued he nor shunned (2.677-79).

In response to Patrides, William B. Hunter latches on to the words “monarch” and “monarchy” in Books 1 and 2. He argues that by refusing to “allude in any way

⁴⁴ This is another article by C.A. Patrides entitled “The Godhead in ‘Paradise Lost’: Dogma or Drama?” (*The Journal of English and German Philology* 64.1(1965): 29-34) that is unrelated to the millennium.

⁴⁵ Qtd. in “Godhead” 32.

⁴⁶ Leonard notes in this line “the heretical implication that God and his Son were creatures.” Milton’s Arianism does account for why the Son is not eternal (*Complete* 739), but it is not known why Milton might have suggested that God was a created being.

whatsoever to the existence of the Son” in *Paradise Lost*, the fallen angels are guilty of “one of the earliest heresies to arise in the church, monarchianism,” that is, the “denial of the independent existence of the Son or of the divinity of Christ”.⁴⁷ Monarchianism developed into “full-blown Arianism” (Hunter, “Heresies” 28-29, 32), which “regards the Son as the earliest and most important creation ex nihilo (that is, coming out of nothing) from the father” and thus “argues against [his] full divinity” (Corns, *Encyclopedia* 18). Hunter implies that because Milton’s devils espouse this heresy, Milton himself could not have been an Arian, as many scholars have supposed (Hunter, “Heresies” 32-33). However, “monarch,” “monarchy,” and “monarchianism” can be slippery terms. Hunter himself admits that “monarchianism had originally been advanced to underscore the unity of the Christian Trinity: the earliest church fathers argued that the Godhead acts as a unit, that it is a single rule, a *mon-arch*.” Hunter believes that Milton was a Trinitarian and so could not have adhered to Arianism (28). Consequently, Hunter writes that “Milton [i.e., the narrator in *Paradise Lost*] himself employs this orthodox sense to state that Satan fought against ‘the Throne and Monarchy of God’ (I, 42)— that is, against the Godhead” (28). According to Hunter, “orthodox monarchianism of a unified rule” developed into heretical monarchianism, which came to mean “a single god rather than the single rule of a triune Godhead” (28-29). Hunter claims that Satan uses this heretical sense of the word when referring to “he who reigns / Monarch in Heav’n” (1.637-38, qtd. in Hunter, “Heresies” 29) and when denouncing the “Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals” before the War in Heaven (5.795-96, qtd. in Hunter, “Heresies” 29).

Leonard, in *Faithful Labourers*, takes issue with Hunter’s analysis, as it is based on words with unstable meanings:

there is something suspiciously convenient about the way in which Hunter’s terms change their chameleon colours. On Milton’s lips, the orthodox sense of “Monarchy” declares Milton to be orthodox. On Satan’s lips, the word becomes heretical and so (surprise, surprise) reveals Milton to be orthodox. This argument is troubling enough (it amounts to “heads I win, tails you lose”), but Hunter fails even to consider the possibility that

⁴⁷ Hunter also quotes 1.92 and 1.637-38, as I have above, in “Heresies” 28-29.

both speakers might use “monarchy” in nothing more or less than its plain English sense. (517)

Indeed, Hunter erroneously suggests that the “Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals” which Satan rejects is the Father’s kingdom. In fact, it is the Son’s. Throughout that particular speech, Satan had been speaking against the “King anointed” (5.777), that is, the Son, who had just been exalted earlier in Book 5. Satan claims that he and all the angels are *the Son’s* “equals” (5.795-96, qtd. in Hunter, “Heresies” 29). Because the Father endows the Son with just a “vicegerent reign” (5.609), there are two kings in heaven. Satan is thus in this instance not using the word “monarchy” in a heretical sense, but, loosely, in its “plain English sense” (i.e., kingship). Moreover, as this line also demonstrates, Hunter is inaccurate when he states that “in *Paradise Lost* Satan never suggests that the Son exists in any sense” (28). When Satan begins to conspire against the Son after the exaltation, he calls upon the angels under his command to all proceed to the “The quarters of the North,” where he holds court, “there to prepare / Fit entertainment to receive our King / The great messiah” (5.689-91). Possibly in recognition of this, Patrides had suggested that the devils refused to mention the Son only in Books 1 and 2. As to the narrator’s reference to “the Throne and Monarchy of God,” Leonard writes that if it “does have a theological sense, it is far from certain that it is the one Hunter wants. A ‘monarchian’ might reply that Satan’s ‘impious war’ (l. 43) is all the more impious for defying the one supreme God” (517). Leonard also points out that while Hunter gives Patrides the “gracious tribute” of acknowledging his insight about the fallen angels’ refusal to name the Son, this “obscures an important difference between [them]. Patrides had argued that the devils ignore the Son for the good reason that the Father and Son are indistinguishable outside Heaven. Patrides’s devils are sound (though not devout) Trinitarians.” Leonard explains that Hunter needs to obscure how his argument differs from that of Patrides because “it raises awkward questions about arguments based on silence. Since Hell’s occupants never mention the Son, it is perilous to make any confident pronouncement as to why they never mention him. Silence is neither orthodoxy nor heresy” (516).

As Leonard suggests, Hunter’s dogmatic reading of “monarch” and “monarchy” is problematic. I argue that something similar is at play in *Of Reformation*. While Milton

does address Christ when he refers to the time “when thou the Eternall and shortly-expected King shalt open the Clouds to judge the severall Kingdomes of the World, and distributing *Nationall Honours* and *Rewards* to Religious and just *Common-wealths*, shalt put an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*, proclaiming thy universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth,” he begins the prayer by addressing the Trinity. This suggests that the “universal and milde *Monarchy*” is not necessarily solely Christ’s, as most scholars have assumed. As Don M. Wolfe and Barbara Lewalski note, Milton did not yet hold Arian views when he published the tract (I.614, note 170, *Life* 122). Milton opens the prayer calling upon each of the three persons of the Godhead one by one:

Thou therefore that sits’t in light & glory inapproachable, *Parent* of *Angels* and *Men!* next thee I implore Omnipotent King, Redeemer of that lost remnant whose nature thou didst assume, ineffable and everlasting *Love!* And thou the third substance of Divine Infinitude, *illuminating Spirit*, the joy and solace of created *Things!* one *Tri-personall GODHEAD!* looke upon this thy poore and almost spent, and expiring *Church*, leave her not thus a prey to these importunate *Wolves*. . . (613-14)

From then on, for more than two of the three and a half pamphlet pages that comprise the full prayer, Milton addresses the Trinity as a whole, using the singular pronouns “thou” and “thy,” for example: “Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and Tyrannous Claime of thy Foes, now unite us intirely, and appropriate us to thy selfe, tie us everlastingly in willing Homage to the *Prerogative* of thy eternall *Throne*” (615).

When he does address the person of Christ directly towards the end of the speech, he does so because, as the synoptic Gospels⁴⁸ and *De Doctrina* tell us ([Oxford] 883-87), Christ shall preside over the Last Judgment. “Thou” in “thou the Eternall and shortly-expected King” refers to Christ and so does “thy” in “thy universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth,” but Christ remains an integral part of the Trinity. Therefore, the *Monarchy* is as much Christ’s as it is the Father’s and Holy Spirit’s. Moreover, two paragraphs before, when Milton mentions “thy eternall *Throne*,” he is unequivocally

⁴⁸ Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:26-30, Matthew 24:29-51, Mark 13:24-37, and Luke 21:27-36.

addressing the Trinity. Building on the work of Mueller and Patrides, I argue that the “*Monarchy*” is not the millennial kingdom of Christ, but rather, the final kingdom of the new heaven and earth wherein God—that is, the entire Godhead composed of the three persons of the Trinity, not just the Son—shall be “All in All.” Milton has in mind here the orthodox monarchian conception of “monarch”: the three persons of the Godhead act “as a unit” and comprise “a single rule.” In fact, there is no direct or explicit reference to the millennium in the prayer. As I shall discuss in my chapter on *Paradise Lost*, Milton, who by the time he wrote the epic would believe in Arianism, will be concerned with the distinction between the Father the Son. There will be two thrones in the epic, but in the end only the Father shall be “All in All”. In *Of Reformation*, the Trinitarian Milton speaks of only one throne. As far as the monarchy is concerned, the distinctions between the three persons of the Trinity do not yet hold importance for him. It is God’s monarchy (not just the Son’s as the millennial kingdom would be), and, in it, God shall be all in all.

Besides “*Monarchy*” and Milton’s addressing the “*Tri-personall GODHEAD*,” five other aspects of the text support this reading: 1) that the “*Monarchy*” will be proclaimed “through Heaven and Earth,” 2) that “an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*” must precede it, 3) that it will be a “milde” monarchy, 4) that, as Mueller has suggested (19), the champions of religious and political reform shall “in supereminence of *beatifick Vision* progressing the *datelesse* and *irrevoluble* Circle of *Eternity* . . . clasp inseparable Hands with *joy*, and *blisse* in over measure for ever,” and, finally, 5) that, as Patrides has observed, the prayer says nothing about the monarchy lasting a thousand years (“Apocalyptic,” 126). I shall consider each of these points in turn.

Firstly, when Milton says that Christ will be “proclaiming [his] universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth,” he is referring not to Christ’s thousand year reign in Revelation 20, which millenarians perceived to be an earthly kingdom, but rather, to the renewed *heaven* and *earth* of Revelation 21, 2 Peter 3:13, and Isaiah (65:17, 66:22).⁴⁹ In Revelation, John of Patmos envisions “a new heaven and a new earth: for the

⁴⁹ Milton cites all four biblical passages in the section of *De Doctrina* on “the renewal and possession of heaven and earth,” which “Our [complete] glorification will have as its companion” ([Oxford] 897).

first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1-3). This final kingdom is to come after the Last Judgment (Revelation 20: 11-15) and the final conflagration of the world (Revelation 21:1). Similarly, in 2 Peter 3:13, after the heavens and earth are incinerated (2 Peter 3: 7, 10, 12), the faithful can look forward to “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”⁵⁰ As the Father tells the Son in *Paradise Lost*, following the Son’s “dread tribunal” in the end times (3.326):

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
 New heav’n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell,
 And after all their tribulations long
 See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With joy and love triumphing and fair truth.
 Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
 For regal sceptre then no more shall need,
 God shall be All in All. (3.334-41)

Here Milton associates the renewed heaven and earth with the time when God shall be immanent, that is, “All in All,” as prophesied by 1 Corinthians 15:28. Earlier in this prayer in *Of Reformation*, Milton intimates that he yearns for this immanence of the deity and the communion it entails when he calls upon God to “unite us intirely, and appropriate us to thy selfe, tie us everlastingly in willing Homage to the *Prerogative* of thy eternall *Throne*” (615). The “*Monarchy*” is thus “universal,” in the sense of “existing or occurring everywhere or in all things” (*OED* 2a). Moreover, the word “monarchy” itself can be defined as “Undivided rule by a deity” (*OED* 1b). Though the *OED* states that this definition specifically pertains to “the millennial reign of Christ or a Messiah on earth,” one of its usage examples is the passage in *Paradise Lost* which mentions Satan taking “ambitious aim / Against the Throne and Monarchy of God” (lines 1.42-42). In my chapter on *Paradise Lost*, I shall argue that in line with Milton’s later Arianism, it is the

⁵⁰ Both Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 prophesy God’s creation of a “new heavens and a new earth.” In Isaiah 65:17, the “former [heaven and earth] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” These are the earliest references to the final kingdom in the bible.

Father who becomes immanent as sole monarch of this final kingdom, after the Son lays aside his regal sceptre and ends his own kingdom, but the prayer in *Of Reformation* suggests that the God who shall be “All in All” will remain a Trinity and retain his three distinct persons. Some scholars, including Doug Trevor, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, have argued that this post-apocalyptic immanence of God means the end of the individuality, but others have challenged this (McColley 22-25, 29, 31, Trevor, 81-85). Diane Kelsey McColley, for example, notes that each “all” in the source text “so that God may be all in all” is translated from the original Greek word “panta” (neuter plural), which is typically translated as “all things” (24). Thus, the Latin of Milton’s Junius-Tremellius-Beza Bible reads, “*ut Deus sit omnia in omnibus*” [so that God may be all things in all things]: The Latin “makes the plurality even clearer, but omits the syntactic reversibility that the less inflected English permits. These plurals assure the possibility that those whom God shall be *in* are not reduced from an ‘all’ meaning a communicating congregation of lives to an ‘All’ that digests them, but may retain the distinctions that the process of creation proliferates” (24-25). Besides, in *De Doctrina*, Milton explicitly states that in the final kingdom “It appears that the saints will not be equally glorified in heaven” (qtd. in 29, [Yale] 631-32). Similarly, in the prayer in *Of Reformation*, Milton says that those who “have been earnest for the *Common good* of *Religion* and their *Countrey*” will enjoy a higher rank in the hierarchy of heaven over other redeemed souls, and in the poem “On Time,” as I suggested in my previous chapter, Milton imagines that this same “Circle of *Eternity*” of the final kingdom shall “greet our bliss / With an individual kiss” (11-12). “Individual” can mean either “inseparable” (*OED* 2), thus suggesting an “everlasting” bond, or “peculiar to a particular person” (Leonard, *Complete* 625, note on line 12). Eternal union need not mean the loss of personal identity. The tract therefore suggests that the creatures and the three persons of the triune creator can maintain individuality in the final kingdom.

The second point supporting my argument that the apocalyptic prayer refers to the final kingdom is the suggestion in the prayer that Christ must first put “an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*” before the “*Monarchy*” can be proclaimed. This is again a reference to 1 Corinthians 15: 24-28, which Milton would later cite in *De Doctrina* as follows:

then there will be an end, when he [i.e. Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the father; when he causes every empire and every ruling force and power to vanish: for he must reign until he has put all his foes under his feet. But the last enemy to vanish will be death. . . . But after all things have been subjected to him, then will the son himself also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all. (887, 889)

The elimination of “*every empire and every ruling force and power*” is a necessary precondition for “*God to be all in all.*” Even peaceful and benevolent nations, including the “*Religious and just Common-wealths,*” like the one Milton envisioned England would soon become, will disappear, as the incorporation of those who “*have been earnest for the Common good of Religion and their Countrey*” into the “*universal and milde Monarchy*” demonstrates. Moreover, Christ handing over his own kingdom to the Father in the end, and his subjecting himself to God, further suggests that the “*Monarchy*” will not be solely his, but will be that of the entirety of the triune God. Most importantly, Milton contrasts the “*universal and milde Monarchy*” with what he refers to earlier in the prayer as “*the afflicted state of this our shaken Monarchy, that now lies laboring under her throwes, and struggling against the grudges of more dreaded Calamities*” (614). Milton, however, though he savagely attacked the bishops in his first polemical pieces, had not yet openly turned against Charles, and imagines that England could achieve religious and political reform. But in the prayer the monarchy, enduring the “*throwes*” (throes) and “*laboring*” pains, gives birth not to a reconstructed nation, which Milton hardly discusses, but to God’s final kingdom where bliss is to be had by union with an immanent deity. Reformation is not so much an end in itself but a means to achieve bliss in heaven, the ultimate end.

As to my third point, Milton tellingly describes the “*Monarchy*” as a “*milde*” one. This is in keeping with Revelation 21: in the renewed heaven and earth “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” (verse 4). However, this would be inconsistent with a millennial kingdom that was to run at the same time as a thousand-year long, and dreadful, Last Judgement. Joseph Mede

espoused this notion of the millennium as coterminous with the Last Judgment as part of his millenarianism (Lewalski, “millennium” 15), and Milton himself perfunctorily adapted it in *De Doctrina*. At any rate, Christ will already have concluded his mission “to judge the severall Kingdomes of the World” prior to putting “an end to all Earthly Tyrannies” and establishing the “*Monarchy*.”

Indeed, and this is my fourth point, as Janel Mueller argues, “there is no room for millenarianism in *Of Reformation*.” Her evidence is “the premium Milton lays on transmundane glory as the end of human activism. The glorified saints of the peroration are quite explicitly imagined in a heaven beyond time” (19). In Milton’s words, “in supereminence of *beatifick Vision* progressing the *datelesse* and *irrevoluble* Circle of *Eternity* shall clasp inseparable Hands with *joy*, and *blisse* in over measure for ever” (qtd. in 19). Milton will reiterate this language very closely in Book 12 of *Paradise Lost*, when Michael describes for Adam “New heav’n, new earth” and their “ages of endless date, / Founded in righteousness and peace and love / To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss” (549-51). In other words, Milton longs for the end of history itself, for an “*Eternity*” that is “*datelesse*.” Lewalski writes that these saints, “who have who have labored for the ‘*Common good of Religion and Countrey*’ [,] will exercise kingly rule” in “Christ’s millennial kingdom” (*Life* 145), but there is no concrete evidence in the text that they exercise any authority at all. They simply enjoy rapturous, everlasting, and total union with God. They “shall receive, above the inferior *Orders* of the *Blessed*, the *Regall* addition of *Principalities, Legions, and Thrones* into their glorious Titles”; but as Leonard points out, a Protestant tradition emerged in the seventeenth-century wherein angelic designations such as these “appl[ied] to essences” whose distinctions were unknowable to man, not to “offices of governance.” The nature of the conventional hierarchy of angels was deemed inscrutable, and all angels, irrespective of their titles, were seen as servants, that is, “messengers,” that were “subject to God” (*Naming* 61). English Bishop Gervase Babington wrote, translating Augustine, “That there is some difference among the Angels there is no doubt to be made, for therefore doth the Scripture give them differing names and titles, but what sort that difference is, he onely knoweth who hath so created them” (qtd. in 62). The saints in Milton’s final kingdom are “*Regall*” only insofar as they are united with God’s “*eternall Throne*.”

Milton's description of the "Circle of *Eternity*" as "*irrevoluble*" is also significant. Earlier in the passage, Milton had prayed,

O thou that after the impetuous rage of five bloody Inundations, and the succeeding Sword of intestine *Warre*, soaking the Land in her owne gore, didst pittie the sad and ceasles revolution of our swift and thick-coming sorrowes when wee were quite breathelesse, of thy *free grace* didst motion *Peace*, and termes of Cov'nant with us, & having first welnigh freed us from *Antichristian* thraldome, didst build up this *Britannick Empire* to a glorious and enviable heighth with all her Daughter Ilands about her, stay with us in this felicity. . . . (614)

As Wolfe notes, the five bloody Inundations recall the Roman, Scottish and Pict, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, and Norman invasions (614, note 172). For Milton, these result in the "ceasles revolution of our swift and thick-coming sorrowes." As the *OED* defines it, something "*irrevoluble*" is "that [which] has no finite period of revolution, whose revolution is never completed; of infinite circuit" (*OED*). Milton sets the adjective against the word "revolution," in the sense of "cyclical recurrence, esp. of a point or period of time" (*OED* 4a). Thus, he wishes for harrowing recurrences that make up history to cease in favor of an eternity wherein the cycle of bliss shall go on forever. Interestingly, Milton refers to five invasions, but Wolfe, who conflates the invasion of the Scots with that of the Picts, actually mentions six. The five inundations might be an allusion to the four worldly kingdoms destroyed and superseded by a fifth and everlasting monarchy, which millenarians saw as a prediction of the thousand-year reign, in the Book of Daniel (Capp 20-22). Milton might thus be thinking of a past millennium in this section of the passage, which further argues against his millenarianism. If this is true, the millennium would be oddly "bloody," but, as I shall discuss shortly, the external, outward kingdom did not need to be free from strife or corruption, as long as the inward, spiritual kingdom brought about peace, happiness, and blessedness in the hearts of believers. The Fifth Monarchist movement, whose adherents believed human involvement through violent and militant means was necessary for coming of the millennial kingdom, had not yet emerged. They would do so about a decade after Milton wrote *Of Reformation* (14).

Finally, here is my fifth, final and most important point on the apocalyptic prayer: C. A. Patrides, subscribing to the consensus view that the monarchy belongs just to Christ, observes that in prayer Milton “failed pointedly to specify Christ’s reign as ‘a thousand years’” (“Apocalyptic” 226). Patrides questions Milton’s millenarianism, as I am doing in this thesis, but on different grounds. He senses a “temperamental circumspectness about the Apocalypse” in Milton’s work generally, even in “his most passionate apocalyptic moments,” that stems from his hesitancy “to deviate from the mainstream of Protestant apocalyptic tradition.” According to Patrides, he “did . . . prevaricate” about the “vexing issue of the millennium postulated in the Apocalypse ([Revelation] 20.1-6).” Patrides offers three reasons for this attitude, firstly, the fear Milton shared with Calvin and Luther of millenarianism’s tendency to breed fanatically violent theocracy; and, secondly, Milton’s apparent implicit inability to make sense of “the more esoteric aspects of millennial expectations,” that is, Revelation 20’s “embarrassingly explicit reference to Christ’s earth-bound reign of a thousand years” and the subsequent release of Satan, who had been bound by an Angel at the beginning of the thousand years (215-16). In a previous section of the article, Patrides had commented that Revelation’s influence on Milton’s work was somewhat limited because of its “daedalian excesses,” which “severely circumscribed their compatibility with his aspirations both linguistic and thematic” (216). Nevertheless, Milton “was very much on the side of the considerable majority of his contemporaries” who believed in an impending millennium, but the caution with which he approached the apocalypse prevented him from mentioning the millennium’s thousand-year duration. Instead, as Patrides sees it, Milton conflates the millennium and the final kingdom in his “vision” of the “universal and milde *Monarchy*”: “the millennial reign would seem to be the final event within time-bound history and yet coterminous with or protracted into eternity, *id est*, quite unlike the period precisely dated in the Apocalypse as scheduled to be followed by the loosening of Satan (20.7 ff.)” (225-26). Patrides might have further accounted for this conflation, or even denied any millenarian reference altogether, by revisiting a comment he had made in passing earlier in the article. He had said that as far as the Book of Revelation was concerned, “the fulfillment of God’s promises and the beatific vision beyond history are what appealed to Milton most” (216). But, putting somewhat too much weight on Milton’s concern with

the political activism in the present (217), he does not return to this insight about Milton's yearning for the future kingdom. Because Patrides pays insufficient attention to the emphasis of Milton's eschatology on the final kingdom, his critique of Milton's millenarianism is limited to the suggestion that Milton had a "qualified response to the millennium." For him, Milton still somehow refers to the thousand-year reign in the prayer (226-27). I contend that Milton does not refer to the thousand years because he is not thinking about the millennium at all, but about the rewards he hopes for in the renewed heaven and earth.

According to Andrew Escobedo, who proposes an overall qualification of millenarianism in Milton's prose, "Patrides aptly describes the ambiguity of Milton's apocalyptic vision" in *Of Reformation*, and "Mueller justly observes" that the tract "imagines the apocalyptic glorification of the saints in heaven, not earth," though, as Mueller and I have argued, this glorification occurs in the renewed heaven and earth. Claiming that Milton "does not make clear where this 'eternal life' will unfold," Escobedo is disposed to believe that Milton was a millenarian, but eschews reliance on the explicit reference to the millennium in *De Doctrina* because the tract's authorship is in a matter of debate. Instead, he focuses on what he calls "less explicit millennialism of Milton's other prose." He admits, however, that while Milton "repeatedly suggests England's paradisaic potential," he "provides no fully-fledged description of a future earthly paradise" and emphasizes the "spiritual over the physical" (29-30, 32). He argues that Milton's apocalyptic thought had evolved from that of Elizabethans like the martyrologist John Foxe, who thought that the millennium had passed and anticipated in Christ's second coming "a sudden and absolute end to earthly existence." The achievements of the English Reformation in the previous century encouraged "the desire for a glorious English future, but the non-millenarian expectation of an earth-destroying Apocalypse close[d] off the national future" (14). Instead of a future millennial kingdom wherein the human progress might reach a "culmination," the renewed heaven and earth after the final conflagration of the world had no relation at all with this progress (5, 13-20). Escobedo would like to see "the modern notion of historical progress emerge as a dialectic between inevitable improvement and human effort" (5) by comparing the eschatologies of Foxe and Milton, but he is limited by Milton's failure to explicitly

mention the millennium in his political prose and his emphasis on the final kingdom, which Escobedo fails to identify and tries to negotiate. Nevertheless, he is able to persuasively argue for “ambiguous interpenetrations between time and eternity” in Milton’s work, for example, in the “National Honours,” which had been earned by earthly achievements, enjoyed by the blessed in heaven (*Of Reformation* 616, Escobedo 30-33).

Michael Fixler also qualifies Milton’s millenarianism in the prose. While Escobedo detects a hesitancy on Milton’s part to envision a future earthly paradise, Fixler wavers between defining the Miltonic millennium as the miraculous earthly reign of Christ with his saints and as a purely human, politico-religious, Christian reconstruction of society. According to Fixler, Milton’s conception of the millennium had been strongest in the antiprelatical tracts, particularly in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions* and especially in the “apocalyptic prayers” in these two works (88-94, 98-106). Milton had “apparently” (89) looked forward to the Reformation creating “spiritual beatitude . . . in a historical setting with apparent political and social ramifications” that manifested in “a society in which all other interests yielded harmoniously and beneficially to the interest of religion and which was, in effect, politically immutable” (90). Furthermore, “thus maintained in its optimal form the state would last until the actual second coming of Christ, and perhaps beyond it. . . . It was in short, a picture of the Kingdom of Christ, or at least some phase of it which, for example, [millenarian writer] Henry Archer had distinguished as an intermediate stage, ‘indeed heavenly but yet on earth,’ and which would suffer no immutability or decay until the Last Judgment” (89-90).

However, for Fixler, Milton’s “ideal of a society perfected by reformation” only “tended at times to become absorbed apocalyptically into an intimate relation with the shortly expected advent of Christ to rule on earth with his saints in the eschatological Kingdom of Glory.” Milton’s concern with this eschatological kingdom was largely concerned with how “he related reformation of the church and state to the vision of the beatific rewards awaiting the just, pious, the worthy, the same vision which figured so persistently throughout his early poems” (131). Furthermore, when considering the antiprelatical tracts as a whole, Fixler equivocates. *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions*

point to Milton's "more apocalyptic mood" wherein "he seemed to believe that God would ensure the continuance in England of a stable state associated in some form with the approaching eschatological Kingdom of Christ." However, "less apocalyptically," as *The Reason of Church Government* demonstrated, "at times he assumed that with the restoration of old liberties and the strength of a new spiritual discipline the state would be shaped to a frame suitable for any great work" (94). Fixler cannot quite decide precisely which "Kingdom of Christ" Milton emphasizes: "hope in the imminent materialization of the Kingdom of Glory, or his faith in the possibility of the more realizable Bucerian *regnum Christi*" (97). The former refers to the literal thousand-year reign of Christ and his saints on earth while the latter the transformational ecclesiastical and societal plan of action suggested by exiled German reformer Martin Bucer to Edward VI in his treatise *De Regno Christi*. It was designed to create what was in effect a humanly and comprehensively realized reign of Christ on earth (32-33). Only "the hope in the imminent materialization of the Kingdom of Glory" adheres to the proper definition of the millennium, but Fixler seems to suggest that Milton entertained both of these distinct versions of Christ's kingdom. Ultimately, in Fixler's view, the descriptions of the Miltonic millennium in the antiprelatical tracts generally tended towards the Bucerian *regnum Christi*, as opposed to literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10. This is significant given Juliet Cummins' suggestion in *Milton and the Ends of Time* that Fixler's study is a key text in the "traditional assessment of Milton's millenarianism" (3).

2.2 "Unlimited Scepter"

Milton's third antiprelatical tract, *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, Against Smectymnuus* (1641) was a brutally sardonic rebuttal in dialog form of the pro-episcopacy claims in Bishop Joseph Hall's *A Defence of a Humble Remonstrance*, which had itself responded to a tract by Smectymnuus. As in *Of Reformation*, towards the end, Milton offers an apocalyptic prayer, wherein he implores Christ to effect a culmination of the English Reformation:

Come therefore O thou that hast the seven staves in thy right hand, appoint thy chosen *Priests* according to their Orders, and the courses of old, to minister before thee, and duely to dresse and powre out the consecrated

oyle into thy holy and ever-burning lamps; thou hast sent out the spirit of prayer upon thy servants over all the Land to this effect, and stirr'd up their vowes as the sound of many waters about thy Throne. . . . O perfect, and accomplish thy glorious acts; for men may leave their works unfinished, but thou art a God, thy nature is perfection; shouldst thou bring us from Egypt to destroy us in this Wildernesse though wee deserve; yet thy great name would suffer in the rejoycing of thine enemies, and the deluded hope of all thy servants. When thou hast settl'd peace in the Church, and righteous judgement in the Kingdome, then shall all thy Saintes addresse their voyces of joy, and triumph to thee, standing at the shoare of that red Sea into which our enemies had almost driven us . . . seeing the power of thy grace is not past away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine, but thy Kingdome is now at hand, and thou standing at the dore. Come forth out of thy Royall Chambers, O Prince of all the Kings of the earth, put on the visible roabes of thy imperiall Majesty, take up that unlimited Scepter which thy Almighty Father hath bequeath'd thee; for now the voice of thy Bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to bee renew'd. (706-07)

In the same way they have dogmatically interpreted “*Monarchy*” in the prayer in *Of Reformation*, scholars read “Kingdome” here as a reference to the thousand-year reign. Calling attention to the part of the prayer where Milton envisions “tak[ing] up a Harp” and singing “an elaborate Song to Generations” in thanksgiving to God, Lewalski writes that “Milton imagines himself as a prophet-poet singing of and in that millennial kingdom” (“millennium” 17). According to Revard, Milton “prays in language touched with apocalyptic fervor for ‘peace in the Church, and righteous judgment in the Kingdome’ . . . such as would occur at the millennium when Jesus assumed his throne” (42). However, Milton hopes Christ will soon “perfect” and fully “accomplish” the work of the Reformation in the final kingdom, not during the millennial one. The final sentence of the prayer, wherein “voice of [Christ’s] Bride” yearns for her heavenly spouse and “all creatures sigh to bee renew’d,” clearly references the “new heaven” and the “new earth” that will emerge after the dissolution of the universe of Revelation 21 (1). At that time the

“new Jerusalem” that will descend from heaven “prepared as a bride trimmed for her husband” in Revelation 21, and God shall “make all things new” (21:2, 5). In fact, earlier in the section of the tract that contains the prayer, Milton explicitly mentions the “new Jerusalem,” which in his apocalyptic fervor, already “descends from Heaven” without any help from the corrupt bishops (703). The “sound of many waters about thy Throne” is also an allusion to the final kingdom, where there is “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22.1). The bride or “wife” of the Lamb is mentioned elsewhere in Revelation (19:7-8, 18:22, 21: 9, 22:17), perhaps most notably in 18:22, wherein “the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more” in Babylon after it is destroyed by an angel. In the prayer, Milton imagines the English faithful, figured as the bride, trapped in the corrupt, Babylonian English church, longing for Christ to rescue them and lead them to the bliss of the final kingdom.

Moreover, when Milton writes that “thy Kingdome is now at hand, and thou standing at the dore,” he alludes to New Testament texts on the second coming that omit the millennium. In the Geneva Bible, Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29 read “*the kingdom of God is near, even at the door.*” The same locution appears in James 5:9: “behold, the judge standeth before the door.”⁵¹ In the first two texts from the synoptic gospels, the Last Judgment leads directly to the renewal of heaven and earth, without any thousand-year reign in between. According to Matthew 24, the “Son of man” shall “come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30) to “judge the world,” as the Geneva Bible notes suggest (note s). He shall then “gather together his elect, from the four winds, *and* from one end of the world unto the other” (24:31). The next event that follows, after the evangelist briefly interrupts the narrative with the parable of the fig tree (24:32-34), is the final destruction of the universe: “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (24:35). Similarly, when St. John in Revelation 21:1 says that he sees “a new heaven, and a new earth,” he mentions that “the first heaven, and

⁵¹ As Leonard notes, lines 130-31 in “Lycidas” (“But that two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite and smite no more”) allude to these passages. They therefore refer, like the apocalyptic prayer in *Animadversions* does, to the final kingdom, not the millennium. See page 61 above.

the first earth were passed away.” The “Kingdome” in the apocalyptic prayer of *Animadversions*, therefore, consists primarily of the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth, and secondarily of the second coming, the Last Judgment and the destruction of the universe, all three of which simply lay the groundwork for the New Jerusalem. Nothing in the prayer or in its source materials says anything about a thousand-year worldly kingdom of Christ.

Indeed, the reference to the “unlimited scepter which thy Almighty Father hath bequeath’d thee” suggests the opposite of a kingdom circumscribed by a thousand-year duration. According to Leonard, who credits the nineteenth century *Paradise Lost* editor John Williams with the observation, Milton had a predilection for the “Latin idiom in which past participial adjectives with a negative prefix deny not just the fact but the possibility of an occurrence (*invictus* means ‘invincible’, not just ‘unconquered’).” Milton employed it “often to affirm inviolable purity or unstoppable power.” Leonard provides a number of examples, including: “When the Lady in *A Masque* sees the ‘unblemish’t form of Chastity’ (215) and the Elder Brother calls Minerva ‘unconquer’d Virgin,’ ‘unblemish’t’ and ‘unconquer’d’ work like *invictus*. When Milton in his famous invocation says that God has dwelt from eternity in ‘unapproached light’ (III.4), ‘unapproached’ means ‘unapproachable’” (*Faithful* 104). And, when Eve “with eyes / Of conjugal attraction unreprou’d” affectionately leans on Adam so that “half her swelling Breast / Naked met his” (IV.492-96, qtd. in 104), “unreproved” does not mean “unreproved for an existing fault”; Eve is “beyond reproach” and so her innocence is uncompromised by her erotic glance of “conjugal attraction” (*Faithful* 103-04). I suggest that “unlimited” employs the same Latin locution in order to make a forceful and emphatic assertion: it is impossible to impose any limit whatsoever, including a temporal one of a thousand years, on the scepter’s power. With this phrase, Milton seems not only to omit the millennial reign but altogether deny the possibility that it could occur. After all, it does seem rather arbitrary and improper to limit the authority of an omnipotent God to a thousand years on earth. Leonard suggests elsewhere that a millenarian interpretation of the prayer might still work despite the “unlimited Scepter.” He cites Milton’s explanation in *De Doctrina* on how Christ’s kingdom can be said to be “everlasting (Dan. 7:14),” as several biblical passages suggest (“Millennium” 270). According to Milton,

“there will be no end to his kingdom *for all ages*, that is, while the ages of the world endure, until *time will be no more*, Rev. x. 6’ ([Yale] 627, qtd. in “Millennium” 270). The scepter could thus similarly be said to be unlimited as long as it lasted until the end of time. If Leonard had noted the Latin locution when he wrote this other article, he would have realized that it is impossible for even human history itself to circumscribe the power of the scepter.

2.3 “The boisterous & contradictional hand of a temporall, earthly, and corporeall Spirituality”

I submit that Milton’s omission of the millennium and emphasis on the final kingdom in the apocalyptic prayers in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversion* is consistent not only with the vitalism in his early poetry and prose, but with his aversion to the corrupt prelacy. He objects to the worldly church government and ceremoniousness of the English episcopacy on the grounds that it is fleshly, coercive, and theocratic, which are negative qualities that a future thousand-year reign of Christ with his saints on earth would also demonstrate. In other words, he cannot lambast the bishops’ secular power structure and then in the end extol what would be a similar regime of saints who rule in the name of Christ, even if they are to be appointed by Christ himself. Milton cares not for kingdoms or governments of this nature, whether future or past, but, rather, for the already existing, purely spiritual kingdom of Christ. In this kingdom, individual Christian liberty is preserved and union with God, which will be perfectly accomplished in the final kingdom, is imperfectly, but sufficiently and presently, attainable.

In the beginning section of *Of Reformation*, Milton vehemently writes about how the worldly prelatical church government utterly detracts from the scripture-based spiritual life of the individual believer. The “Doctrine of the Gospel” has been

planted by teachers Divinely inspir’d, and by them winnow’d, and sifted, from the chaffe of overdated Cermonies, and refin’d 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 himself in his Sacraments ordain'd. (519-20)

Because of their idolatrously ritualistic approach to worship, the prelates “might bring the inward acts of the *Spirit* to the outward, and customary ey-Service of the body, as if they could make *God* earthly, and fleshly, because they could not make themselves *heavenly* and *Spirituell*.” Here, the negative reference to an “earthly” and “fleshly” God suggests the incompatibility of Milton’s thought with the millenarian notion of a worldly and physical reign of Christ. For Milton, communion with the deity was purely spiritual, a “Divine intercour, betwixt *God*, and the Soule,” but the bishops would “draw downe” this spirituality, “yea, the very shape of *God himself*, into an exterior, and bodily forme, urgently pretending a necessity, and obligation of joyning the body in a formall reverence” (520-21). Alluding to the Anglican clergy’s misplaced fondness for incense, holy water, vestments, liturgy, and missals (521), Milton laments that

the Soule by this meanes of over-bodying her selfe, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible, and sensuous colleague the body in performance of *Religious* duties, her pineons now broken, and flagging, shifted off from her selfe, the labour of high soaring any more, forgot her heavenly flight, and left the dull, and droyling cacas to plod on in the old rode, and drudging Trade of outward conformity.

The believer becomes “fixt onely upon the *Flesh*, renders likewise the whole faculty of his apprehension, carnall, and all the inward acts of *worship* issuing from the native strength of the SOULE, run lavishly to the upper skin, and there harden in the crust of Formalitie” (522).

Of course, this whole opening specifically targets the bishops’ emphasis on ritual, but it reveals Milton’s deep commitment to the spiritual kingdom and his extreme distaste for worldly religiosity. Later on in the tract, Milton attacks the bishops’ theocratic tendencies:

now *Priests* not perceiving the heavenly brightnesse, and inward splendor of their more glorious *Evangelick Ministry* with as great ambition affect to be Kings; as in all their courses is easie to be observ’d. Their eyes ever

imminent upon worldly matters, their desires ever thirsting after worldly employments, in stead of diligent and fervent study in the Bible, they covet to be experts in Canons, and Decretals, which may inable them to judge, and interpose in temporall Causes, however pretended *Ecclesiastical*. Doe they not hord up *Pelfe*, seeke to be potent in *secular Strength*, in *State Affaires*, in *Lands*, *Lordships*, and *Demeanes*, to sway and carry all before them in *high Courts*, and *Privie Counsels*, to bring into their grasp, the *high*, and *principall Offices* of the *Kingdom*? (593)

All these suggest that he would not find a thousand-year physical, theocratic reign of Christ with his Saints appealing. Using the language of the tract's introductory section, the final kingdom Milton prays for at the end of *Of Reformation* does not "draw downe" "the very shape of *God himself*, into an exterior, and bodily forme"; rather, the redeemed are, as the Gospell had been, "refin'd 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." Indeed, just before the apocalyptic prayer, he reiterates his bleak view of the English episcopacy: "We have tri'd already, & miserably felt what *ambition worldly glory & immoderate wealth* can do, what a boisterous & contradicional hand of a temporall, earthly, and corporeall Spirituality can availe to the edifying of Christs holy *Church*" (613). Indeed, the millennial kingdom might also be described as reign involving "a temporall, earthly, and corporeall Spirituality."

Animadversions echoes some of these concerns. Castigating Bishop Hall and his cohorts, Milton writes,

we know you feare . . . lest you should lose that superfluity of riches and honour which your party usurp. And whosoever covets and so earnestly labours to keep such an incumbring surcharge of earthly things, cannot but have an earth-quake still in his bones . . . you are not dieted, nor your loynes girt for spirituall valour, and Christian warfare, the luggage is too great that followes your Camp; your hearts are there, you march heavily. How shall we think you have not carnall feare while we see you so subject to carnall desire?" (665-66)

God's "reforming Spirit" fights against the bishops' "humane Principals, and carnall sense, the pride of flesh that still cry'd up Antiquity, Custome, Canons, Counsels and Lawes, and cry'd down the truth for noveltie, schism, profanenesse and Sacriledge" (705).

I suggest that, though he never explicitly said so, Milton was inclined to believe in the Augustinian conception of the millennium, that is, a wholly spiritual and indefinitely long kingdom that began around the time of the incarnation and would continue until the end of the world, though some Protestant exegetes placed its end in the eleventh century (Hotson 169-70, Jue 94, note 18). As he writes in *Of Reformation*, in a section on the "Primitive Pastors" of the early church who, in contrast with the English bishops, eschewed "all worldly matters as clogs, and indeed derogations, and debasements to their high calling," "Pilate heard once our Saviour *Christ* professing that *his Kingdom was not of this world*, he thought the man could not stand much in *Caesars* light, nor much indammage the Roman Empire: for if the life of *Christ* be hid to this world, much more is his Scepter unoperative, but in spirituall things" (576). In addition, Milton may allude to the "heavenly city" in Augustine's *City of God* early in the tract (Augustine 193-99): criticizing the "foul errors, the ridiculous wresting of Scripture, the Heresies, [and] the vanities thick sown" in works of the early church fathers but possibly enlisting Augustine on his side (551), Milton imagines that the bishops of his day might censure the early church by saying that it lacked "Church government" with "temporall and spirituall power" to enforce doctrine—"as if the *heavenly City* could not support it selfe without the props and buttresses of secular Authoritie" (554, my emphasis). According to Augustine, "the heavenly city" of the faithful in the world must "obey the laws of the earthly city" with which it coexists (195), but Milton suggests that this does not necessitate theocracy.

Milton's description of the kingly function of Christ's mediatorial office in Book 1, Chapter 15 of *De Doctrina* strongly suggests his inclination towards an Augustinian millennium: "The kingly function is that by which Christ, made king by God the father, rules and preserves the church gained by him, principally by internal law and spiritual power, [and] conquers and subdues his enemies" ([Oxford] 505). Later, he elaborates on

what he means by “Principally by internal law.” I shall quote at length because the entirety of passage demonstrates just how strong his convictions are, as far as the spiritual kingdom is concerned:

[John] 18: 36: *my kingdom is not of this world; if it were. . .* Hence too the law of the kingdom, the gift of the spirit, was given at Jerusalem on the same fiftieth day after Christ had suffered, as the law of Moses was given [on the fiftieth day] after the Passover on Mount Sinai, Acts 2: 1, in order that it be shown that the law of flesh and slavery had been abolished by the law of freedom and spirit, the old law by the new. Rom. 14: 17: *for [God’s] kingdom is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy through the holy spirit*; Ps. 68: 18 with Eph. 4: 8, etc.: *he gave gifts to human kind, namely spiritual ones*, 2 Cor. 10: 4; 1 John 5: 4: *this is the victory which vanquished [the world]*. From these facts the pre-eminence of Christ’s kingdom above all the rest shines out, equally with its divine principle; seeing indeed that he rules not only bodies, as the civil magistrate does, but above all else mind and conscience; and not by force and bodily arms but by those things which in the world’s judgement are weakest. Wherefore also all external coercion must be absent from the kingdom of Christ, which is the church. ([Oxford] 505)

Milton will write about the less spiritual, earthly millennium in Book 1, Chapter 33, which, as I shall discuss shortly is a non-ideological and perfunctory reference, but Milton significantly says little about it here. He only says that “The kingdom of Christ is also called the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. Of grace, because [it is] also ‘the kingdom of the heavens’, Matt. 3: 2, *and is already coming*. Of glory, because it is going to be more manifest at the second coming” and then announces that he will discuss the latter in Chapter 33 (507). The kingdom of grace (or “of the heavens”) is this spiritual kingdom, and the kingdom of glory is the kingdom of the second coming. As we shall see, in Chapter 33, there is a lack of clarity as to whether the kingdom of glory and millennial kingdom are equivalent or whether the millennium is merely an element of the kingdom of glory. But here, in Chapter 15, Milton does not define it in any detail, suggesting only that it is a “more manifest” aspect of the primarily spiritual kingdom of

Christ and that it will emerge during the second coming. I contend that Milton is downplaying the contrast between the spiritual kingdom and the earthly millennium in his enthusiasm for the former, which is clearly evident in the passage. Milton explicitly states that Christ's kingdom is "principally" spiritual. Christ may also work through his kingdom's "divine principle," that is, his "divine nature" as the Son of God (*De Doctrina* [Oxford] 135), which manifests in ordinary and extraordinary providence; in this way, he governs "bodies, as the civil magistrate does." But "above all else" he rules "mind and conscience." In particular, Milton emphasizes Christian liberty as the Mosaic "law of flesh and slavery" that has been superseded by the Pentacostal "law of freedom and spirit." Crucially, reflecting the de-emphasis of divine intervention through miracles I discussed in the last chapter, "coercion must be absent from the kingdom of Christ." Finally, Milton provides only a relatively small number of proof-texts, but they succinctly attest that the kingdom is "*within*" and "*not of this world*" (505).

To illustrate how Milton's adherence to the spiritual kingdom is difficult to reconcile with millenarian doctrine, I shall briefly consider these passages from *De Doctrina*, *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions* in the light of an important contemporary millenarian pamphlet, John (or Henry) Archer's *The Personall Reigne of Christ upon the Earth*, which was published in 1641 (1st edition) and 1642 (2nd edition), about the same time as the two antiprelatical tracts. Along with several other publications on the dogma, it helped spark millenarian excitement during the tumultuous 1640s (Revard 42, 47-48). Like Milton, Archer admits that Christ already rules a "Providentiall" kingdom and a "spirituall" one. The former is "that universall influence and Soveraigne power, by which Iesus Christ manageth the Affaires of all the World, both in Heaven, Earth, and under the Earth" as the Father's "Viceroy, or immediate Administrator of all things" (1); the latter, "that Soveraignty, which by his Word and spirit, he exerciseth over the consciences of some people, and in special the Elect of God the Father" (2). However, while Milton favors the spiritual kingdom, Archer emphasizes the thousand-year millennial reign, which he calls Christ's "third" or "Monarchicall" kingdom (2, 50). While Christ will not govern "by tyranny, oppression, and sensually," he will do so "in a *worldly* visible *earthly* glory" and "with *honour*, *peace*, *riches*, and whatsoever in and of the world is not sinfull." It shall be "a Soveraignty which Christ shall administer over all the Earth, in a

visible and *earthly* manner, for *splendor, riches, peace, &c.* though not in a *fleshly* or sinful manner” (2-3, emphasis mine). Although Archer strives to mitigate it, the unspiritual materiality of this kingdom is not entirely unlike “that superfluity of riches and honour,” the “incumbring surcharge of earthly things” (*Animadversions* 666) and the “temporall, earthly, and corporeall Spirituality” (*Of Reformation* 613) that Milton charges the bishops as having. Furthermore, this “Monarchicall” kingdom sharply contrasts with the “universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth” in *Of Reformation*. The former entails the limited, thousand-year reign of solely Christ on earth, and the latter, the eternal, unlimited rule of the Trinity in the renewed heaven and earth.

Archer’s “Monarchicall kingdom” also shows signs of coercive theocracy. Christ will first “come from heaven visibly” (15), “raise up” the Saints from the dead (16), and then conduct a “partiall and more strict” judgment day that will initiate this kingdom (12). The second and Last Judgment will occur at the close of the thousand years. During the “partiall” judgment, he “will destroy the wicked people on earth . . . who will grow to agree and combine against the Saints,” but he will not destroy all of them. Because the Last Judgment is still to come and because “by the end of Christs Kingdome great Nations of wicked must be in the world, called *Gog and Magog, Rev. 20 7, 8*” during the final apocalyptic battle with Satan, Christ will only “ruine the Armies” of the wicked who will challenge the Saints. He will “make the rest slaves to the Churches” (21, 25). He will also, as part of the “partiall judgment,” “examine, blame, and shame the Saints who are alive at that his coming, if they be found to have walked loosely, he will not kill them nor change them in a moment, that is to be done at his last coming to judge all” (21). After thus establishing his kingdom, he will re-ascend to heaven and leave behind a theocracy, giving the kingdom “to the Saints, that is, to them immediately to Rule, therefore saith *Matth. 19.28. they shall judge on Thrones the twelve Tribes*, that is, they and all Beleevers shall rule the World, in which the twelve Tribes shall bee chiefe [the Jews having converted (25)], and they shall not onely rule as Kings but *as Priests, Rev. 20.4. that is, Discipline their Soules as well as rule their bodies*” (22, emphasis mine). Christ only will return to earth again during the Last Judgment, after which he will surrender the kingdom to the Father, as 1 Cor. 24 suggests, and the world will end. In Archer’s view,

this will be a final, definitive end of the world. As opposed to what Milton believed, then, Archer thought that the renewal of heaven and earth was to occur during the millennium (10). After Christ gives up the kingdom, the blessed would be glorified in the “highest Heavens above the Sunne and time” (13). Therefore, “there shall be general holinesse of all persons, so there shall be much Holinesse, greater then ever was” so that, oddly and contradictorily, “it shall be a life much of sense, [and] little (in comparison) of faith” (28). The protracted, earthly reign and the partial judgment that was to inaugurate it necessitate coercion, theocratic governance, a material show of glory and authority, and even slavery, all of which were antithetical to the spiritual kingdom and the Christian liberty that Milton was committed to. Milton yearned for unity with God in a renewed heaven and earth that refined and perfected the spiritual kingdom. He was not looking for another new regime of the Saints that would materialize the New Jerusalem. A millennial kingdom would be tantamount to a reversal of typology in the reinstatement of the old “law of the flesh and slavery” and the abolition of the new “law of freedom and spirit.”

2.4 “The Roman *Antichrist* . . . bred up by Constantine”

Revard (44) and Leonard (“Millennium” 268-70) have suggested that Milton could not have believed in a past millennium because of his negative opinion of Constantine, which is evident in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions*. In *Of Reformation*, Milton writes that clerical and prelatical worldliness, corruption, ritualism, and secular power originated during the reign of the emperor, who

appointed certain times for Fasts and Feasts, built stately Churches, gave large Immunities to the Clergie, great Riches and Promotions to *Bishops*, gave and minister’d occasion to bring in a Deluge of Ceremonies So that in this manner the *Prelates* both then and ever since comming from a meane, and Plebeyan *Life* on a sudden to be Lords of stately Palaces, rich furniture, delicious fare, and *Princely* attendance, thought the plaine and homespun verity of *Christs* Gospell unfit any longer to hold their Lordships acquaintance. (556-57)

Indeed, Milton’s vehemence is palpable in the fierce alliteration and the clash of sound and sense that, for example, suggest that the emperor’s fasts led to feasts and that his

prelates were princely. According to Milton, the church had already by “insensible degrees welk’^t and impair’d,” in Constantine’s time and that of his successors “with large steps went downe hill decaying” (557). Constantine “marr’d all in the church” and “though perhaps not wittingly, set open a dore to more mischiefe in Christendome” (558, 560). It was quite the opposite of a Golden Age: “at this time *Antichrist* began first to put forth his horn” and the future “Roman *Antichrist*” would be “bred up by *Constantine*” (557). In *Animadversions*, Milton refers to “*Constantinian* silver” that the proper study of scripture will destroy along with the other aspects of a materialistic episcopacy that is dependent on the questionable writings of the church fathers (698-99).

To counter this objection, I suggest that because Milton so deeply believed in the spiritual kingdom, he did entertain the possibility of a purely internal, Augustinian millennium that had already begun and that was completely independent of any external, worldly kingdom. According to Jeffrey Jue, prior to espousing millenarianism, Joseph Mede similarly believed in “a progressive advancement of Christ’s kingdom through his church,” that is, “a more spiritual reign through the Gospel ministry entrusted to the church.” Jue’s discussion of this essentially Augustinian perspective on the thousand years will demonstrate how Milton might have subscribed to a past millennium despite his attitude towards Constantine. Mede’s “spiritual reign”

was decisively inconsistent with a reign manifested in political terms. Clearly this was not a description of a millenarian theocratic reign of Christ. Even more, this interpretation of a spiritual reign allowed the millennium to be co-terminus [sic] with any period in history where evil and unrighteousness still existed, even during the period of the great apostasy. If the character of the millennial reign of Christ was spiritual, then it could just as well extend within an era where corrupt earthly powers were still active. . . . For Augustine, and those who followed the Augustinian tradition, the reign of Christ was seen as a thoroughly spiritual reign, with no geo-political manifestation. (*Heaven* 94, 94, note 18)

⁵² To wilt, wither, fade (*OED* v.1).

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, most Protestants believed in a past millennium. Some thought that the thousand years began at some point during Christ's first advent and that it ended in the eleventh century, while others saw the reign of Constantine as starting point and the dawn of the Reformation in the 1300s, when the Pope began to be identified as the Antichrist, as the end point (Hotson 161, 164, 169-70).

But, according to Howard Hotson, as the century progressed, the "accumulating evidence of serious imperfections within the early as well as late medieval church," including "corruption" and "ecclesiastical persecution, oppression, and suppression of the Gospel" (165-167) made this view problematic. An increasing number of religious thinkers situated the emergence of the Antichrist in the papacy during this past millennium (174-75), and Milton was among them. As *Of Reformation* suggests, the Antichrist was already at work during the time of Constantine. In one sense, this would not have been an issue for Milton. The "Roman Antichrist" as a political figure had no real bearing on the spiritual kingdom, as this inward realm was separate from the external world. But according to Augustine in *The City of God*, the "last persecution of the Antichrist" will occur "for three years and six months" after Satan is released at the end of the thousand years (327-33). As Hotson puts it, in that text, the "brief period of Satan's release from bondage is explicitly identified with the final persecution of Antichrist; and in the dominant medieval tradition which derived from [Augustine], the reign of the Antichrist was almost invariably situated in the brief interval between the end of the millennium and the Second Advent" (162).⁵³ The fact that the Antichrist had been active in Rome during what was supposed to be the past millennium suggested that the first thousand years after Christ could not have constituted the millennial reign, which

⁵³ Although he does not explicitly say so, Augustine seems to be equating the defeat of the beast, which was identified as the Antichrist in Milton's time (Hill, *Antichrist* 4), the false prophet, and the earthly armies in Revelation 19:19-21 with the defeat of Satan and the another set of earthly armies (including those of Gog and Magog) in Revelation 20:7-10. This is in spite of the fact that, in the latter passage, the beast and the false prophet had already been cast into the lake of fire, into which Satan is also thrown. David Pareus makes the same identification. See page 117 below. Milton himself, by using 2 Thessalonians 2:8 as a proof-text for the final apocalyptic battle, also suggests that the final persecution of the Antichrist will occur after the release of Satan (*De Doctrina* 873, 887).

consequently had yet to begin. Despite Milton's emphasis on the spiritual kingdom, the Antichrist had a very real and significant presence in the world for him, and he needed to account for it. I suggest that he had difficulty relegating Satan and the Antichrist to the world outside of the inner spiritual realm of the believer because he was very cognizant, as he discusses in *Of Reformation*, of how the Antichrist, working through the ritualistic English prelacy, was severely detrimental to the spiritual kingdom (522).

I contend that Milton was able, at least temporarily, to solve the problem of the Roman Antichrist with the help of David Pareus and his *A Commentary upon the Divine Revelation of the Apostle and Evangelist, John* (1618, translated into English from the Latin in 1644). As I discussed in the previous chapter, Pareus seems to have influenced the Nativity Ode. Pareus believed in a past millennium, but crucially, as I have mentioned, he did not think that Satan was completely restrained. In Pareus's opinion, Satan is bound only so that "neither he himselfe, nor his Emissary Angels could any longer uphold Paganisme, or hinder the course of the Gospell among the Gentiles. The *binding of Satan* therefore must not be understood absolutely, as if he then ceased altogether to do mischief, but comparatively, & with limitation, that he could no longer bewitch the nations with such grosse Idol-worship" (504). Later, Pareus discusses in detail how the Antichrist's corrupt church might be reconciled with a past millennium. I shall quote at length because the passage comprehensively covers Milton's concerns:

But thou wilt say; Did not Satan in the first three hundred yeers after the descension of the Angell [i.e., the beginning of the millennium], most cruelly afflict the Church by the Romane Tyrants: and in the three hundred following yeers, defiled the Christian world with most grosse heresies: and in the four hundred succeeding yeers, raised up the *Romane Antichrist out of the bottomlesse Pit*, giving him his Throne and great power, working with all manner of unrighteousnesse and cruelty in the very heart of the Church? How then could Satan be said to *be bound these thousand yeers*, in which he raged so outrageously?

I answer: The binding of Satan (as before I said) may not be absolutely understood, as if he could not, or did not hurt the Church at all, but restrictively unto the cause expressed in the Text, so farre as he was then

restrained from seducing the Nations any longer, that they should embrace the Faith of Christ. To this *binding of Satan* it is sufficient, that then he could not by the Tyrants, Iewes, or Philosophers, hinder any longer the propagation of the Gospell among all Nations.

Pareus here suggests that the past millennium had put an end to the external persecution of the Church by pagans, but then he immediately continues by emphasizing that it did not prevent internal corruption and schism:

And therefore howsoever in great number, the Gentiles were converted to Christ, and Paganisme every where decayed; yet no marvaile, though Satan did rage in his principall members, and breathed out threatenings by the Tyrants of the Romane Empire, and by Hereticks in the Church it selfe: Hence arose so many persecutions of the Saints, and such great conflicts of the *Church* with Hereticks, during sixe hundred yeers: neither is it strange that *Antichrist* was then raised up by Satan: for seeing hee was bound himself, he gave *his throne and power to Antichrist*, that the *Beast* might be the *Vicar of the Dragon* while he was in bonds, and the more furiously exercise all his power. (508-09)

Milton, as I have mentioned, praised Pareus and his commentary on Revelation in *Reason of Church-Government* (1.815) and mentions him and the commentary again in the introduction to *Samson Agonistes*. In the light of the passage above, Pareus's impact on the Nativity Ode becomes clearer. That work did emphasize the end of paganism and allude to the partial binding of Satan: "Th'old Dragon under ground / In straiter limits bound, / Not half so far casts his usurped sway" (168-70). This is an early piece, however, written in 1629, and Milton may have changed his mind by 1641, but he also hints at this partial binding in *De Doctrina*. In Book 1, Chapter 9, "On the special governance of Angels:" he writes, "the proper place" for "evil angels" is "the Abyss, whence one may not leave without permission." The devils are "sometimes . . . able to wander over the whole earth, the air, and even heaven to carry out God's judgments." Tellingly, Milton offers as one of the proof-texts the millenarian Revelation 20.3: "*he* [an angel] *hurled him* [Satan] *into the Abyss and closed it up*" (353), suggesting that Satan had already been bound in the past and hence that the millennium has concluded.

Moreover, in *Tetrachordon*, he writes about how an “unjust restriction of divorce” effected by a canon law of Pope Gregory I in the 6th century “was in a manner the first loosning of Antichrist” and how “the contemning of that restraint by *Henry 8* whose divorce he [i.e. the Papal Antichrist] oppos’d” was the “first meanes of his [the Antichrist’s] fall heer in England” (706). The “first loosning of Antichrist” suggests that the Antichrist (by virtue of Satan’s binding at the beginning of the millennium) had also been bound, and that thus the millennium was in the past. Meanwhile, the “first meanes of his fall” calls to mind the final defeat of Satan and the Antichrist in during the apocalyptic battle after the millennium and prior to the Last Judgment and the establishment of the final kingdom.

I suggest that Pareus’s commentary became less persuasive over time for Milton, and consequently that his acknowledgment of the millennium in *De Doctrina* is in accord with a future millennium, but Milton’s familiarity with and admiration of Pareus indicates that Pareus’s notion of a past millennium might have appealed to him between 1629 and the early 1640s, and quite possibly even later than that. Moreover, for Pareus, that past millennium was a spiritual one. He refuted the claims of the millenarians among the church fathers who anticipated the “corporall Resurrection of Martyrs, or *Golden Kingdom* of Christ on earth” in the future (525) and encouraged millenarians of his present time to “diligently consider” whether the prophecies of Revelation 20:4 concern “the Kingdome of the Martyrs in Heaven, or not rather of Christs Spirituall Kingdome and State of the Church of the Gospell on Earth, partly already fulfilled, and partly not, but in time to bee accomplished” (510). Pareus also believed that as opposed to envisioning an imminent Golden Age,

the whole Scripture holds forth, that the last times shall not be voluptuous in the least, but difficult and sorrowful unto the Church in this world: Besides Christ did often fortell that his Kingdom should not be earthly: *My kingdome is not of this world. The world shall rejoyce, but yee shall mourne: In the world yee shall have tribulation. Then shalbe great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world unto this time. Watch therefore, that ye may be found worthy to escape all these things. When the sonne of man commeth shall he finde Faith on the earth.*

Through manifold tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This know that in the last dayes perilous (or difficult) times shall come, &c. These and such like testimonies of Scripture: which speake of the afflicted state of the last times, doe abundantly refute the Millenaries Fiction. (526)

For both Milton and Pareus, believers merited blessedness by enduring these hard times faithfully.

Pareus's conception of tumultuous end times, which follow a millennium wherein Satan and the Antichrist are active, is consistent with Milton's own view, in *Paradise Lost*, of the troubled world external to the spiritual kingdom. After the Son's resurrection and ascension into heaven, the world shall "go on, / To the good malignant, to bad men benign, / Under her own weight groaning" until the Last Judgment (12.537-39). In particular, the "grievous wolves" of the corrupt Roman and Anglican clergy "all the sacred mysteries of heaven, To their own vile advantages shall turn / Of lucre and ambition" (12.509-11) and "Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force / On every conscience" (12.521-22). Consequently, "truth shall retire / Bestruck with slanderous darts, and works of faith / Rarely be found" (12.535-37). Nevertheless, the Son

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 their hearts shall write,
To guide them in all truth, and also arm
With spiritual armour, able to resist
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts
What man can do against them, not afraid,
Though to the death, against such cruelties
With inward consolations recompensed,
And oft supported so as shall amaze
Their proudest persecutors. (12.485-97)

Those "who in the worship persevere, / Of spirit and truth" constitute the church that is the basis of the Son's spiritual kingdom (12.532-33). For them, the challenges of this

world provide opportunities to earn God's favor and "unfinished glorification." As Milton writes in *De Doctrina*,

The perseverance of the saints is the gift of God who preserves, whereby those who are foreknown, chosen, reborn, and sealed through the holy spirit persevere right to the end in faith and in God's grace, and do not entirely fall away through any force or guile of the devil or the world, so long as they do not fail their own selves, and provided they maintain faith and charity with all their might. (657-59)

That the saints preserve "right to the end" literally means that individual saints will endure the trials of the world to the end of their respective lives, but the phrase is also open to the possibility that the saints are collectively already persevering until the end of time, which suggests that, at least in this section of *De Doctrina* (Book 1, Chapter 25 on "Unfinished Glorification"), Milton does not anticipate a future millennium.

I shall now briefly return to the reference to Constantine in *Animadversions*, which I submit touches on the world of this spiritual kingdom (or past millennium), rather than on an earthly or future millennium. In that section of the tract, the unreliable writings of the church fathers that the bishops are so fond of are apocalyptically figured as the "*Nebuchadnezzars* Image" from the Book of Daniel, which Milton describes as a "livelesse *Colossus*," a "carved Gyant terribly menacing to children." Milton tells the Remonstrant that scripture will "crumble it like the chaffe of the Summer threshing floores, as well the gold of those Apostolick Successors that you boast of, as your *Constantinian* silver, together with the iron, the brasse, and the clay of those muddy and strawy ages that follow" (700-01). This is a reference to Neuchadnezzar's dream, wherein a series of worldly monarchies, represented by gold, silver, brass, and iron-and-clay body parts of a "great image," are destroyed by a stone which had been "cut without hands." The Stone, which was seen a symbol for the Church or Christ himself, then became a "great mountain." Millenarians interpreted the mountain to be the future thousand-year reign while non-millenarians thought it to be the church (Daniel 2:31-35, 44, Revard 54). Leonard suggests that by associating Constantine with the second, silver earthly kingdom of Neuchadnezzar's dream, his reign cannot be part of a past or future millennium. Moreover, Leonard presents this as evidence of Milton's belief in the thousand-year

reign. According to Leonard, non-millenarians believed that the worldly monarchies included Babylon (gold head), Persia (silver breast and arms), Greece (bronze belly and thighs), and ancient Rome (iron legs and iron-and-clay feet), so for them the stone (Christ) had already demolished these kingdoms, and the great mountain had already appeared in the church. Millenarians, on the other hand, thought that the iron- and-clay kingdom included the Roman church (and at times the ritualistic English church as well). In their view, the stone had yet to devastate the earthly kingdoms and inaugurate the millennial kingdom. Since Milton references the bishops from the English and early churches, he must be millenarian (“Millennium” 267). However, the passage does not necessarily suggest this. First of all, Milton’s primary concern here is the current spiritual kingdom of Christ, not the eschatological one. Standing in for the stone in the passage are “Scriptures of God which hee hath left us as the just and adequate measure of truth, fitted, and proportion’d to the diligent study, memory, and use of every faithful man” which constitute a weapon that destroys the idolatrous reliance on the writings of the church fathers (i.e., “*Nebuchadnezzars Image*”) (700). Scripture serves as the basis for a sound spiritual Christian life for individual believers and for radical renewal for the church as a whole. Its destruction of aspects of corrupt ecclesiastical kingdoms will not result in an earthly, millennial kingdom but in a successful English Reformation. It does not obliterate “the iron, the brasse, and the clay” ages, but “the iron, the brasse, and the clay” (i.e., the continued prelatical materialism) of “those muddy and strawy ages that follow” (700-01). Thus, as the great mountain will be the renovated English church, Milton’s passage mirrors the non-millenarian version of the king’s dream in Daniel, not the millenarian one. In any case, as I shall discuss in my chapter on *Paradise Regained*, wherein the Danielic stone crucially appears, I suggest that Milton’s interest in this biblical passage lies not in the establishment of a millennial kingdom, but rather, in the destruction of all earthly monarchies in order to make way for the renewed heaven and earth.

2.5 The Augustinian-Parean Millennium and *The History of Britain*

At this point, I shall turn to Milton's *The History of Britain* and present this as a test case for how the Augustinian-Parean tradition of the past millennium operated in Milton's thought. Though the end of paganism ushered in spiritual transformation, it was no Golden Age but rather a time of "manifold tribulations" through which the faithful could "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." In *The History*, published during the Restoration in 1670, though written in the 1640s and 1650s (Lewalski, *Life* 346), Milton says very little about Constantine, only saying that he was named Emperor by his father in Britain and might have been born there, that his mother Helena might have been the daughter of a local ruler, that he left the island and came back after four years to "settle or alter the state of things heer," and that he died (112-14). Although Milton does not disparage Constantine, throughout the period covered by the history, that is, from the island's early times up to the Norman conquest, the world was certainly "Under her own weight groaning" (*Paradise Lost* 12.539). For example, during the reign of the Saxon King Ecbert, the seven kingdoms of Britain were "reduc't . . . under the power of one man; and him one of the worthiest" (257):

But when God hath decreed servitude on a sinful nation, fitted by their own vices for no condition but servile, all Estates of Government are alike unable to avoid it. God had purpos'd to punish our instrumental punishers, though now Christians, by other Heathen [i.e., the Danes], according to his Divine Retaliation; invasion for invasion, spoil for spoil, destruction for destruction. The *Saxons* were now full as wicked as the *Britans* were at their arrival, brok'n with luxurie and sloth, either secular or superstitious; for laying aside the exercise of Arms, and the study of all virtuous knowledge, some betook them to over-worldly or vicious practice. (259)

Moreover, the "grievous wolves" in the clergy early on undermined the faith and forced "every conscience" (*Paradise Lost* 12.508, 521-22). Truth had retired "Bestruck with slanderous darts." "Works of faith" could "Rarely be found" (*Paradise Lost* 12.535-37). Many of the Saxons degenerated into

religious Idleness and Solitude, which brought forth nothing but vain and delusive visions; easily perceiv'd such by thir commanding of things, either not belonging to the Gospel, or utterly forbidden, Ceremonies, Reliques, Monasteries, Masses, Idols; add to these ostentation of Alms, got oftentimes by rapine and oppression, or intermixt with violent and lustful deeds, sometimes prodigally bestow'd as the expiation of crueltie and bloodshed. What longer suffering could there be, when Religion it self grew so void of sincerity, and the greatest shews of purity were impur'd? (259)

As Milton observed in the apocalyptic prayer at the end of *Of Reformation*, the history of the land had in those times been one of repeated invasions and “the sad and ceaseles revolution of our swift and thick-comming sorrowes” (614).

Nevertheless, the conversion of England to Christianity had been effective and sincere, and the workings of the Holy Spirit, that is, the “Comforter” that the Son had sent after his ascension (*Paradise Lost* 12.486), is evident in the few outstanding and faithful kings. Milton initially highlights the ceremoniousness of St. Augustine of Canterbury and his monks when they first present themselves to King Ethelbert of Kent in order to begin the conversion:

[The king] schose a place to meet them under the open Sky, possest with an old perswasion, that all Spells, if they should use any to deceive him, so it were not within doors, would be unavailable. They on the other side call'd to his presence, advancing for thir Standard, a silver cross, and the painted image of our Saviour, came slowly forward singing thir solemn Litanies: which wrought in *Ethelbert* more suspition perhaps that they us'd enchantments. (188)

By doing this, Milton sarcastically points out that Antichristian elements promoting idolatry are already operating at this point in history. That the king “perhaps” suspects St. Augustine employs superstitious magic is dripping with Miltonic irony. It might be the millennium and the binding of Satan is reflected in the end of paganism in England, but, as Pareus suggests, the thousand years need not be free from internal corruption. Still, when the monks “preach'd to him, and all in that assembly, the tidings of Salvation,”

Ethelbert found that “Fair indeed and ample are the promises which ye bring, and such things as have the appearance in them of much good” and gave them “free leave to preach their doctrine where they pleased” (188-89). Augustine and his party then through their preaching and “by example of thir holy life, spent in prayer, fasting, and continual labour in the conversion of Souls, they won many; on whose bounty and the Kings, receiving only what was necessary, they subsisted.” Consequently, the “King himself convinc’ t by thir good life & miracles, became Christian, and was baptized, then multitudes daily, conforming to thir Prince, thought it honour to be reckon’ d among those of his faith” (189). Assessing *Ethelbert*, “the first Christian King of *Saxons*,” Milton writes that he was “no less a favourer of all civility in that rude age. He gave Laws and Statutes after the example of *Roman* Emperors, written with the advice of his sagest Counsellors, but in the *English* tongue, and observ’ d long after. Wherein his special care was to punish those who had stoln ought from Church or Churchman, thereby shewing how gratefully he receiv’ d at thir hands the Christian faith” (195-96).

The link between faith and inspired, good governance is also seen in the case of King (and Saint) Oswald of Northumbria, who was noted for “his Devotion, Humility, and Almes-deeds” as well as for his “preaching in Scotch or bad English.” Oswald “easily reduc’ d both Kingdoms of *Northumberland* as before into one; nor of [his brother] *Edwins* Dominion lost any part, but enlarg’ d it rather; over all the fowr *British* Nations, *Angles*, *Britans*, *Picts*, and *Scots*, exercising regall Authority” (205-06). After vanquishing *Northumberland*, he “took care to instruct again the people in Christianity. Sending therefore to the Scottish Elders [he had lived in exile in Scotland]. . . among whom he had receav’ d Baptism, requested of them som faithful Teacher, who might again settle Religion in his Realm, which the late troubles had impar’ d; they as readily hearkning to his request, send *Aidan* a Scotch Monk and Bishop, but of singular zeal and meekness, with others to assist him” (205). Oswald “reign’ d 8 years, worthy also as might seem of longer life” but died in battle (207). Similarly, Ecbert reached a “full highth of glory, having . . . enjoy’ d his Conquest seaven peacefull years,” and, as I mentioned above, was “one of the worthiest” kings. Milton is not explicit about any particularly godly acts on his part, but he implies that the king was faithful. According to Milton, one of the Kingdoms Ecbert conquers, Northumbria, is one of utter depravity. It

suffered from “general ignorance and decay of learning”; there was a “neglect of breeding up youth in Scriptures”; and the “spruce and gay apparel of thir Preists and Nuns” betrayed “thir vain and wanton minds” and “wanton deeds.” All these social ills resulted in the following iniquities: “Altars defil’d with perjuries, Cloisters violated with Adulteries, the Land polluted with blood of thir Princes, civil dissentions among the people, and finally all the same vices which [the historian monk] *Gildas* alleg’d of old to have ruin’d the *Britans*” (255-56). We can infer that Ecbert’s glorious rule over the seven kingdoms involved a return to proper religious observance and spirituality.

Perhaps the best example of the faithful king is Alfred, who was “exemplary in devotion, having collected into a Book certain Prayers and Psalms, which he carried ever with him in his Bosome to use on all occasions.” Because, like Oswald, Alfred does, through devotional prayer, “in the worship persevere / Of spirit and truth” (*Paradise Lost* 12.532-33), the Holy Spirit can “guide” him “in all truth” and “arm” him “With spiritual armour” (12.490-91):

from the time of his undertaking regal charge, no man more patient in hearing cases, more inquisitive in examining, more exact in doing justice, and providing good Laws, which are yet extant; more severe in punishing unjust judges or obstinate offenders . . . so that justice seem’d in his daies not to flourish only, but to triumph; no man then hee more frugal of two pretious things in mans life, his time and his revenue; no man wiser in the disposal of both. (*History of Britain* 290-91)

He had a “noble minde, which renderd him the mirror of Princes.” Milton even considered writing an epic about his life (Lewalski, *Life* 348). Edgar was yet another faithful king: he “had no War all his Reign; yet always well prepar’d for War, govern’d the Kingdom in great Peace, Honour, and Prosperity, gaining thence the Sirname of Peaceble, much extoll’d for Justice, Clemency, and all Kingly Vertues.” Milton, however, remarks that the monks who wrote his chronicles might have been biased due to Edgar’s “building so many Monasteries” (321), which again hints at internal strife during the Augustinian-Parean millennium. Milton does not explicitly state that Edgar engaged in devotions or similar acts of faith, but there is some indication that he came under the positive influence of St. Dunstan, the “strenuous Bishop, zealous without dread of person,

and for ought appears, the best of many Ages, if he busied not himself too much in secular affairs” (334). Upon gaining the throne, Edgar recalled Dunstan, who had been banished by his predecessor, from exile, and he was “sharply reprov’d by *Dunstan*” for a minor sexual escapade, for which he “submitted to 7 years penance, and for that time to want his Coronation: But why he had it not before, is left unwritt’n” (321, 327). According to Sir Frank Stenton, he delayed his coronation at the suggestion of Dunstan, “who was strongly influenced by the parallel between the anointing of a king and the consecration of a priest,” in order to first come “to full maturity of mind and conduct” (qtd. in 323, note 32). Edgar’s death in A.D. 975 roughly corresponds to the end point of a past millennium (Pareus thought that end point to be 1073, the year Gregory VII became Pope): “his vertues were so many and so mature, he dying before the Age wherein wisdom can in others attain to any ripeness: however with him dy’d all the *Saxon* glory. From henceforth nothing is to be heard of but thir decline and ruin under a double Conquest [i.e., by the Danes and the Normans], and the causes foregoing” (327-28).⁵⁴ The timing of England’s decline just before to the onset of the “Norman yoke” (Corns, *Encyclopedia* 257) is thus consistent with that of the church as posited by the Augustinian-Paraen construction of a past millennium that began around the time of the incarnation. As Lewalski writes, “Treating the Saxon period, Milton can now emphasize some elements of the ‘Saxon myth’ invoked by many defenders of the revolution, according to which Englishmen’s liberties are embedded in Saxon laws and institutions, and the Norman Conquest brought in its wake feudal oppression and royalist absolutism.” (*Life* 347). It is easy to see how Milton might have thought that Satan had been completely unloosed in 1066.

Of course, with the exception of some of the Saxon laws mentioned, the achievements of these exemplary reigns never endured. Danish invasions also followed the kingships of Alfred and Ecbert. As Campbell and Corns observe, “Milton does not present a national history that celebrates either Britain or England. Rather, early history

⁵⁴ However, King (and Saint) Edward the Confessor, who ruled later on, exhibited some godly charity and was even able to cure “the Disease call’d thence the Kings Evil”: “His Laws held good and just, and long after desir’d by the English of thir Norman Kings, are yet extant” (392).

depicts primitivism, ignorance, corruption, and depravity. Here is no prehistory of a chosen people” (356). Nevertheless, there is a clear pattern of enlightened good governance, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that corresponds to the discipline of the individual believer and that of the church as whole in context of the spiritual kingdom. Satan may have been only partially bound during the millennium, as Pareus suggests, but without the hell he raises, there might not be any “*Nationall Honours and Rewards* to Religious and just *Common-wealths*” to be distributed in God’s “universal and milde *Monarchy* through Heaven and Earth.” The time of the Saxons prior to the “Norman yoke” was not, as Milton’s radical contemporaries saw it, a Golden Age that safeguarded the civil liberties and representative government (Corns, *Encyclopedia* 257). Rather, the millennium in England signified an improvement in the spiritual lives of the people, as it saw the end of paganism, but at the same time, the mixture of good and evil elements enabled the faithful to persevere through earthly trials and attain blessedness in the present.

2.6 Tactical Millenarianism in Milton’s Prose

Besides *Of Reformation and Animadversions*, scholars have suggested that there are millenarian references in Milton’s other works of political prose.⁵⁵ Lewalski, particularly, in “Milton and the millennium,” her contribution to *Milton and the Ends of Time*, surveys these works and confidently identifies several examples. In this section, I shall briefly consider these examples and argue that they do not conclusively refer to the millennium and instead call to mind the final kingdom. As William Walker observes, “Though he occasionally refers to the kingdom of Christ, Milton never explicitly says it will last for a thousand years” (92). Moreover, according to John T. Shawcross, “The concordances to Milton’s poetry and English prose record that Milton *never* used millennial, millenarian, or millennium, of even a thousand years / days to mean the reign of Christ. We do find ‘Apocalypse,’ ‘Revelation(s)’ (but none refers to the millennium), and ‘reveal’ (119, note 16).” I shall again build on the work of Fixler, and argue that Milton, employing a tactical millenarianism from 1640 to 1660, pragmatically leaves

⁵⁵ Lewalski, “millennium” 18-21, Revard 42, 53-54, Hunter, “millennial” 99, Loewenstein, *Drama* 39, 63-64, Barker 193-214.

these allusions open to millenarian interpretation in order to maximize popular support for his views.

After covering *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions*, Lewalski assesses *Areopagitica* (1644), but cannot find any explicit reference to the millennium. She writes, for example, that “Milton no longer speaks of Christ’s Second Coming as imminent, but he does refer to an England being prepared by God for some great change: ‘all concurrence of signs’ and ‘the general instinct of holy and devout men’ indicate, he declares, that God is beginning ‘some new and great period in his Church, ev’n to the reforming of Reformation itself’” (18, qtd. in 18, *Areopagitica* 553). She also alludes to Milton’s image of truth as the dismembered body of Osiris:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious 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 that story goes of the *Ægyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the 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 carefull 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 Masters second comming; he shall bring together every joynt and member, and shall mould them into an immortall feature of lovelines and perfection. (549)

In the passage, Milton explicitly refers only to the second coming, and when Christ reconstitutes truth into an “*immortall* feature of lovelines and perfection” (emphasis mine), the passage evokes the “*datelesse and irrevoluble Circle of Eternity*” with no thousand-years limit (*Of Reformation* 616). Furthermore, *Paradise Lost* also associates truth with the final kingdom:

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
New heav’n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell,
And after all their tribulations long

See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With joy and love triumphing, and *fair truth*. (3.335-38, emphasis mine)

Here, Milton seems to recall his vision in *Areopagitica* of truth restored to a state of wholeness and “lovelines.”

Lewalski’s next example, from Milton’s *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), similarly mentions Christ’s kingdom of “eternal righteousness” (i.e., the final kingdom) rather than, as Lewalski claims, the “millennium when there will be no more earthly kings” (19):

[Christ] is our only King, the root of David, and whose kingdom is eternal righteousness, with all those that Warr against him, whose happiness and final hopes are laid up in that only just & rightful kingdom (which we pray uncessantly may com soon, and in so praying wish hasty ruin and destruction to all Tyrants), even he is our immortal king (*CP III.256*) . . .
 (qtd. in 18)

Again, there is no reference to a thousand years. And, here, as in *Of Reformation*, Milton refers to “destruction to all Tyrants,” which is the precondition for the renewed heaven and earth, not the millennium. In addition, another reference to the final kingdom in *Paradise Lost* touches on “eternal righteousness”:

[The son shall] raise
 From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
 New heav’ns, new earth, ages of *endless* date
 Founded in *righteousness* and peace and love. (12.547-50, emphasis mine)

“Endless,” like “dateless” in the apocalyptic prayer in *Of Reformation* and “unlimited Scepter” in *Animadversions* (707), demonstrates Milton’s insistent focus on the everlasting final kingdom, not on a millennial one circumscribed by worldly and temporal boundaries.

Lewalski then turns her attention to *Eikonoklastes* (1649), where “Milton makes his most direct application of apocalyptic symbols to contemporary politics, as he links the justice meted out to Charles in the regicide with the honor accorded to the saints in Psalm 149:8, commonly applied to the endtimes” (19):

Therefore *To bind thir Kings in Chaines, and thir Nobles with links of Iron*, is an honour belonging to his Saints; not to build *Babel* (which was *Nimrods* work the first King . . .) but to destroy it, especially that spiritual *Babel* [the Roman Church]: and first to overcome those European Kings, which receive thir power, not from God, but from the beast; and are counted no better then his ten hornes . . . untill at last, *joyning thir Armies with the Beast*, whose power first rais'd them, they shall perish with him by the *King of Kings* against whom they have rebell'd This is thir doom writt'n, *Rev. 19*, and the utmost that we find concerning them in these latter days. (*CP III:598-99*, qtd. in 19)

According to Lewalski, the destruction of the earthly kings by Christ, as related in Revelation 19:19-21, is the “millennial ‘doom’ (Rev. 19) to be visited on kings ‘in these latter days’.” Presumably, she has in mind the fact that Revelation 20, on the millennium, immediately follows these verses. However, Pareus denies that Revelation 19:19-21 happens chronologically before the millennium. This is a significant point in that it helps support the Augustinian and medieval traditions which locate the final persecution of the Antichrist after the millennium:

the casting of the Beast into hell [and destruction of the armies of the earthly kings] praecedes indeed the binding of the Dragon [prior to the millennium] in order of the Vision, but not in order of time the *Beast* and *False-prophet* shall not be abolished, but by the brightnesse of Christs comming to judgement. (Pareus 509).

In other words, Pareus equates Revelation 19:19-21 to the final apocalyptic battle between Gog and Magog and Christ in Revelation 20: 7-10, which occurs after the thousand years and just prior to the Last Judgment. Milton himself suggests in *De Doctrina* that the Antichrist, who was also called “the Beast” (Hill, *Antichrist* 4), would be revealed and destroyed in Revelation 20:7-9, along with the last armies of the earthly kings (873, 887). Again, this passage calls to mind the end of all earthly kingdoms that will precede the renewed heaven and earth.

Lewalski’s last two examples from the prose similarly look forward to the second coming of Christ. In *A Defence of the People of England*, Milton

flatly denied the royalist analogy which his literary and political adversary Salmasius so often invoked between divine and human kingship, citing in evidence Christ's sole kingship at the millennium: 'who, in fact, is worthy of holding on earth power like that of God but some person who far surpasses all others and even resembles God in goodness and wisdom? The only such person, as I believe, is the Son of God whose coming we look for' (*CP IV I*: 427-28). (19, qtd. in 19-20)

And, finally, in *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660),

on the eve of the Restoration, Milton appeals with special force to Christ's millennial kingdom to reinforce his now desperate republican arguments. No man can rightfully hold royal dominion over other men, except for Christ, 'our true and only to be expected King . . . the only by him [God] anointed and ordained since the work of our redemption finish, Universal Lord of all Mankinde' (*CP VII*: 445). (Lewalski 21, qtd. in 21)

As in all the previous passages, neither one mentions the thousand years, which is a crucial signifier for the millennial kingdom. Consequently, while both passages might possibly allude to the millennium, they could as easily refer to the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth as the apocalyptic prayers in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions* do. The "Universal Lord of All Mankinde" in *The Readie and Easie Way* echoes the "universal and milde monarchy" that unifies "Heaven and Earth" in *Of Reformation* (emphases mine). The *Defence* suggests, however, that the Son of God will be "holding on *earth* power like that of God" (emphasis mine), so it might seem like an earthly reign. But in the final kingdom, the Son, as an integral part of the Trinity, will rule over a renewed earth that will become one with heaven. In addition, he will exert the dreadful power of a judge on earth during the Last Judgment. It might also be objected that Milton speaks of the Son as if he were a man, that is, "some person who far surpasses all others and even resembles God in goodness and wisdom," thus suggesting a sole, physical or personal rule on earth. However, the incarnation unites the divine with the human, as the Father in *Paradise Lost* tells the Son:

thy humiliation shall exalt
With thee thy manhood also to this throne

Here thou shalt sit incarnate, here shalt reign

Both God and man. (3.313-16)

As a result, Milton can describe Christ in human terms, while simultaneously referencing a divine kingship over heaven and earth.

Another similar reference in *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642), the fourth of Milton's five antiprelatical tracts, is worth discussing. Milton writes that "the future kingdome of Christ . . . is not yet visibly come" (770). Lewalski does not mention it, but Michael Fixler in *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* briefly touches upon it, though as an indicator that Milton was shifting his attention from the apocalyptic excitement of *Animadversions* and *Of Reformation* to more practical matters of church discipline (95). The same reasons I have presented to view the last two examples as references to the final kingdom may be applied to this one, but it is important to note that Milton does imagine the second coming to be a real, "visible" event, which he has in mind when he implores Christ to "put on the visible robes of thy imperiall Majesty" in the apocalyptic prayer of *Animadversions*. Christ already rules a spiritual kingdom, but the second coming will be a momentous, very palpable and future occasion that will radically change the world and initiate a new kingdom. This kingdom, however, is neither millennial nor earthly, but eternal and universal.

All these references, however, though not definitively millenarian, might have been interpreted as such by Milton's contemporaries. I argue that Milton wrote ambiguously in these isolated passages in order to avoid excluding and alienating adherents of the dogma, who often supported his political and religious agendas. Millenarianism reached a height of popularity during the tumultuous revolutionary period of the 1640s and 1650s (Revard 42-54, Lewalski, "millennium" 16-18). Nevertheless, Milton was careful enough in his language to stay true to his core belief in the spiritual and final kingdoms, which his audience of the fit though few (*Paradise Lost* 7.31) would have discerned. Nevertheless, this tactical millenarianism did involve some strategic ambiguity. Thomas Corns has identified "ambivalences and contradictions" in Milton's work and has attributed some of these to "the psychology of political commitment" and

to “exigencies of the shifting polemical situation in which he operated, of the debates in which he participated” (“plurality” 110). According to him,

Milton’s own [autobiographical] comments are articulated in precisely determined contexts and with respect for the inhibitions and requirements of his circumstances One occasion may demand an englobing of his own stance within a broad Puritan position; another may require an attack on Presbyterianism in defence of the sectional interests of independency. Then he may have needed to rest silent on third-culture radicals. Now he wants to distance himself from any taint of proletarianism or hostility to property Fantasy and a fierce pragmatism, a romantic affection for past struggle or present ideals, personal admiration or friendship towards people with whose politics he may disagree sharply, and conflicting polemical imperatives—all may coexist. (114)

Arguing that “the ideological implications of the Milton *oeuvre* are convoluted, ambivalent, and internally contradictory” to a significant degree, Corns warns against the temptation to “reduce to unity a [Miltonic] position that is genuinely fissured” (110). As I shall discuss in the final section of this chapter, this applies to Milton’s attitude towards the millennium to the extent that he is forced to acknowledge it in *De Doctrina* because it appears in scripture. However, as to the tactically millenarian references in the political prose, Milton, committed to an underlying non-millenarian perspective, is motivated by *realpolitik*.

Michael Fixler makes a similar argument in *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*. According to him, Milton gradually abandoned millenarianism, which had been strongest in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions* (88-94, 98-106), because of his growing aversion to the theocracy associated with it (170-71, 208) and his increasing emphasis on Christian liberty, free will, the spiritual kingdom, the practical aspects of the reformation, and his more careful consideration of Christian eschatology in *De Doctrina* (121-32, 109, 214-219). Even so, he continued to refer to the millennium if his discourse required it (206, 208-09, 219). To the “eschatological Kingdom of Christ”

he referred in part in his justification of the regicide, and hence that is one source of confusion. Another source is to be found in his tendency to

remind the reader of the ideal frame of reference, *the just and rightful Kingdom*, in all discussions of political necessity and compromise. A final source of confusion derived from his difficulty in justifying military resistance and action for the sake of religious liberty without invoking the psychological ‘set’ or *gestalt* involving such resistance with associations of the Scriptural Armageddon, of the armies of the Lord, the providences of God, and so forth. . . . It is the nature of these confusions that they are generated by the tactical necessities of polemic and the sometimes misleading emphases of rhetorical considerations. (210)

I agree with Fixler on the polemical motivations behind Milton’s millenarian references, but part company with him on his view that Milton did hold millenarian views at some point—specifically during the time he wrote *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions* (48, 76-97, 213, 219).

In any case, the anonymous pamphlet written in response to the latter tract, *A Modest Confutation of a Slanderous and Scurrilous Libel, Entitled, Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnuus*, derided Milton’s prayer there as “a long, tedious, theatricall, big-mouthed astounding prayer.” Addressing Milton, the author writes, “I am sure your Extemporall will set such a fire on your Spirits, that they will need quenching, or the whole Kingdome will burn with them” (qtd. in 105-06), suggesting that Milton was a religious radical, or sectary (105-06). Milton replied in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, that it was not “a prayer so much as a hymne in prose frequent both in the Prophets, and in human authors; therefore the stile was greater then for an ordinary prayer” (qtd. in 106). According to Fixler, Milton “was visibly annoyed” by these comments and had “exposed his enthusiasm to scorn and came off lamely in the rebuttal. For this, perhaps, and for weightier reasons Milton never again confided to prose the fullness of his intense apocalyptic longing and hope” (106). As I discussed at the end of the last chapter, Thomas Corns argues that Milton published his stately collection of poems in 1645 in order to counter the perception of him as sectary, which had stemmed from his publication of the divorce tracts (“Respectability” 777-78). As the supercilious tone of his reply to the *Modest Confuter* on “stile” suggests, the embarrassment he experienced from his tactical millenarianism in the prayer in *Animadversions* also

contributed to his decision to publish the collection, wherein the final kingdom is unambiguously highlighted, in order to regain “respectability” (778). After *Animadversions*, Milton would deploy this strategy with more circumspection and sobriety and less exuberance and vulnerability. The poetry collection also served to reinforce to his audience of the fit though few his true eschatological concerns.

2.7 “They . . . will live and reign with Christ for [those] thousand years”

Now the time has come for me to confront *De Doctrina Christiana*, the most significant challenge for my thesis. If these last two chapters have been persuasive and if the following two will also succeed in like fashion, then I will have demonstrated that the treatise contains the only clear and explicit reference to the millennium in all of Milton’s works. If Milton had not written this passage, no one could have definitively identified him as a millenarian. That three and a half page passage is in Book 1, Chapter 33 of the treatise, entitled “On Complete Glorification” (883-87), which most Miltonists regard as certain proof of his millennial convictions (Lewalski 14-15; Hutton 36-37; Revard 54-55; Shawcross 106-10). In particular, it quotes passages from Revelation 20 as proof-texts, verse 4, for example: “they [i.e. those who did not worship the beast] will live and reign with Christ for [those] thousand years” (885). It certainly refers to the millennium quite explicitly, but since this is the sole Miltonic text that does so, it is a shaky foundation for the long held belief of scholars in Milton’s millenarian ideology. As I have suggested, passages in Milton’s other writings that have been cited as evidence for Milton’s millenarianism in fact do not do so in direct and categorical terms.

As Milton’s authorship of the text is still a matter of debate, the easy route would be to conclude that Milton did not in fact write this passage, as William B. Hunter has done in his chapter in *Milton and the Ends of Time* (“millennial”).⁵⁶ John Mulryan, another influential scholar who denies that Milton penned the work, has expressed

⁵⁶ As I discussed above, Escobedo declines to refer to *De Doctrina* as evidence for his contention that Milton was a millenarian because of the debate on whether Milton wrote it or not, but this decision makes his argument more difficult. In any case, he writes that he is “inclined to take the passage [in *De Doctrina*] as rather definitive” (29).

interest in my work precisely because it helps disprove Milton's authorship.⁵⁷ But I will resist the temptation to take this easy route. The controversy on whether Milton wrote *De Doctrina* is beyond the scope of this thesis,⁵⁸ but Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, and Fiona J. Tweedie have conducted a thorough examination of the manuscript, and I shall defer to their determination confirming Milton as the author (*Manuscript*).

John T. Shawcross employs another convenient tactic, that is, casting doubt on Milton's biblical source text. While he subscribes to the consensus that *De Doctrina* demonstrates its author's millenarianism, in his opinion the writer of *De Doctrina* implicitly admits,⁵⁹ as have other exegetes, that the brief, sole section of the bible that constitutes the basis of the millenarian ideology, Revelation 20:1-10, suffers from incoherence (114). In verses 1-3, an angel descends and binds Satan, but curiously only for the limited one thousand years of the millennium. Verses 4 to 6 then go on to describe the thousand-year reign of Christ with resurrected saints. Finally, as a prelude to the Last Judgment and the renewal of heaven and earth, verses 7 to 10 describe the strange release of Satan after the thousand years elapse, his war against the saints, and his spectacular defeat. To Shawcross, the temporary victory over Satan and his subsequent inexplicable liberation after the millennium do not make theological sense, and may even call into question the finality of the eternal kingdom after the renewal of heaven and earth. He thinks the millennium as described in Revelation is a spurious "inserted 'vision'" from suspect source material and that *De Doctrina*'s author himself had a sense of it as such. Nevertheless, in Shawcross's analysis, teachings of Revelation on the millennium are merely objectively reproduced in *De Doctrina* and not explicitly challenged (113-14). Ultimately, the work "exhibits a strong belief in and use of Revelation 20-21" but "The author . . . implies a most justified uncertainty" (117, 114). I shall build on Shawcross's suggestion that there is some doubt concerning the millennium in *De Doctrina*, but I shall not question the authorship of Revelation 20 as he does. In taking on the considerable

⁵⁷ Professor Mulryan made these positive comments in a private conversation with my thesis supervisor Dr. John Leonard in about May, 2016.

⁵⁸ See Hunter, *Visitation* and Lewalski, "Evidences."

⁵⁹ Shawcross forgoes taking on a position on the authorship controversy in the article.

difficulties that *De Doctrina* presents for my argument, I shall assume that Milton wrote the treatise and that he himself did not doubt that St. John wrote Revelation 20.

Firstly, in *De Doctrina*, as Shawcross notes, the word “millennium” tellingly never appears, only the phrases “anni mille” and “mille annos,” or “thousand years” (113). For comparison, the great English millenarian Joseph Mede used the Latin phrase “millennium regni” or the “the millennium of the reign [of Christ]” (572). Secondly, since millenarianism was particularly widespread from 1640 to 1660 (Revard 42-54, Lewalski, “millennium” 16-18), it is remarkable that the sole explicit mention of the millennium in Milton’s work was to appear in print late in the period, in the late 1650s, when it is thought that preparations were being completed for the publication of *De Doctrina* at the end of the decade (Hale and Cullington xxii-xxv). Furthermore, even as a testament to millenarianism, the treatise is cautious and less than totally enthusiastic. I contend that it assumes a non-ideological position on the millennium. In other words, to read “thousand years” in *De Doctrina* as a sure sign of millenarianism is yet another dogmatic reading. By the time he wrote this section of *De Doctrina*, Milton no longer believed in the past millennium of Pareus, perhaps because he decided that the Antichristian Roman Church had infringed on the spiritual kingdom to a degree that made that timing implausible. Or, perhaps he had realized that the pervasive depravity of the English, despite the outstanding kings, in his *History of Britain*, which, as Lewalski conjectures, he completed between 1655 and 1657 (*Life* 246) also stretched credulity. In any case, he had to account for the millennium somehow, as it was present in scripture. But with the spiritual or past millennium discredited, its alternative, a theocratic, coercive, and earthly kingdom of Christ with his saints in the future was antithetical to his theology. Consequently, he acknowledges the millennium with what Hunter describes as a “total lack of interest” that is uncharacteristic for a millenarian (“millennial” 102-04). For example, the fervent expectation for an impending second coming, so pronounced in *Of Reformation* and *Animadversions*, is absent in the treatise (103). Indeed, Milton discusses the topic rather drily and matter-of-factly. Hunter thus concludes that this is further proof that Milton could not have authored the treatise (104). As Patrides observes, Milton “vapidly” discusses the millennium in the treatise with “astonishing literalism” (“apocalyptic” 227).

While Shawcross only infers a qualified incertitude concerning the millennium in *De Doctrina*, I contend that Milton explicitly introduces some doubt concerning the doctrine. As Bryan Ball observes, Milton was not alone: the “overall picture” of the discussion on the millennium in the period was “less of the subjective imposition of fanciful theories by an extravagant minority, than of erudite and honest men genuinely wrestling with an obscure and difficult passage in Scripture” (160). I have corresponded with John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington, the editors of the 2012 Oxford Edition of the treatise, and my examination of the millenarian passage, in consultation with them, has revealed two problematic elements in the following sentence: “*In terris autem futurum illud regnum testimonia quam plurima demonstrant*” (884), which in English reads, “But that that kingdom will be on earth, how very many passages show!” (885). The first element is the word “autem,” which can mean either “moreover” or “however.” This initially attracted my attention. The second and more crucial one is the phrase “testimonia quam plurima,” which was originally translated as “how very many passages!” Because of my inquiries, the Oxford editors have decided to revise their rendering of the phrase to “very many possible proof-texts.” As I shall now discuss, the more confident original translation of the sentence was thus altered to the more circumspect “But that that kingdom will be on earth, very many possible proof-texts show” (7 Cullington, 9 August 2015 email) (see Plate 1 below, p. 133). The change can now be seen in the Errata listed in the Addenda of the online edition of the text (see change in page 885, line 7). I must not, however, overstate my case. I do not claim that the translation change demolishes the millenarian reading of the passage, but it does open up very interesting “possibilities.”

My curiosity was initially aroused when I noticed the omission of “autem” by Charles Sumner and John Carey, the first two English translators of the treatise, in their versions of the work, published in 1825 and 1973, respectively. The Oxford editors rectified the oversight, though they did not explore the implications of their correction. The emendation suggests that Milton struggled with a scriptural inconsistency that goes beyond those within Revelation. Previously undetected, it calls into question Milton’s millenarianism. The key pages which scholars refer to as proof of Milton’s adherence to this doctrine are manuscript pages 446 to 449, where Revelation 20:4, which I quoted above, and Revelation 20:6, appear as proof-texts. The latter reads: “*Blessed and holy is*

he who has a share in the first resurrection: [for] against these people the second death is powerless, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him during a thousand years.” Because the thousand-year earthly reign of King Jesus is so plainly mentioned, it is easy for an ideological interpretation favoring a clear-cut millenarianism to take hold. However, a close reading of the language of Book 1, Chapter 33 reveals instability. On page 446, Milton begins his section on the millennium by writing that

At the time of this last judgement—for indeed it is unlikely that so many myriads of angels and people should be assembled and judged in the space of a single day, and ‘day’ is often understood as any indefinite period of time whatever—from the beginning, I say, of this judgment until its end, and for some time after its end, it *appears* that the so often promised glorious kingdom of Christ with his saints will come into being on earth.
(883, my emphasis)

I submit that Milton’s use of the verb “appears” (or “videtur”), which he utilizes twice (883, 885), shows that as opposed to just restating the doctrine, as Shawcross claims, Milton assumes a tentative position on millenarianism, particularly here, when he suggests that the millennium and an extended judgment day will be to a large extent simultaneous or, as Fixler puts it, “co-extensive” (218). I have corresponded with the Oxford editors, and according to Dr. Hale, “videtur” can mean “it is seen” as well as “it seems”, and the meaning “fluctuates a lot” depending on the “exact tone” of “each occasion.” He feels that the word is used more neutrally here, but the other possibility nonetheless exists (Hale, 18 May 2016 email).

I further submit that while Milton in these manuscript pages does indeed discuss the millennium, he encounters evidence in scripture that renders the dogma questionable. This is recounted on page 447, where the critical omission of “autem” occurs in the previous translations. Here, Milton makes a distinction relevant to the discussion of millenarianism. He distinguishes between Christ’s “first coming, the *kingdom* of grace, on the one hand, which is also called the kingdom of the heavens, [which] had both been proclaimed by John the Baptist” and the “kingdom of glory, on the other hand, [[which] will begin] only with his second coming” (883). The former refers to the kingdom of Christ that had been inaugurated by the incarnation, or first coming, and that is manifest

in both the inner, spiritual space of the individual believer (i.e., the spiritual kingdom) and the church as a community of the faithful; the latter, in contrast, alludes to the kingdom established by the second coming, which includes the future millennial reign. As such, this is a rejection of the notion of a past millennium favored by theologians like Augustine and Pareus.

After making the distinction between “the kingdom of the heavens” and “the kingdom of glory,” Milton elaborates on the difference between these past and future kingdoms, writing that,

the kingdom of glory, . . . [will begin] only with his second coming, Dan 7:13-14: [*I saw in the nighttime visions that,*] *behold, one like the son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven . . . : and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. . . ; namely, from the time when he was coming with the clouds (as his coming is always described elsewhere), not into flesh, as Junius maintains (for indeed he would then have been like the son of man before he was man, which would surely have been rather incongruous), but to judgment; right up to that time when he shall lay aside the kingdom, 1 Cor. 15: 24: then there will be an end [, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the father]. (883-85)*

Most of the translators of *De Doctrina* agree that Milton’s denial that Daniel 7:13 alludes to Christ coming “into flesh, as Junius maintains” is a reference to the incarnation, that is, the first coming (884, note 76; Carey translation of *De Doctrina* 624, note 20). Junius, who believed in a past millennium (Jue, “Puritan” 262), was a Renaissance theologian, commentator and one of the translators of the Junius-Tremellius-Beza bible, the version Milton primarily used (Hale and Cullington, “Introduction,” 1,li,liv, xxxiv, xlviii, xlix). Milton’s point is that, rather, Daniel 7:13 is an allusion to the second coming and the subsequent millennium. However, Milton runs into a problem when he attempts to make his case by citing these verses, the earliest possible reference to the second coming in the Bible, where “one like the son of man . . . is given dominion and glory and a kingdom.” As he is trying to establish a basis for millenarianism in scripture, he needs the kingdom to be unequivocally a kingdom on *earth*. Instead, “one like the son of man. . . *coming with the clouds of heaven,*” seems to suggest a kingdom not on earth but in a heavenly

sphere, that is, the skies of the earth, as opposed to the “pure Empyrean” (3.57) of *Paradise Lost*, the highest heavenly realm where the Father resides. At least, as religious scholar John J. Collins has observed, the quotation does not conclusively indicate that the Son of man *descends* to rule on land (311).

The critical omission in the previous translations occurs in the following sentence that ends in an exclamation point: “*But* that that kingdom will be on earth, how very many passages show!” (855). Indeed, what follows is an exhaustive list of quotations, including the key Revelation 20 verses, that might support a case for an earthly millennium (885, 887). As I mentioned above, the sentence reads “In terris autem futurum illud regnum testimonia quam plurima demonstrant” (884) in Milton’s Latin, and context determines whether “autem” means “moreover” or “however.” To the translators of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “autem” meant “moreover,” and they presumably felt it unnecessary to render an English translation of the word. Sumner translates the sentence simply as “That this reign will be on earth, is evident from many passages” (361), and Carey renders it as “There are any number of texts which show that Christ’s reign will take place on earth” (624). Consequently, both Sumner and Carey present the “very many passages” (Oxford translation) as unambiguous proof of millenarianism. On the other hand, the Oxford editors translate “autem” as “but” [“But that that kingdom will be on earth, how very many passages show!”], suggesting something quite different: that the *heavenly* “one like the son of man” Daniel 7 passage and its associated citations render an *earthly* millennial kingdom at least to some degree questionable.

I have asked the Oxford editors of *De Doctrina* to confirm and clarify their translation, and they have positively received my reading. Dr. Hale writes,

Autem is a contrast but a mild one, so doesn’t get a heavyweight adversative like *sed* or *tamen* or *nihilominus*: he [Milton] has a repertoire and range of intensity. Here’s how Donald [Cullington] puts it: Our translation of ‘autem’ as ‘but’ is not meant to point a strong contrast, but there is *some* contrast because of the large number of quotations that follow it, compared with the merely two less ‘earthbound’ quotations that

precede it. That also explains our use of ‘how very many’ as the meaning of ‘quam plurima’, and the exclamation mark we have ended the sentence with [‘. . . how very many passages show!’]” (15 May 2015 email).

The Latin original did not have an exclamation point. Part of the Oxford editors’ stated editorial practice was to try to capture the dictating theologian’s tone and rhetoric (Hale and Cullington, “Introduction,” xix, xxxv).

Indeed, the second “less ‘earthbound’ quotation Dr. Cullington mentions, 1 Cor. 15:24, when Christ in the “end. . . hands over the kingdom to God the father,” introduces additional uncertainty about the millennium. The heavenly nature of this citation becomes evident when Milton discusses it a few pages later. There he quotes up to verse 28, which states that “then will the son himself also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, *so that God may be all in all*” (887, 889). God subsuming all matter into himself certainly suggests a heavenly sphere rather than an earthly one. The unspecified, unquoted passages on Christ coming with the clouds that are also mentioned on key page 447 function in a similar way. These passages are ones in the synoptic gospels and in Revelation that allude to Daniel 7:13-14. There is no direct reference in any of them to a millennium whatsoever. Consider in particular three of the passages, Matthew 24:30-35, Mark 13:26-31, and Luke 21:27-33, which narrate the same gospel episode. I similarly discussed this in my analysis of *Animadversions*, above, but it will be useful to revisit it. In the King James version of Matthew 24, Jesus tells his disciples “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory” (Matthew 24:30). Humanity does see Christ from below, but the figure does not descend to found any millennial kingdom. Instead, the Son of man remains in the heavenly sphere: “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, *from one end of heaven to the other*” (Matthew 24:31, emphasis mine). Just three verses later, the final conflagration and renewal of heaven and earth are evoked: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Not only does Matthew 24 fail to mention the millennium, the fact that it touches on the destruction of heaven and earth precludes any thousand year earthly kingdom of Christ. In other words, it is unlikely that the Son of

man will reign for a thousand years in the heavens, that is, the skies of the earth, or the on the earth itself, that is, on land, for that matter, because both sky and land will almost immediately be destroyed after his second coming. Milton's references to these gospel passages thus suggest the millennium was questionable doctrine for him. They also indicate his persistent focus on the final kingdom that will emerge after the passing of the old heaven and earth. As Shawcross says, "the teaching of Christ in the New Testament is *not* millenarian" (108).

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the only other place where Milton uses Revelation 20 (verse 3) as a proof-text is in Book 1, Chapter 9, "On the special governance of Angels:" "*he* [an angel] *hurled him* [Satan] *into the Abyss and closed it up.*" There Milton discusses "the Abyss, whence one may not leave without permission" as "the proper place" for "evil angels," though the devils are "sometimes . . . able to wander over the whole earth, the air, and even heaven to carry out God's judgments" (353). This reference contradicts the notion of a future millennium since it suggests that the binding of Satan, that is, his imprisonment in the Abyss at the beginning of the thousand years, was done in the past, perhaps in a past millennium.

Because I brought the attention of the Oxford editors to the contrast signaled by "autem," they now tentatively regard the "proof-texts" suggesting a millennial kingdom on earth as less firm in Milton's mind and their original translation of the critical sentence, and by extension, those of Sumner and Carey, as somewhat overconfident. As I mentioned above, they have revised the original "*But* that that kingdom will be on earth, how very many passages show!" to "*But* that that kingdom will be on earth, very many possible proof-texts show." In the revised sentence, they altered their initial emphatic or intensive "quam," that is, "how very many," and have elected to abide by the usual function of "quam" followed by a superlative adjective, which is to indicate a quality that is as manifest as *possible* or as *can be* (Cullington, 9 August 2015 email; see also Wheelock and LaFleur 212). The Oxford editors have also eliminated the emphatic editorial exclamation point at the end of the sentence (Cullington, 9 August 2015 email). According to Hale, while "quam" + a superlative has no necessary tone of interrogation or exclamation," either of the two is possible. Hence, the Latin "quam," like our English

“how,” can function as an intensifier, as in “how very many passages!”, but it can also operate as an interrogative adverb, as in “just how very many passages?” (see Lewis, “quam”). Hale now favors a neutral tone, however. It is also noteworthy that the Oxford editors did not strictly apply the “quam” idiom and change their original to “That the kingdom will be on earth, the greatest number of possible proof-texts show.” Instead, they depict a more circumspect Milton. Indeed, as Hale further observes about these proof texts in my correspondence with him, there are actually not a large number of proof-texts, though Milton does quote at length (see Plates 1-3 below, pp. 133-35). Hale says this might “suggest, equally, his [Milton’s] enthusiasm for the idea, or a paucity of texts, perhaps both. In *De Doctrina* generally, he can wax enthusiastic in his advocacy, and strive to make the best of a weak case, so as to ‘preserve the phenomena,’ in this case scripture’s self-agreement” (Hale, 18 May 2016 email).

It is thus demonstrable that Milton cannot quite reconcile evidence supporting a heavenly second coming with evidence that Christ will descend and establish a worldly kingdom. That Milton approaches the dogma of the millennium with circumspection, with some lack of confidence, and with the uncertainty that Shawcross first notices indicates that he is not taking any ideological position at all on the millennium. Instead, he makes a qualified and disinterested concession that a future millennium is mentioned in scripture. As a result of my research, the whole passage thus becomes much more tentative, exploratory, interrogative, and cautious than scholars have hitherto recognized. While “Autem,” “testimonia quam plurima,” and the translation change do not invalidate millenarian interpretations of the passage, they do expose fissures in what had seemed be an unequivocal endorsement of the doctrine in the treatise.

They also attest to the “ambivalences and contradictions” that Corns sees in Milton’s work. Arguing for the “plurality” or “indeterminacy of [Milton’s] ideology,” Corns writes that “Those who attempt to develop a unifying thesis about the Milton *oeuvre* attribute to him a degree of single-mindedness which is probably alien to most people at most times” (110, 114, 124). More recently, the New Milton Critics have been exploring “incertitude” and “discontinuities” in Milton’s work (Herman 43; Herman and Sauer 1). Some scholars, including Regina Schwartz, have similarly discussed

apophaticism, or negative theology, in Milton's epics (Schwartz 41-43; 48, note 31; 49, note 33; Bryson 87-92, 119, 126). Truth, after all has been "hew'd . . . into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd . . . to the four winds" (*Areopagitica* 549). Milton can thus live with the doubt he raises concerning the millennium in scripture, dutifully acknowledge a doctrine that is antithetical to his core beliefs, and even deploy a disingenuous tactical millenarianism. He is less ideologically stable than Lewalski, Revard, Loewenstein, and Hill imagine.

While Shawcross and I see reasons to doubt Milton's millenarianism in *De Doctrina*, Fixler goes further and discerns an implicit rejection of millenarianism when Milton finally performs a systematic analysis of Revelation 20 in the treatise:

Milton excluded by definition the possibility that the eschatological kingdom might provide any sort of model or suggestion for millenarian theocracy. . . . Significantly Milton conceived of the day of judgment as co-extensive with the millennium, and therefore the judgment by Christ and his saints and their rule or dominion were one and the same thing. In the final Kingdom the rule of judgment would 'be the conscience of each individual, according to the measure of light which he has enjoyed.'⁶⁰ Since Milton repeatedly made it clear throughout his treatise that under the ordinary conditions of life no man in any capacity might presume to judge the conscience of another, it clearly follows that the kind of eschatological dominion the saints would enjoy with Christ could have no earthly counterpart whatsoever. (218-19)

The passage demonstrates how the prominence of liberty in Milton's thought might hinder his embracing millenarianism. "The conscience of each individual" serves as both the "the rule of judgment" (that is, the criterion for an individual soul being judged so as to determine whether that soul will be damned or deemed righteous for the eternity after the millennium) and, since the Last Judgment is simultaneous with the millennium, the basis of the reign of the saints (that is, the criterion for how each individual soul is to be

⁶⁰ See Milton, *De Doctrina* [Columbia] 357, Vol. 16. Fixler does not footnote. Sumner's translation actually translates "Norma iudicii erit ipsa conscientia" as "The rule of judgment will be the conscience of each individual."

governed during the millennium). Indeed, as Hale and Cullington translate it, Milton says that “judgment” during the second coming “appears . . . not so much judicial as governmental, in which sense Gideon, Jephthah, and the remaining Judges are said to have ‘judged’ Israel for many years” (883). But Milton does not go into any further detail in distinguishing judgment and governance during the concurrent Last Judgment and earthly millennium. While the conscience of the individual might be the “rule of judgment” on the one hand, some other criteria might be used as bases for government, but the distinction is not made. Moreover, the wording “not so much judicial as governmental” might imply that Milton finds certain non-governing saints (not theocrats), who will only sit in judgment of humanity, acceptable. I have suggested that Milton is tentative as far as the millennium in general is concerned, and he has the same attitude on this point. How the Last Judgment and the thousand-year reign will operate on a practical level at the same time remains inchoate, and thus the idea that the saints⁶¹ might judge, and rule over, other individuals is, as Fixler stresses, questionable in the light of Christian liberty of conscience. For Fixler, the simultaneity of millennium and final judgment in *De Doctrina* precludes the thousand-year, literal “earthly” reign. It might therefore seem that Milton might be willing to accept a future millennium provided that no theocracy of saints, arrogating Christ’s name, carnally rule over individual consciences and as long as the thousand years constitute a relatively brief transitory stage that is continuous with the final kingdom. However, he yearns for a complete and perfect union with God, which would not be possible under the still fallen conditions of a millennial kingdom, whether it be judicial, governmental, or both. The renewal of heaven and earth constitutes a reversal of the fall that Milton immortalizes in *Paradise Lost*, but would sooner forget.

Miltonists should be immeasurably grateful to John Hale and Donald Cullington for providing a more faithful and flexible edition of *De Doctrina* that allows us not only

⁶¹ According to *De Doctrina*, the saints are those who “‘have followed me [i.e. Jesus]’” and who “‘at the regeneration—when the son of man sits on the throne of his glory—will . . . also sit on twelve thrones’” (881, Matt. 19:28). These are “those who died in Christ” [who] will rise again first” (879, 1 Thess. 4:16) and the “living who are left for the coming of the Lord” (879, 1 Thess. 4:15) who will be “caught up with them into the clouds, to meet the Lord” (879, 1 Thess. 4:17).

to clarify Milton's theology, but to be enlightened by the uncertainties and cruxes he faced in his efforts, as he describes them in *De Doctrina*, "to encompass God with our minds as he shows himself and describes himself in sacred literature. For although it be granted that God is always either described or outlined not as he really is but as we can grasp him, yet it would be no less our duty to imagine him in our mind exactly as he—in adapting himself to our grasp—wants to be imagined" (10). Milton in part yearns for the final kingdom when God shall be "All in All"—when he shall "unite us intirely, and appropriate us to thy selfe, [and] tie us everlastingly in willing Homage to the *Prerogative of thy eternall Throne*" (*Of Reformation* 615)—because only then will God be "visible" (*Animadversions* 707) "as he really is" and not just as how "we can grasp him." Only then will God "bring together every joynt and member" of truth, which is now scattered in "ambivalences and contradictions," "incertitude," doubt, and ideological "plurality," and "mould them into an immortall feature of lovelines and perfection" (549). This epistemological bliss would not be available in a theocratic, coercive, and earthly millennium. Nevertheless, while he waits for the final kingdom, Milton can contently endure some epistemological instability. Consequently, he does not deny the millennium, but, rather, approaches it with caution, tentativeness, and, ultimately, indifference. The discoveries I have made in the Latin text of *De Doctrina* thus do not form a stone that crumbles the millenarian idol of Milton criticism, but it does show that the colossus has clay feet under all the iron.

For the remainder of this thesis, I shall test this hypothesis by turning to Milton's great epics, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, which Milton published in two decades following the Restoration. When Charles II came to power in 1660, Milton had to lay aside his theological treatise because it contained controversial notions and the political situation had become dangerous for him (Hale and Cullington xxvi). I shall demonstrate that Milton's perspective on the millennium in *De Doctrina* manifests itself in the continued focus on the spiritual and final kingdoms in both epics and in the anti-millenarianism of *Paradise Regained*. Milton does not make persistent or veiled millenarian references in the epics, as scholars Lewalski, Revard, and Loewenstein suggest. Rather, there is evidence that he kept faith with the Augustinian-Parean tradition of the past millennium and the kingdom within.

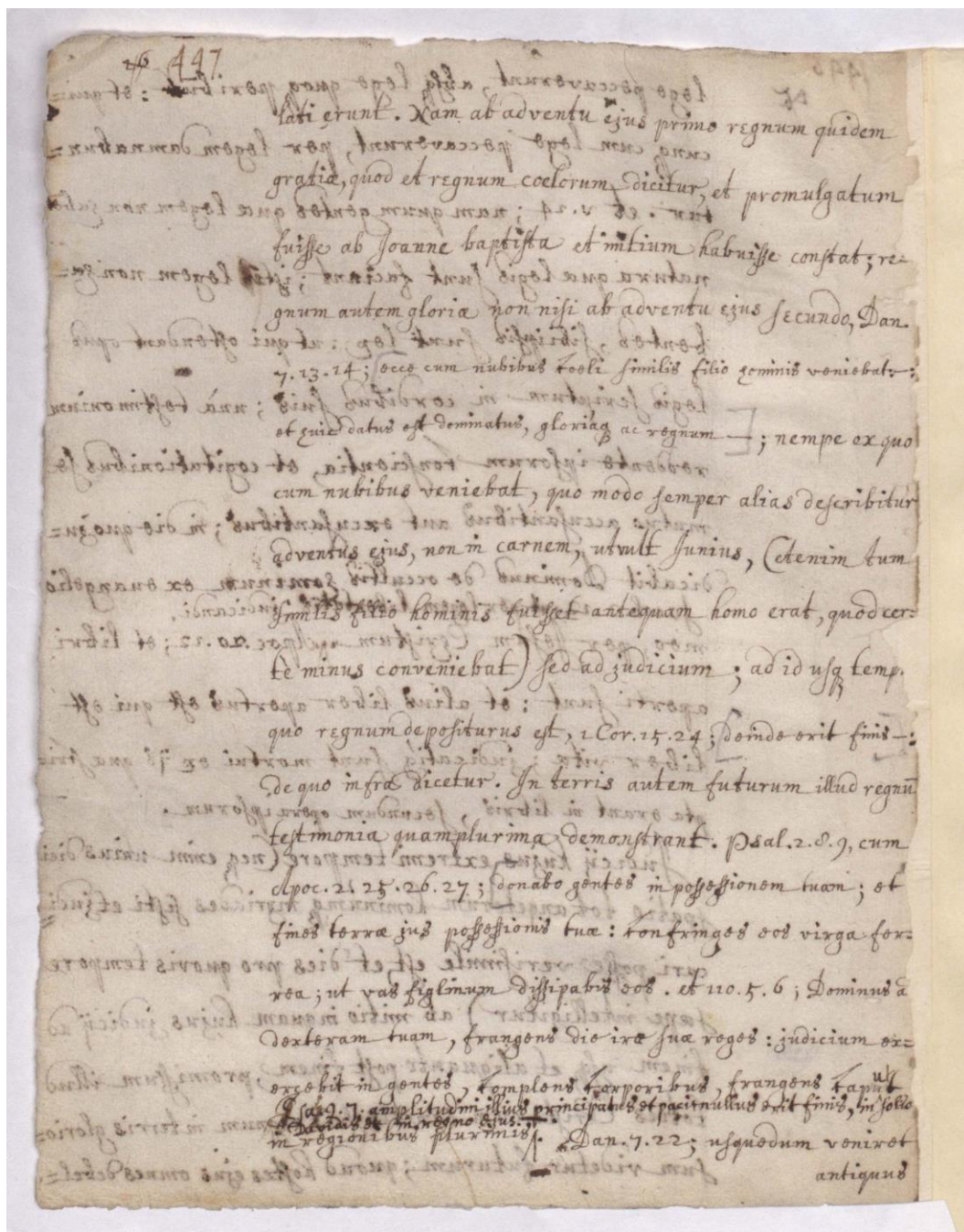


Plate 1: The National Archives, London, MS SP 9/61, Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. MS 447. Lines 12 to 13: "*In terris autem futurum illud regnum testimonia quam plurima demonstrant* [But that that kingdom will be on earth, very many possible proof-texts show]." Lines 13 to 20: proof-texts for Christ's millennial kingdom; continued on pp. MS 448-49 (see Plates 2 and 3).

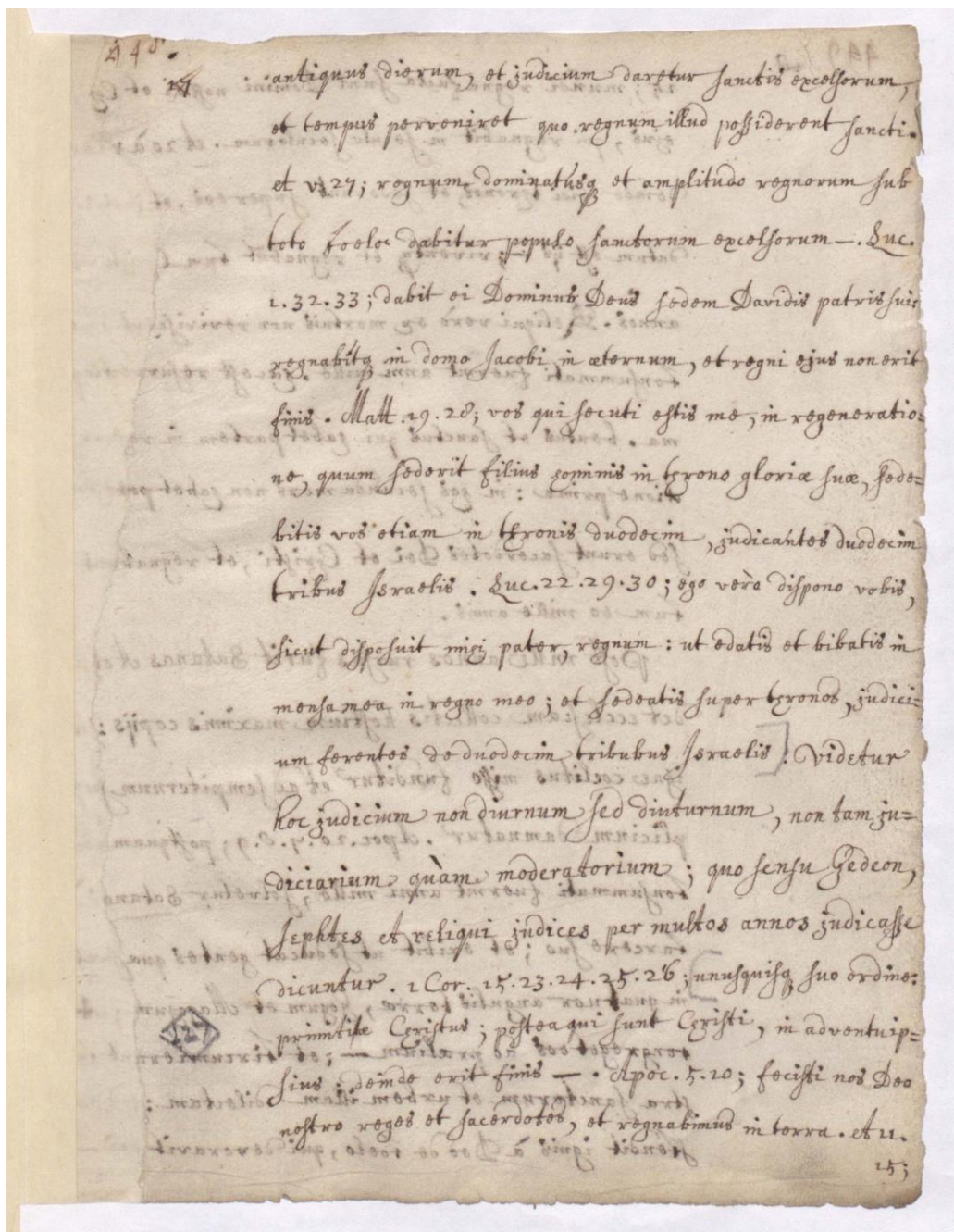


Plate 2: The National Archives, London, MS SP 9/61, Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. MS 448. Lines 1 to 20: proof-texts for Christ's millennial kingdom; continued from p. MS 447, continued on p. MS 449 (see Plates 1 and 3).

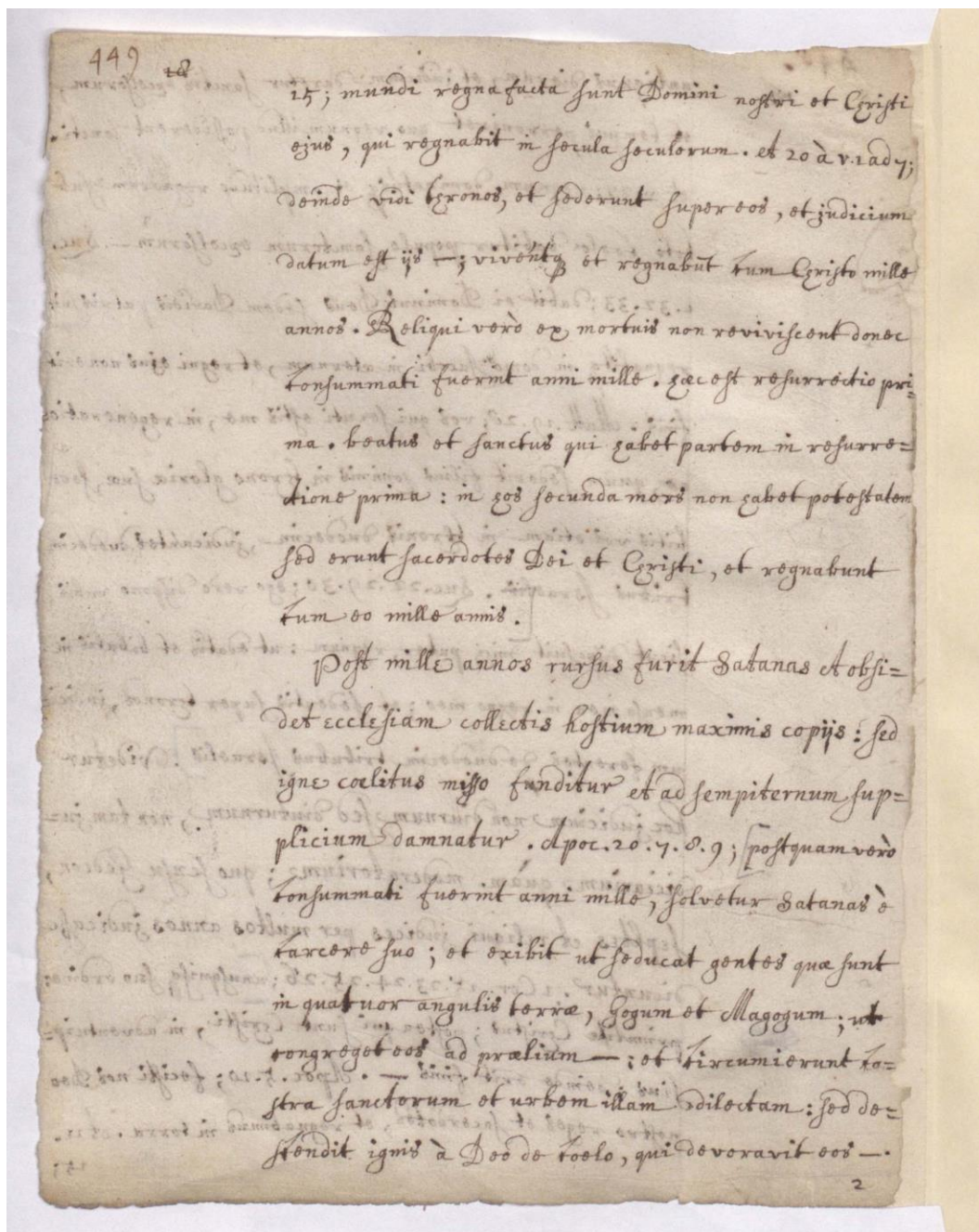


Plate 3: The National Archives, London, MS SP 9/61, Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. MS 449. Lines 1 to 10: proof-texts for Christ's millennial kingdom; continued from pp. MS 447-48 (see Plates 1 and 2).

Chapter 3

3 *Paradise Lost*: The Eternally Recurring Beginnings and Ultimate End of the Son's Kingdom

Chapter Abstract: Beginning with the scholarly debate between William Empson and C.S. Lewis on whether or not the Father abdicates his kingship and becomes absolutely immanent when the Son surrenders his own kingdom to the Father at the end of world, I argue in this chapter that *Paradise Lost* demonstrates Milton's longing for the ultimate end of the Son's kingdom, rather than the future beginning of his millennial reign on earth. For Milton, as I shall discuss in section 3.2, the Son's kingdom had already begun at the beginning of time and that beginning is eternally recurring. The exaltations in Book 3 and Book 5, and all other exaltations of the Son and beginnings of his kingdom, are, in a manner of speaking, the same event. They are eternal recurrences of the primordial beginning that manifests during discrete historical occasions. Since that first beginning, his literal begetting which occurs before the earliest chronological event in the epic, that is, the exaltation in Book 5, and through each successive beginning, the Father seeks to connect with creation through the Son and the Son's kingdom. This connection is enabled by the incarnation or humiliation of the Son that, as Dennis Danielson argues (222-24), accompanies each of his exaltations. I contend that one particular humiliation of the Son has a preeminent and eternally resonant effect that is both recurrent and retroactive: the Son's incarnation and mortal death. It is this ultimate humiliation that makes the eternal recurrence of these beginnings possible. Thus, the Son's kingdom in its fullest sense is not to be sought in a future millennium; it is already manifest, particularly in the spiritual kingdom, and Milton implies that it has been manifest since the literal begetting of the Son in the beginning of time.

3.1 The Humiliation and Exaltation of William Empson

Even the sternest critic of the Father in *Paradise Lost* discovered that willingness to endure humiliation can lead to a good thing. In *Milton's God*, William Empson recalls how he had been lecturing on another scholar's reading of the Son's offer to humiliate himself for the salvation of man (3.236-65). Paul Phelps Morand had (in Empson's

paraphrase) argued that “God is simply a dynastic ruler” who “intrigues and lies to bolster his power” in order to “transfer it unimpaired to his Son” (123-24). When the Son declares that he will atone for man’s disobedience by dying, that is merely “propaganda dialog,” as Empson puts it, the Father’s “method of impressing the loyalist angels” (124, 129) in order to set up the Son’s exaltation as “God and man” (3.315). This is, of course, in line with Empson’s own view that Milton’s epic “is so good” because “it makes God so bad” (13) and that God, in accord with his “authoritarian character” (103), deliberately arranges for Satan, Adam, and Eve to fall (102, 112-16). Empson must have delighted in the shameless and disdainful relish with which he delivered these points to the lecture audience. However, his moment of triumph was rudely interrupted when he was challenged during question time by his great adversary C.S. Lewis, who had (in Empson’s words) so “kindly” graced the occasion. Empson tells us that Lewis began with “a sentence of charitable compunction, recognizing that the speaker wasn’t responsible for this bit,” but it is easy to imagine the preeminent Anglican scholar’s own victorious tone: “Does Phelps Morand think God is going to abdicate, then?” (130).

At that moment, Empson might have chillingly remembered that Lewis had once written, “In order to take no unfair advantage I should warn the reader that I myself am a Christian, and that some (by no means all) of the things which the atheist reader must ‘try to feel as if he believed’ I actually, in cold prose, do believe” (64). In any case, Empson’s embarrassment at the devastating question is palpable: “I tried to explain that M. Morand regarded this as the way Milton’s dramatic imagination worked, after it had been corrupted by his patriotic labours, not as part of his theological system. The answer felt weak . . .” (130). Today, when brazen self-promotion is the rule in the conference circuit, the wit, honesty, decorum, and humility of these two great scholars are refreshing. In addition, the high literary stakes of their engagements inspire us, as they did Empson when he bounced back, though not on the same day. A great insight, related to the work of another scholar, Denis Saurat, had fortuitously emerged from his discomfiture:

The answer felt weak, and soon afterwards another difficulty drove me back to the book of M. Saurat, which I had probably not read since I was an undergraduate; I thus realized, what M. Saurat was not intending to prove, that Milton did expect God to abdicate. At least, that is the most

direct way to express the idea; you may also say he is an emergent or evolutionary deity, as has been believed at times by many other thinkers, for example Aeschylus and H.G. Wells. (130)

A few pages later, he feels a kind of exaltation at the idea that God will abdicate. He writes “we can I think partly solve the central problem about the poem, which is how Milton can have thought it to justify God” (140).

The work by Saurat that opened Empson’s eyes was the controversial and transcendental *Milton: Man and Thinker* (1925). According to Saurat, God is “no Creator external to his Creation, but Total and Perfect Being, which includes in himself the whole of space and the whole of time” (113). In Empson’s terms, Saurat attempts “to show the profundity, or the impersonality and pantheism, of Milton’s God” (117). However, as Empson sees it, pantheism describes not God as he is now, but as he will be after the end of time (144). On Judgment Day, the Son will finally be “Anointed universal King” and given “all power” (3.317, 321-32) but, according to Empson, the “eternal gift” of this kingship “is thus to be received only on the Last Day, and handed back the day after” (133). As the Last Judgment proceeds,

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
 New heav’n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell . . .
 Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
 For regal sceptre no more shall need,
 God shall be All in All. But all ye gods,
 Adore him, who to compass all this dies,
 Adore the Son, and honour him as me. (3.334-35, 339-43, qtd. in 134)

For Empson, the source text in St. Paul’s 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 suggests a “literal autocracy”:

Then cometh the end . . . but when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him; and when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (*De Doctrina* [Columbia] 367, qtd. in 133)

On the other hand, in Milton's "obscure" and "oracular" poetry, Empson discerns a pantheism that is "decisively implied." It is plain to him that the Son will abdicate. The Father tells him "thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by" (399) in the "New Heav'n and Earth." However, Empson calls attention to two critical aspects of Milton's language. First, there is the subtle shift of the auxiliary verb "shalt" from second person in line 339 to the third person in line 340 (i.e., from "thy regal sceptre *shalt* lay by" to "For regal sceptre no more *shall* need"). Consequently, Empson hears the "intransitive use of the verb *need*" though "slightly archaic" (*OED* 1a) in the latter line (i.e., "For regal sceptre no more shall *be needful or necessary*"). The grammatical subject of "need" is therefore not the Son, but the "sceptre." This convinces Empson that Milton's main point is that the Father will abdicate as well. Empson writes that, "a reader . . . could only impute the old construction: 'Authority will then no longer be needed'—not therefore, from the Father, any more from the Son" (134). Strictly speaking, as Empson sees it, the Father will not reassume the power that he had given to the Son in 3.317 and that son will himself give it up in 3.339. He will abdicate on Judgment Day, not after the Son lays aside his "regal sceptre" (137). Empson is not very explicit about this, but he is careful to underscore that the Son accedes to the "supreme throne" in line 3.317 (137-38), as opposed to the "vicegerent" (5.609) throne he had already possessed (103-04). Thus, because the Father eschews "literal autocracy" in the "New heav'n and earth," Empson takes "God shall be All in All" to mean that "the very disagreeable God of the Old Testament . . . eventually . . . will dissolve into the landscape and become immanent only" (132-33).

For Empson, God's willingness to abdicate makes him "less wicked" than the "traditional Christian" God, whose reign will never end (11). Empson discusses this in progressive political terms. First of all, "It is a great moral cleansing for Milton's God, after the greed for power which can be felt in him everywhere else, to say that he will give his throne to Incarnate Man" in lines 3.305-20. That moment has a "democratic appeal" that "makes the whole picture of him just tolerable" (137). As for the subsequent pantheism of the "New heav'n and earth," Empson goes so far as to compare it to a communist state: the angels "put up a timidly evasive but none the less stubborn resistance to dissolving themselves into God, like peasantry under Communism trying to delay collectivization; and here too the state has the high claim that it has promised to

eventually wither away. God must abdicate before the plan of Total Union can seem tolerable to them” (139). As a comment on dictatorship, God’s abdication is particularly appealing. Cromwell’s

admitted and genuine bother, for a number of years, was to find some way of establishing a Parliament under which he could feel himself justified in stopping to be a dictator. When Milton made God the Father plan for his eventual abdication, he ascribed to him in the high tradition of Plutarch the noblest sentiment that could be found in an absolute ruler; and could reflect with pride that he had himself seen it in operation, though with a tragic end. Milton’s God is thus to be regarded as like King Lear and Prospero, turbulent and masterful characters who are struggling to renounce their power and enter peace; the story makes them behave much worse than they do, but the author allows him the same purifying aspiration. (144-45)

The abdication is a “good eventual plan,” a “solution” to all of the Father’s “contradictions” (143, 146) that “makes our impression of the poem and indeed of the author much more satisfactory.” It is “an important part of [Milton’s] delicately balanced structure.” Empson can thus appreciate, but only to a limited degree, how in Milton’s mind the epic might indeed “justify the ways of God to man” (140). Even with the saving grace of pantheism after the end of times, Milton’s God remains totalitarian and inscrutable in the final analysis: “astonishing like Uncle Joe Stalin; the same patience under the appearance of roughness, the same flashes of joviality, the same thorough unscrupulousness, the same real bad temper” (145-46).

Empson’s close reading is astute and ebullient, and when he considers what he sees as Milton’s efforts to mitigate God’s iniquity (11), he does so with imaginativeness, sincerity, and even some generosity. However, there is a problem. Empson neglects to examine the other passage in *Paradise Lost* that explicitly mentions the time when God shall be “All in All.” That passage, 6.723-33, which more closely reflects the biblical source in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, suggests that the Father will not abdicate. During the war in heaven, the Father commands the Son to “Ascend my chariot” and “Pursue these

sons of darkness, drive them out / From all Heav'n's bounds into utter deep" (6.711,715-16). In response, the Son says

O Father, O Supreme of Heav'nly thrones,
 First, highest, holiest, best, thou always seek'st
 To glorify thy Son, I always thee,
 As is most just; this I my glory account,
 My exaltation, and my whole delight,
 That thou in me well pleased, declar'st thy will
 Fulfilled, which to fulfil is all my bliss.
 Sceptre and Power, thy giving, I assume,
 And gladlier shall resign, when in the end
 Thou shalt be All in All, and I in thee
 For ever, and in me all whom thou lov'st:
 But whom thou hat'st, I hate, and can put on
 Thy terrors, as I put thy mildness on,
 Image of thee in all things; and shall soon,
 Armed with thy might, rid Heav'n of these rebelled,
 To their prepar'd ill mansion driven down
 To chains of darkness, and th' undying worm,
 That from thy just obedience could revolt,
 Whom to obey is happiness entire.
 Then shall thy Saints unmixed, and from th' impure
 Far separate, circling thy holy Mount
 Unfeigned hallelujahs to thee sing,
 Hymns of high praise, and I among them chief. (6.723-45)

In particular, when the Son says to the Father, "Thou shalt be All in All, and I in thee / For ever, and in me all whom thou lov'st" (6.732-33), there is the suggestion that a hierarchy under the supremacy of the Father is maintained. The Father shall be "All in all," but there are three levels of being: that of the Father's unity with all things, that of the Son's unity with the Father ("and I in thee / For ever"), and that of all righteous souls in unity with the Son ("and in me all whom thou lov'st"). For the good angels and the

righteous, oneness with the Father still requires some kind of mediation from the Son. Even in the end, a direct, complete, and independent connection with God is not possible. Furthermore, the placement of the Son's anticipation of victory in the War in Heaven right after his reference to the time when God shall be "All and All" is telling. It suggests that Milton is comparing the triumphant good angels at the beginning of time to the blessed at the end of time. This implies that in the new heav'n and earth, the Son remains "chief" or preeminent in the hierarchy, and that obedience to a higher power, though "happiness entire," remains a requirement. There are suggestions of "literal autocracy" after all.

Lines 6.732-33 correspond more closely to 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 than the "pantheist" lines in Book 3 (339-43). The Oxford edition of *De Doctrina* presents Milton's source material more clearly and completely than Empson's quotation from Sumner's translation (i.e., the Columbia edition):

Then at last there will come that end [described in]⁶² 1 Cor. 15: 24–8: *then there will be an end, when he [i.e. Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the father; when he causes every empire and every ruling force and power to vanish: for he must reign until he has put all his foes under his feet. But the last enemy to vanish will be death: for 'he has subjected all things under his feet'.*⁶³ *But when he [i.e. the Psalmist] says that all things have been subjected to him [i.e. Jesus,] it is clear that this is being said: 'excepting him [i.e. God] who subjected all things to him'. But after all things have been subjected to him, then will the son himself also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.* (887, 889)

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton essentially rewrites the last sentence in poetic form. He renders "all things have been subjected to him [i.e. Jesus]" as the Blessed's oneness with the Son ("and in me all whom thou lov'st") and "then will the son himself also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him" as the Son's unity with the Father ("and I in thee / For ever"). The implication is that these two categories of subjection do not disappear

⁶² Comments in brackets are those of the editors of the Oxford edition of *De Doctrina*.

⁶³ Psalm 8:6.

when God becomes immanent. Unity or oneness then is merely a purified state of subjection or subordination to a superior entity. Moreover, *De Doctrina* suggests that the Father does not relinquish authority when the Son is exalted: “*when he [i.e. the Psalmist] says that all things have been subjected to him [i.e. Jesus,] it is clear that this is being said: ‘excepting him [i.e. God] who subjected all things to him.’*” Because, as this verse (1 Corinthians 15: 27) points out, the Father is not subordinated to the Son, his supreme authority is either concurrently maintained or temporarily unexercised. In either case, he cannot be said to have abdicated. After all, when the angels joyfully sing after the Son’s exaltation, they praise the Father as the “Eternal King” (3.374). Despite what Empson thinks, the Father is not King Lear.

Finally, read in the context of *De Doctrina* and lines 6.723-33, the “royal sceptre” is not only a symbol of royal power, but also an instrument of destruction during the end times. A few pages before the treatise mentions the time when God shall be “all in all,” while discussing the Son’s glorious kingdom during the second coming, Milton refers to the “iron rod” of Revelation 2:25-7 and Psalm 2: 8-9: *I shall give the nations into your possession, and the ends of the earth as a right for your possession: you will smash them with an iron rod; you will shatter them like a potter’s vessel*” (885). The “iron rod” is translated as a “sceptre of yron” in the Geneva bible: “Thou shalt crush [A. V. “break”] them with a sceptre of yron, and break [A.V. “dash”] them in pieces like a potters vessel.” In *Of Reformation*, Milton alludes to this passage when he mentions “the iron Scepter of [Christ’s] anger” (qtd. in Leonard, “Millennium” 271). Referring to this instrument as a “rod” emphasizes its destructive power, rather than its representation of regal sovereignty. In Milton’s account in *De Doctrina*, before God becomes All in All, the Son, evoking Psalm 2, first “*causes every empire and every ruling force and power to vanish: for he must reign until he has put all his foes under his feet. But the last enemy to vanish will be death: for ‘he has subjected all things under his feet.’*” Hence, when God tells the Son “Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by, / For regal sceptre no more shall need” (3.339-440), he means that there are not any more earthly kingdoms or anything else, even death, left to destroy. Similarly, in lines 6.723-33, the Son mentions “Sceptre and Power” that he “shall resign, when in the end” God “shall be All in All.” The sceptre then assumes the destructive aspects of the “the iron Scepter of [Christ’s] anger” when

the Son goes on to relate how he “Armed with [the Father’s] might, [will] rid Heav’n of these rebelled, / To their prepar’d ill mansion driven down / To chains of darkness, and th’ undying worm.” Ultimately, the sceptre brings about the end of all kingdoms, including the Son’s. Because the Son “*must reign until he has put all his foes under his feet,*” when he has done so, his own kingdom is at an end. The iron sceptre is also an instrument of judgment. As Fowler notes, “iron sceptres . . . were traditionally symbolic of rigorous justice” (522). When the Son turns over the kingdom to the father, he will also have completed the Last Judgment. *De Doctrina* is very emphatic about the end of the Son’s kingdom. Milton devotes an entire manuscript page trying to reconcile the Son’s handing the kingdom over to the father with passages in scripture that attest to his everlasting kingdom. According to him, the kingdom may be said to have no end because it will last “while the world’s ages endure, until ‘time shall be no more’, Rev. 10: 6” (889).

I suggest that while the Son lays down his iron sceptre, the Father retains his own “golden sceptre” when he assumes sole kingship of the new heaven and earth. Both Abdiel and Beelzebub refer to two sceptres, the iron and the golden. When Satan rejects the exalted Son, Abdiel foresees Satan’s defeat:

That golden sceptre which thou didst reject
Is now an iron rod to bruise and break
Thy disobedience. (5.886-88)

Abdiel, earlier in that scene, had said that the Son had been “by right endued / With regal sceptre” by the Father (5.815-16). Therefore, the golden sceptre and the iron rod are here two aspects of the same object. However, later on in time (though earlier in the poem), when the rebels are first cast into hell, Beelzebub laments that the “king of heaven” (2.316)

will reign
Sole king, and of his kingdom lose no part
By our revolt, but over hell extend
His empire, and with iron sceptre rule
Us here, as with his golden those in heaven. (2.324-28)

There is ambiguity as to who the wielder of the sceptre is. In Book 3, it is the Son, but in Book 2, it is the Father. In Book 2, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the fallen angels discuss their defeat at the hands of the “almighty victor,” that is, the Father,⁶⁴ and eschew mentioning the Son, though in Book 6, it is the Son who vanquishes them. Beelzebub speaks of a “Sole king,” but in Book 3, there two kings, the Father and the Son: the Son is “Anointed universal King” by the Father, but, as I mentioned above, the angels adore the Father as the “Eternal King” (3.317, 374), and Gabriel, when he confronts Satan in the Garden of Eden, refers to the Father as “Heav’n’s awful monarch” (4.960). The Father does not abdicate when he exalts the Son as prophesied in Book 3, so there is no reason to suppose that he abdicates or promises to abdicate at some later time when he exalts the Son in Book 5. Thus, the epic allows for the possibility that both the Son and the Father possess a sceptre. Of course, by referring to the Father as the only king in heaven, the devils are denying the kingship of the Son, whose exaltation led to their rebellion the first place. But this does not negate the possibility that the Father had wielded a sceptre prior to the Son’s anointing and afterwards continues to do so. Beelzebub speaks as if the Father had always ruled “those in heaven” with his golden sceptre. In any case, in Book 3, the Father seems to have two separate sceptres, the golden and the iron, and they are not referred to as “regal,” as the Son’s is in Books 3 and 5. When the Father tells the Son that “thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,” the Son’s sceptre is clearly specified. In the end of time then, the Son will “lay by” *his* sceptre because, having destroyed all earthly kingdoms and judged men and angels, “regal sceptre then no more shall need [i.e. be needed].” The regal sceptre, that is to say, the one with both golden and iron aspects that the Son holds, is no longer needful, but the passage does not say anything about the Father laying down his own sceptre (or sceptres), whether iron or golden. The implication of the passage is that since the Son “*hands over the kingdom to God the father,*” the Father, as sole “eternal” king of the final kingdom,

⁶⁴ The Father endows the Son with “all power” during the exaltation (3.317), but, in both *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina*, the word “almighty” pertains only to the Father. In 3.56 and 3.386, for example, Milton refers to God as the “Almighty Father.” *De Doctrina* [Oxford] 39 exhaustively discusses biblical references to God as the “Lord Almighty.” Not one of the proof-texts uses the word with reference to Christ.

keeps his own sceptre, which he shall continue to wield in golden benevolence. As Fowler notes, the “golden sceptre” represents “merciful equity” (722).

Empson, like myself, questions whether Milton was a millenarian. Firstly, that “Christ will receive the faithful into bliss ‘whether in Heaven or Earth’” (*Paradise Lost* 12.462-63) suggests that Milton was “doubtful” about the belief in a worldly, thousand-year reign (127). According to Fowler, “the millennium is speculated by Michael” in that short section of his conversation with Adam in Book 12 of *Paradise Lost* (575). In addition, as Empson sees it, the millennium has an “uncertain” and “controverted time scheme” (133): “*De Doctrina* [Book 1] Chapter XXXIII says that the glorious reign of Christ on earth will begin at the Last Judgment and ‘extend a little beyond its conclusion’; then the chapter goes on to name the thousand years, then it gives a still grander interpretation” (127). He suggests it is the result of “The difficulty of fitting in the extremely grand climax” of God’s abdication. His main objection is that “The doctrine of the end of time, if one takes it seriously, is already enough to make anything but Total Union (or else Total Separateness from God) hard to conceive” (133). As the New Covenant of Christ fulfills that of Moses and makes it “unnecessary,” so does Pantheism negate the millennium (132). However, in the lines from *Paradise Lost* that Empson cites, Milton does not allude to the millennium and express doubt about it: when Michael tells Adam that the Son will

reward

His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
Whether in heaven or earth, for then the earth
Shall be all paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days. (12.461-65)

Michael is referring to the “New heaven and earth” (3.335) of the final kingdom. After the final conflagration in the end of the world, both heaven and earth will be renewed such that each will be indistinguishable from the other. Furthermore, Empson inaccurately equates the kingdom of glory with the millennium and seemingly fails to realize that much of the elongated Last Judgment will occur during the thousand years of the millennium. Finally, as I have shown, the culminating point of historical time is not God’s abdication and the emergence of pantheism, but, rather, the end of the Son’s

kingdom and the refinement of the previous order, that is, the universal hierarchy under the Father's supremacy in the final kingdom.

While Empson is right to suggest that Milton is not millenarian, he reaches the right conclusion through the wrong reasons. Milton yearns for neither the future beginning of the Son's Kingdom nor a new world order at the end of time, but, instead, for the ultimate end of the Son's kingdom and a sublimation of the existing order. Indeed, as I shall also argue in the next section of this chapter, the Son's kingdom, for Milton, has already begun and that beginning is eternally recurring. Moreover, as I have demonstrated in this section, in the kingdom that Milton looks forward to, the Son will not be king; God will, as he will always have been. The Son's kingdom, in other words, is not an end in itself, but a means to effect the renewal of the hierarchical world. Milton never in fact explicitly mentions the millennium in the epic. However, in the concluding section of this chapter, I argue that he does implicitly assume an anti-millenarian position during the Son's exaltation in Book 3. The Son offers to humiliate himself to atone for man's sins and mentions being "long absent" from heaven while on his earthly mission, perhaps long enough to preside over a millennial reign or, if Milton's mortalism were applied, to be dead until the Last Judgment. The Father in Book 3, and Michael, later in Book 12, correct the Son by including his ascension into heaven after his crucifixion in their narratives of the Son's first and second advents. The mortalist reading, if accurate, would obviate the millennium altogether.

C.S. Lewis argues that Milton was "enchanted" by hierarchy: "Everything that he greatly cares about demands order, proportion, measure, and control. In poetry he considers *decorum* the grand masterpiece" (78-79). He might be overstating his case given Milton's revolutionary sympathies, but Milton did subscribe to the Father's hierarchical organization of the universe. Consequently, hierarchy will still exist in the new heaven and earth. As Milton writes in *Reason of Church-Government*,

Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into their celestial principdoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of heaven. The state

also of the blessed in paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of new Jerusalem. (qtd. in 79, Wolfe I.752)

According to Lewis, continuing to quote from *Reason of Church-Government*, “there will be discipline in Heaven ‘that our happiness may orb itself into a thousand vagaries of glory and delight, and with a kind of eccentric equation be, as it were, an invariable planet of joy and felicity’” (79, qtd. in 79, Wolfe I.752). Empson, perhaps because he can only, as Lewis puts it, “try to feel as if he believed” when reading Milton, dreams of a future “radical” pantheism (132) that evokes enlightened dictatorship, democracy, and even communism. He thus falls victim into the same trap, set by ideologically oriented scholarship, that Lewalski, Loewenstein, Revard, and others fall into when they argue for Milton’s radical millenarianism.

3.2 “This day I have begot”

Precisely when did the Son’s kingdom begin? Milton denies us an easy answer to this question. The epic points to multiple exaltations of the Son and thus to his kingdom’s multiple beginnings. Each time we consider one beginning, there always is another one that precedes it. In Book 3, for example, when before the fall the Son volunteers to die an earthly death for man’s redemption, the Father declares to the assembled angels that the Son will gain a future glorious kingship during the Last Judgment (3.313-33), yet the Father’s pronouncement itself also exalts the Son in the prelapsarian present of the speech (3.317-20, 341-43). Moreover, in the Father’s pronouncement and in Michael’s speech to Adam in Book 12, the Son’s ascension into heaven after the crucifixion is another exaltation that will occur more immediately prior to that of the Last Judgment. This one will begin the Son’s spiritual kingdom (4.485-539). Another prelapsarian exaltation, which establishes the Son’s supremacy over the angels, antedates all these in Raphael’s narrative of the War in Heaven to Adam in Book 5. It takes place before (and directly provokes) Satan’s rebellion, but it only seems to be the primordial beginning.

In that scene, all the angels gather before the throne of the Father, mirroring the exaltation of Book 3, and the Father says,

Hear all ye angels, progeny of light,
 Thrones, dominations, principdoms, virtues, powers,
 Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.
 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 my self have sworn to him shall bow
 All knees in heaven, and shall confess him Lord:
 Under his great vicegerent reign abide
 United as one individual soul
 For ever happy: him who disobeys
 Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day
 Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
 Into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place
 Ordained without redemption, without end. (5.600-15)

Critics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Saurat and Empson, were confused by this passage. They took “begot” to mean the literal begetting or creation of the Son, which would have thus had occurred on the same day as the inauguration of his “vicegerent” reign. They saw this as glaringly inconsistent with Abdiel’s declaration to Satan that the Father, through the agency of the Son, had created “All things,” including angels (6.835-38). The entire heavenly host is present when God exalts the Son, so how could the Son have caused the angels to come into being when he himself had just been formed (Leonard, *Faithful* 440)? Moreover, the Son’s rise to power seemed brazenly abrupt and the Father’s favoritism oppressive. For Empson, writing in 1935, Milton inserted this contradiction purposefully. In a forced conclusion that conflates the Father’s status with that of the Son, Empson writes that God is “a usurping angel” and hence we can give Satan our “heartiest admiration” (qtd. in 440). However, Empson was unaware that Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson had by then made an important breakthrough nine years earlier: the metaphorical meaning of “begot” in scripture is “exalted,” as Milton himself acknowledges when discussing the biblical sources of the

passage (Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1:5) in *De Doctrina* (see 131, 505). The autocratic character of the heavenly regime of the Father and the Son is thus mitigated. Grierson also wrote about this eureka moment in his 1937 book *Milton and Wordsworth*, which dealt a major blow to critics who admired Satan, but, as Leonard reminds us, he had already written about it in a review of Saurat's book, dated in 1926. The appearance of his findings in a minor publication explains why it did not initially enjoy widespread notice (434, 440).

The literal begetting of the Son, which is thus yet another beginning altogether, is a mysterious event that complicates the apparent primordially of the Son's exaltation in Book 5. Milton omits this from the narrative, and, except that we are told that he was the agent of creation, the Son's status prior to this exaltation is completely unknown. Similarly, Satan's own moment of creation is not depicted in the poem. After the Son is anointed king, Satan addresses the vast "host" of angels under his command and questions the Son's new authority (5.744, 771-802). Abdiel, the loyal seraph, challenges him, and it is at this point where Abdiel tells Satan that the Son had created the angels, implying that though the Son had therefore been greater than the angels, they are "not by his reign obscured, / But more illustrious made, since he the head, / One of our number thus reduced becomes" (5.841-43). Satan responds, mocking the language of the Son's exaltation:

strange point and new!

Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: 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. (5.855-61)

But Satan, whose own kingship is to be a corruption of the Son's, evokes only one beginning. By "self-begot," Satan means both self-created *and* self-exalted. As A. J. A. Waldock observes, Abdiel is in fact providing completely new information about their creation since Satan calls it into question in front of all the other "Innumerable" angels (5.745), who do not dispute him (71). Satan is thus sincere when he suggests that angels

do not remember their own beginnings. As if all this were not enough, Fowler observes in his edition of *Paradise Lost* (713) that the Son is begot, that is, exalted, on two more occasions later on during the War in Heaven, when he mounts the Father's chariot (6.749-72) and after he routs the rebel angels:

he celebrated rode
Triumphant through mid Heav'n, into the courts
And temple of his mighty Father throned
On high: who into glory him received,
Where now he sits at the right hand of bliss. (6.888-92)

Even the mere suggestion by the Father that the Son ascend the chariot is a begetting of this nature. As the Son tells the Father:

thou always seek'st
To glorify thy Son, I always thee,
As is most just; this I my glory account,
My exaltation, and my whole delight,
That thou in me well pleased, declar'st thy will
Fulfilled, which to fulfil is all my bliss. (6.724-29)

The father does indeed "always" endeavor to "glorify" the Son. As Fowler writes, Milton "seems to have envisaged a series of 'metaphorical generations' and exaltations" (713). By doing this and locating the literal begettings of the Son and the angels in time immemorial and shrouding them in mystery, Milton emphasizes that, despite the millenarians' fervent anticipation of a new beginning, the Son's kingdom has in fact already begun.

Critics have also been puzzled by Milton's inclusion of the two similar, ritualistic, prelapsarian exaltations of the Son by the Father before angelic audiences, the one in Book 5, which is quoted above, and the other in Book 3. The latter occurs later in the time scheme of the narrative than the former, though it appears earlier in the poem. The Father has just revealed that Satan, who is en route to the newly created earth, will succeed in tempting Adam and Eve. The Son then expresses his willingness to atone for man's transgressions by becoming a man himself and dying, and the Father, though Book 5 tells us that he had already done so, rewards him by making him a king:

Because thou hast, though throned in highest bliss
 Equal to God, and equally enjoying
 Godlike fruition, quitted all to save
 A world from utter loss, and hast been found
 By merit more then birthright Son of God,
 Found worthiest to be so by being good,
 Far more then great or high; because in thee
 Love hath abounded more then glory abounds,
 Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt
 With thee thy manhood also to this Throne;
 Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
 Both God and man, Son both of God and man,
 Anointed universal King, all power
 I give thee, reign for ever, and assume
 Thy merits; under thee as head supreme
 Thrones, principedoms, powers, dominions I reduce:
 All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
 In heaven, or earth, or under earth in hell,
 When thou attended gloriously from heaven
 Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send
 The summoning archangels to proclaim
 Thy dread tribunal: forthwith from all winds
 The living, and forthwith the cited dead
 Of all past Ages to the general doom
 Shall hasten, such a peal shall rouse their sleep.
 Then all thy saints assembled, thou shalt judge
 Bad men and Angels, they arraigned shall sink
 Beneath thy sentence; hell her numbers full,
 Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. (3.305-33)

Grant McColley in *Paradise Lost, an Account of its Growth and Major Origins* (1940)
 points to “the impropriety of describing God as twice exalting the Son” as “Such a Divine

Decree as the Exaltation was as irrevocable as it was eternal” (qtd. in Empson 99). According to Empson, “Book III and V, on this view, must report the same scene in Heaven, and different aspects of it were merely separated for the literary requirements of epic construction.” He notes, as I have above, that the Son is exalted again after the war in Heaven and that one possibility, which he thinks doubtful, is that “the purposes of the Father though eternal were realized gradually in time” (99). For his part, Allan H. Gilbert in *On the Composition of ‘Paradise Lost’: A Study of the Ordering and Insertion of Materials* (1947) hints that “the duplication . . . resulted from the late composition of Book III” (qtd. in Danielson 220), and McColley similarly accounts for the perceived anomaly by suggesting that the sequence of poem’s plot points was determined by Milton only after a substantial amount of the poetry had been written (Empson 99). Other scholars contend that Milton equivocated or wrote carelessly (Danielson 220).

Empson proposes an easy solution to the problem: “God foreknew the effects of the first exaltation of the Son” in Book 5, that is, Satan’s rebellion, his temptation of Adam and Eve, and the subsequent fall of man, and “indeed exalted the Son because he foreknew the Son would choose the Incarnation,” during which the Son would redeem mankind through his own death (100). In arguing against the Fortunate Fall, Dennis Danielson presents a more radical explanation. In his view, Milton highlights the prelapsarian exaltation of the Son in Book 5 as “head” of the angels in order to suggest that the Son’s kingdom necessitates neither an angelic fall nor a human one (221). Moreover, Danielson elaborates on a note in Fowler’s edition of *Paradise Lost* that “Abdiel appears to regard the Messiah’s kingship over the Angels as a kind of incarnation” in his admonition of the rebellious angels in 5.842-5 (qtd. in 222): “just as the ‘humiliation’ of the Son’s human incarnation, foretold by God in Book 3, ‘will exalt / With [him his] manhood’ (3.313-14), so the angels, as Abdiel asserts, are not ‘obscured’ by the Son’s reign but rather ‘more illustrious made, since he the head / One of our number thus reduced becomes’ (5.841-3)” (222-23). The implication is that even if Adam and Eve had not transgressed, man would still have enjoyed this “gracious condescension of the Son towards God’s creatures” within “a Christocentric universe” (224). Danielson writes that “the Son’s being ‘proclaimed / Messiah king anointed’ in every sense precedes the Fall (5.663-4).” In other words, “If either Adam or Milton’s reader hears the

echo of those words spoken in book 5, he will have cause to recall also that that anointing of the Messiah was an accomplished fact before the Fall, indeed before the foundation of the world” (222).

I suggest that the Son’s exaltation in Book 5 does not precede the Fall in every sense. For instance, it is not questionable that the Son is named “Messiah king anointed,” but shortly afterwards, just before the outbreak of the War on Heaven, God commands Abdiel to join Michael’s angelic host and engage with the rebels, who “refuse . . . for their king / Messiah, who by right of merit reigns” (6.41, 43). As William B. Hunter observes, the Son merits his kingship only after the crucifixion, which is yet to happen far in the future and as a consequence of the Fall (“Exaltation” 222-23). I argue that McColley and Gilbert are in a sense correct. The exaltations in Book 3 and Book 5, and all other exaltations of the Son and beginnings of his kingdom, are, in a manner of speaking, the same event. They are eternal recurrences of the primordial beginning that manifests during discrete historical occasions. Since that first beginning, which occurs even before the earliest chronological event in the epic, that is, the exaltation in Book 5, and through each successive beginning, the Father constantly seeks to connect with creation through the Son and the Son’s kingdom. This connection is enabled by the incarnation or humiliation of the Son that, as Danielson argues, accompanies each of his exaltations. Stevie Davies makes a similar point about the exaltation in Book 5 and uses the same speech by Abdiel as evidence. According to her, in order to attain a “closeness” and “a greater equality among the community of Heaven” such that the Son is a “*primus inter pares*” for the angels, “the godhead must descend and reduce itself, while simultaneously exalting the community” (162). This is the essential nature of the Son’s kingdom, for God and his creatures to, as the Father puts it, “Under [the Son’s] great vicegerent reign abide / United as one individual soul / For ever happy” (5.609-11). Abdiel expresses this sentiment eloquently. Trying to reassure Satan, who is about to rebel, he says,

How provident [the Father] is, how far from thought
To make us less, bent rather to exalt
Our happy state under one head [the Son’s] more near
United. (5.828-31)

I contend that one particular humiliation of the Son has a preeminent and eternally resonant effect that is both recurrent and retroactive: the Son's incarnation and mortal death. It is this ultimate humiliation that makes the eternal recurrence of these beginnings possible. This explains why the Son literally "by right of merit reigns" long before the event that earns him that right. In other words, the Father's renewed invitation to his creatures to partake in union with him through the Son's sacrifice is so powerful and efficacious that it eternally reverberates backwards and forwards in time. Thus, the Son's kingdom in its fullest sense is not to be sought in a future millennium, it is already manifest, and Milton implies that it has been manifest since the literal begetting of the Son in the beginning of time.

In the context of previous scholarship on the Son's exaltations, I shall discuss a passage on Christ's "mediatorial office" in *De Doctrina* that corroborates this notion of the eternally recurrent beginnings of the Son's kingdom. Moreover, besides the Son's kingship by merit during the War of Heaven, other elements in the epic suggest that the Son's kingdom is eternally recurrent in the way I have described. The iron sceptre, discussed above, used by the Son to defeat the rebel angels during the War in Heaven, is primarily associated with the kingdoms the Son is to establish during his incarnation and second coming; it serves to assert that the beginnings of those future kingdoms are merely recurrences of previous beginnings. The epic itself alludes to the Son's mediatorial office, when the Father deploys the Son to expel Satan and his cohorts from heaven, and gives particular emphasis to the Son's mediatorial role as king, but the Son's agency as mediator between God and man only comes into effect after death. The intermingling of different verb tenses and the critical pun "quitted" in the Son's exaltation in Book 3 before the fall of man, which conflate past and future time frames, hint at the retroactive effect of the Son's humiliation during the Passion. Finally, I shall argue that language of Book 12 suggests that Adam and Eve have access to the Son's kingdom, that is, "the Paradise within," precisely by virtue of this retroactive effect. To conclude this section of the chapter, I shall return to *De Doctrina*. Its chapter on "unfinished Glorification" suggests that the faithful need not yearn for the millennium to attain a radical transformation of the world. Union with God and the bliss that comes with it are already imperfectly but sufficiently attainable through the Son's kingdom, his

spiritual kingdom, that is, and will be perfectly and completely so in the final kingdom when God shall be “All in All.”

Critics have recognized the recurrence in Milton’s work and in Christian doctrine before, but only on a metaphorical or typological level. For instance, the exaltations in Books 3 and 5 present no difficulty for Davies. She writes that

In the vision of Christian truth . . . there is no real past, present, or future in a simple linear sense. The great circle of eternity; the recurrence of events, images, persons, postures; the looping movements of the narrative; the tight circles of human history repeating our fall invincibly—all forbid any merely chronological interpretation of the poem.

However, this sort of recurrence only serves to “keep insisting upon a basic wholeness of meaning within the poem.” The Son’s willingness to humiliate himself on man’s behalf, which “has been offered directly in [the exaltation in] Book 3,” is, as Davies rather indecorously puts it, “present in [the exaltation in] Book 5 in a *buried* form” (150, my emphasis). But ultimately the Son’s offer is solely “the condition upon which the first exaltation to kingship in the poem (though second in time) is made” (i.e., the Book 3 exaltation) (152). I suggest that, for Milton, the ultimate fulfillment of that offer, that is, the Son’s incarnation and death, is the precondition upon which *all* exaltations of the Son in the poem are made. The recurrences in Milton are not just figurative; they have very real effects. When Milton says that the Son “by right of merit reigns” during the War in Heaven, he means that the Son has literally already earned that right, despite the fact that his incarnation and death are in the future.

Davies builds her discussion on the research of Hunter, who, as I mentioned above, calls attention to the temporal anomalies associated with the Son’s exaltations. Hunter also approaches the issue from a standpoint of metaphor. Focusing on the Son’s exaltation in Book 5 and the War in Heaven that it sparks, Hunter argues that Milton

is simultaneously narrating there three events from three very different points in time: first, the surface narrative of the fall of the angels, which took place before the foundation of the world; second, the defeat of Satan and his fellow devils described in Revelation, which will take place at the

end of time; and third and most important, the exaltation of the Son of God, which took place concomitantly with his resurrection as the incarnate God-man. All three of these events, from the beginning, middle, and end of time, are to be viewed as being simultaneously and metaphorically present in the one narrative framework. (223)

For Hunter, the Son's exaltation at the beginning of time is merely a representation of the Son's exaltation during his resurrection. Similarly, Patrides talks about how the final apocalyptic battle is "transferred" into the "remote past" of the war in Heaven. This, according to him, mirrors the book of Revelation, which presents a view of history as perceived from the eternal time of heaven: "History's design thus apprehended, it will be recognized not only that the past and the present are anticipatory of the future but that the future is inherent in the past and that both are present in the present." (229). More recently, Stephen Fallon writes that "Christ's passion is both a unique event in history and a sacrifice played out at all times since" but Milton is only "playing with the ancient Christian theme of the intersection of the timeless with time" (250). However, Milton does more than play with this theme. He does more than assume the perspective of eternal time in heaven. And the effects of the Son's humiliation are tangible long before the Passion takes place. Scholars have been minimizing the recurring beginnings of Christ's kingdoms for too long. These beginnings do not "forbid any *merely* chronological interpretation of the poem," as Davies suggests (150), nor are "different aspects" of the Son's exaltation, in Empson's paraphrase of McColley, "*merely* separated for the literary requirements of epic construction" (99). Chronology profoundly operates as events flow in both sequential and reverse order. There is more than metaphor here.

It is illuminating to consider Hunter's argument in some detail. He revisits Grierson's breakthrough concerning the word "begot," and points out that Psalm 2, the primary biblical source text of the Book 5 exaltation, was seen as an allusion to the "historical Christ," particularly his resurrection and subsequent exaltation: "Yet have I [the Father] set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron" (qtd. in "Exaltation" 216, Psalm

2:6-9). In the chapter on the Son of God in *De Doctrina* (Book 1, Chapter 5), Milton does assert that “the Father [is] said in Scripture to have begotten the Son in a double sense, the one literal, with reference to the production of the Son, the other metaphorical, with reference to his exaltation,” and he does use Psalm 2 as an example of the latter sense:

Further, it will be apparent from the second Psalm, that Christ has begotten the Son, that is, has made him king: v. 6. “yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion”; and then in the next verse, after having anointed his King, whence the name of *Christ* is derived, he says, “this day have I begotten thee.”

But in the same section of the treatise Milton writes that “beget” also metaphorically means the Son’s “resuscitation from the dead,” citing as one of his proof texts “Paul’s interpretation” of the psalm in Acts 13:33: “God hath fulfilled the promise unto us . . . , in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second Psalm; Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Hunter also discusses the other biblical source text of the exaltation in Book 5, Hebrews 1, which also refers to the resurrection and suggests that “beget” means both exaltation and resurrection on a metaphorical level (*De Doctrina* [Columbia]. 14:183, “Exaltation” 216-17). Hunter thus has to ask, “how can the Son be begotten or exalted as *Paradise Lost* V, 600 ff., describes the event, exciting the revolt of angels which took place before the creation of the world, when the begetting actually refers to Christ’s resurrection from the dead at the beginning of our own millennium?” (217).⁶⁵

Moreover, Hunter observes that the glorification of the Son, which according to *De Doctrina* occurs only after, and as a result of, the Son’s resurrection and “concomitant exaltation” (217), is in effect in *Paradise Lost* “throughout the poem, long before the incarnation” (220-21):

Thus at the first introduction of the Son in the poem, he is described as being “the radiant image of [the Father’s] Glory” (III, 63), he is “most

⁶⁵ This is an error since the resurrection was two millennia ago. Hunter might have the millennial reign in mind because in the article he suggests that the exaltation in Book 5 alludes to “the defeat of Satan and his fellow devils described in the Book of Revelation” (223), which happens at the end of the thousand years. But he never mentions millenarianism in the article.

glorious” (III, 139), is the glory of the Father (III, 388, and V, 719), and so on. Apparently as the immediate result of his offer to save mankind, the paternal glory becomes visibly manifest in the Son (III, 141, 386; see also X, 66). Likewise he is regularly pictured at the Father’s right hand—from, indeed, the earliest time in the poem when the Father “begets” him, coincidentally revealing him there (V, 606). (221)

Hunter, however, fudges in the last sentence and uses the present tense. The Father says, “This day I have *begot* whom I declare / My only Son, and on this holy hill” (5.603-04, emphasis mine). The Father’s use of the past tense is telling. The exaltation had already happened prior to the Father’s declaration to the angels. Strictly speaking, the Father suggests that it had occurred earlier in the day, but the emphasis is on the exaltation as a past event, one that on the surface level had just happened, but on a deeper level had “already” happened in the future. In contrast, when Sin recounts to Satan her spectacularly gruesome birth from his head, the actual begetting itself is described, as if it were presently happening (2.746-67). It is not relegated to a nebulous past.

Hunter also connects this glorification of the Son to his questions concerning the Son’s merits as the savior of mankind, which I have discussed above. Hence, as the War in Heaven draws to a conclusion, “the fullness of his Sonship is made fully manifest” by the Father:

Into thee such virtue and grace
Immense I have transfused, that all may know
In heaven and hell thy power above compare,
And this perverse commotion governed thus,
To manifest thee worthiest to be heir
Of all things, to be heir and to be king
By sacred unction, thy deservèd right. (6.703-09, qtd. in 221)

The son may meritoriously defeat Satan and his cohorts in the present time of the War in Heaven, but to do so would only validate the “sacred unction” which is administered by God during his initial exaltation in 6.600-615 and his “deserved right” by virtue of something other than his victory over the fallen angels, who had yet to rebel when he is anointed. Furthermore, in addition to his reigning by merit mentioned in 6.43, he is Son

“by merit more than birthright” (3.309, qtd. in 222), and the Father enjoins him to “assume / Thy Merits” (3.318-9, qtd. in 222). The examples from Book 6 are the most striking. Those in Book 3 might be excused by pointing to the Son’s obedient willingness to undergo humiliation on behalf of man, but the reference to merit in Book 6, occurring as they do before the Son participates in the War in Heaven, are completely unearned from strictly chronological perspective.

As I mentioned, Hunter concludes that Milton metaphorically evokes three different periods of biblical time. To support his case, Hunter quotes and paraphrases from the chapter “OF THE OFFICE OF THE MEDIATOR [CHRIST] AND OF HIS THREEFOLD FUNCTION” from the Sumner translation of *De Doctrina* (Book 1, Chapter 15):

As prophet he has enlightened his church since the world was created. As priest he “once offered himself to God the Father as a sacrifice for sinners” (XV, 291), where Milton says that “once offered” means that he did this “*virtually* [virtute] and as regarded the efficacy of his sacrifice, from the foundation of the world”—an offer “*actually* [ipso facto][”]⁶⁶ carried out later in the course of time (XV, 293, 294). (qtd. in 219)

Hunter also quotes Calvinist theologian Amandus Polanus, who asserts that Christ “was mediator as being *incarnandus* (about to become flesh), just as he is now our mediator as being *incarnatus* (become flesh)”. In the view of Polanus, “things done and to be done, present and future are in the same place” and beyond the scope of time as far as the divine perspective is concerned (qtd. in 220, 220) and “All things which become in time are said to have been in God from eternity; not by their own real essence, not through a formal *esse* but through the virtual *esse*” (qtd. in 224). This is similar to Empson’s point that God exalts the Son in Book 5 because he foreknew that the Son would offer himself for mankind (100). In Hunter’s assessment, “Milton is describing the event by a metaphorical interpretation of time (‘today’ from Psalm 2), just as he is metaphorically interpreting ‘begot.’ The whole of this section of the poem is, accordingly, to be read as one enormous metaphor. . . a metaphor which has three different temporal interpretations,

⁶⁶ Hunter omits a close quotation mark here. He also supplies the original Latin wording. Volume and page numbers are of the Columbia edition of *De Doctrina*.

three different events which will later be realized in time and which collectively span all of time' (225). Hence, the exaltation of the Son in Book 5 is for Hunter a metaphorical exaltation by the Father that represents the actual one that takes place when Christ resurrects from the dead (227). Similarly the Son "virtually offers himself to atone for the sins of mankind" in 3.227 ff., which occurs before the fall of man.

However, Hunter does not fully attend to the fact that "as regarded the efficacy of his sacrifice" Christ offers himself "from the foundation of the world." In other words, Christ's death on the cross has real, and non-metaphorical, effects that extend backward all the way to the beginning of time and forward to the end of time. It is retroactively and recurrently efficacious, and the full quotation from the Oxford translation of the pertinent passages from *De Doctrina* makes this clear:

His priestly function is that whereby Christ once and for all offered himself to God the father as a sacrificial victim for sinners, and has always made and still now makes intercession for us Once and for all offered. Indeed, virtually and effectively [he offered himself] from the very beginning of the world as stated above . . . Rev. 13.8; but in actual fact at the 'perfecting of the ages' and 'once and for all' at that. (501, 503)

On one level, the Son's offer to humiliate himself in 3.227 ff. is "virtual" or "metaphorical," but since it leads to Satan's rebellion, it has effects that are undeniably real. The proof text, Revelation 13:8 is quite blunt: "the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world." By virtue of the fact that this passage from *De Doctrina* refers to the Son's ultimate humiliation and its continuous retroactive and recurrent effects, I argue that this is evidence for the eternally recurring beginnings of the Son's kingdom.

The Son's kingdom as it will be fully manifest in the future thus exerts a presence in the universe for all time. The kingdom has in a real sense always been there, so a millennium need not be yearned for. Because the Son has effectively offered himself from the beginning of time, he literally reigns by merit during the War in Heaven. As Davies writes of the exaltation in Book 3, where the Son is "found / By merit more than birthright Son of God" (308-09): "Here God first explicitly repudiates hereditary rule in favor of elective rule on a meritocratic basis" (152). I suggest Milton needs the Son's

kingship in the earlier Book 5 exaltation to be based on merit just as much, and relies on the retroactive efficacy of the Son's ultimate humiliation to endow the Son with merit at that earlier time. A king with only metaphorical merit would have been insufficient. Danielson's argument that Adam and Eve need not fall in order for the Son's kingdom to be established (through his incarnation) is therefore less than satisfactory because the Son would not merit his rule if the first parents had not transgressed. The retroactive efficacy of the Son's sacrifice also manifests in the Son's regal sceptre in Books 5 and 6. This regal sceptre is principally a symbol of the Son's future kingdoms of his first and second advents, as suggested by the biblical source texts of the Book 5 exaltation, Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1. Both mention sceptres, the former an "iron sceptre" and the latter a "sceptre of righteousness" (1:8), and refer to the exaltation during the resurrection. And, as I discussed, Milton in *De Doctrina* also associates the iron sceptre with the destruction of earthly kingdoms during the second coming (885). However, in *Paradise Lost*, the Son has been wielding the same sceptre since the far distant past of prelapsarian heaven.⁶⁷ This suggests that the future beginnings of the Son's kingdom are not new ones, but, rather, recurrences of beginnings that have already come to pass. Moreover, when the Son uses the iron sceptre against the devils during the War in Heaven, he does so not as an unworthy avenger. His future humiliation for man merits his use of the destructive implement during his second coming and, because his ultimate sacrifice reverberates backward in time, during the War in Heaven as well. Finally, the "iron sceptre" is significant in the exaltation of Book 5 because it is an aspect of the kingly function of Christ's mediatorial office. *De Doctrina* does not explicitly say, as it does about the priestly and prophetic functions, that the kingly function is "virtually and effectively" demonstrable from the beginning of the world. According to the treatise, it begins to manifest during the incarnation (489). But Milton includes Psalm 2, verse 9, on the "iron rod" as one of the proof texts for how the Son "conquers and subdues" his enemies

⁶⁷ Revard (57) and Sarah Hutton (37) suggest that the regal sceptre that the Son is to "lay by" at the end of the world when he surrenders his kingdom to the Father (3.339) just possibly hints that the Son will rule a millennial kingdom at his second coming. However, as Book 5 of *Paradise Lost* indicates, the Son has been wielding this same sceptre since his first exaltation before the Satan's rebellion and the fall of man. The regal sceptre thus does not signify the millennium, but, rather, the Son's kingdom that began before the beginning of history and that begins again and again.

during the second coming as part of this kingly function (507, 885). Thus, all three functions of the Son's mediatorial office, something that is established only during the Son's first advent, effectively resonate during the War in Heaven. The epic even seems to explicitly refer to this when the Father sends off the Son to expel the rebel angels from heaven. He tells him

to manifest thee worthiest to be heir
Of all things, to be heir and to be king
By sacred unction, thy deserved right.

“Unction” can simply mean the Son's anointing as king, but it also evokes the same language Milton uses in *De Doctrina* to describe the Son's “unction to the mediatorial office [*mediatoris munera unctionem*]” ([Columbia] 130-31).

The fluidity and ambiguity of verb tenses in the Son's exaltation of Book 3 (3.274-343) also suggest that the beginning of the Son's kingdom recurs due to the retroactive efficaciousness of his ultimate humiliation. Empson noticed this, writing that

The Father first says he *will* give the Son all power, then in the present tense ‘I give thee’; yet had given it already [during the Book 3 exaltation], or at least enough to cause Satan and his followers to revolt. Without so much as a full stop, the Father next says that the time when he will give it is the Day of Judgment, and the climax of the speech is to say that immediately after that ‘God shall be All in All’. The eternal gift of the Father is thus to be received only on the Last Day, and handed back the day after. (133)

However, Empson connects this to the “controverted time scheme of the millennium” (133). Fowler also comments on the tenses in this scene, writing that “The overall effect is of a timeless meditation, or of a comprehensive vision that enfolds many different temporal perspectives” (578). According to him, this reflects the timeless perspective of God. I suggest that the shifts in tenses are more significant than that.

The Father begins his speech by telling the Son,
Well thou know'st how dear,
To me are all my works, nor man the least

Though last created, that for him *I spare*
 Thee from my bosom and right hand, to have,
 By losing thee awhile, the whole race lost. (3.276-80)

The present tense of “I spare” (i.e., part with) suggests at the onset that the fall has already happened and that Christ’s humiliation is a present occurrence. The verbs then shift to the future tense and an imperative voice that indicates futurity. For example, the Father tells the Son, “be thou in Adam’s room [i.e., place] / The head of all mankind.” According to him, Adam’s “crime makes guilty all his sons, thy merit / Imputed shall absolve them who renounce / Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds.” And, as he sees it, “So man, as is most just, / Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die, / And dying rise” (3.285-86, 290-92, 294-96). But then the Father abruptly shifts from future to the present perfect and present progressive tenses:

Nor *shalt* thou by descending to assume
 Man’s nature, *lessen* or *degrade* thine own.
 Because thou *hast*, though throned in highest bliss
 Equal to God, and equally enjoying
 Godlike fruition, *quitted* all to save
 A world from utter loss, and *hast been found*
 By merit more than birthright Son of God,
 Found worthiest to be so by being good,
 Far more then great or high; because in thee
 Love *hath abounded* more than glory abounds. (3.303-12, emphasis mine)

It is as if the Son’s having “quitted all to save / A world from utter loss” and love having “abounded more than glory abounds” are actions that have already been completed in the past. That the Son has “been found / By merit more than birthright Son of God” seems like an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and will continue in the future. Of course, at this point in the epic the Son’s humiliation is far in the future. This humiliation thus is retroactively effective during the Book 3 exaltation.

Besides its tense, the word “quitted” is a rich and crucial pun, as Leonard and Fowler note (749, 578). It conflates not only past, present, and future, but also the key aspects of the Son’s first mission on earth, that is, his incarnation, his atonement for

man's sins, his death, and his exaltation. "Quit" can mean "to renounce" (*OED* 10), and the Son has just offered to renounce his divinity. He tells his Father, "Account me man; I for his sake will leave / Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee / Freely put off" (3.238-40). This kenosis will occur during his incarnation in the future, but his having offered to relinquish a divine nature he already possesses gives the action immediacy in time.

"Quit" can also mean "redeem" or "set free" (6a), "to pay (a debt, penalty, due, etc.)" (1a), or to "remit or cancel (a debt)" (9). "Quitted" in this sense entirely refers to a future action, the Son's redemption of man, who has yet to transgress. The word can also mean "to leave or go away from (a place or person); to separate from or part with" (11). In this sense, "quitted" suggests the Son's future death as a mortal, just as "quit" does Samson's demise in Manoa's last line in *Samson Agonistes*: "Samson hath quit himself / Like Samson" (1709-10). As Leonard notes, Samson has "left his life" (942). One might therefore hear "The Son hath quit himself like the Son" in the phrase "Quitted all."

"Quit" can also mean to "stop" or "give up" (13c) or "leave, resign, or withdraw from (a job, occupation, institution, etc.)" (13). This sense brings us back to the present wherein the Son implicitly undermines the yearning for a future beginning of his kingdom.

Millenarians longed for such a beginning, but the kingdom had begun a long time ago, so much so that it is as if the Son is at the point where he is giving it up or resigning his kingship (as he will do at the end of time) in a paradoxical way. In any case, the kingdom will begin again and yet again. Thus with sublime economy, Milton collapses time and meaning to the extent that the retroactive effects of the Son's humiliation are powerfully foregrounded and the Son's incarnation, atonement for man, death, and exaltation are indistinguishable from each other. The Son accomplishes one mighty, multifaceted action efficaciously for all time. No wonder neither the Son nor the Father mentions the gory details of the sacrifice itself. They are secondary, or simply not germane at all, to the breathtakingly moving act of communion offered by the creator, through the beautiful mediation of the Son, to all of creation. Though he is unable to explain the need for the Son to die by crucifixion in the first place, Empson was right to observe that from the perspective of the Son and the Father, "death by torture was such a trivial sacrifice" (129).

To return to the mercurial tenses of the Father's speech, the Father shifts back to future tense after presenting the Son's humiliation and his meriting kingship as, in a manner of speaking, past events. However, as Empson notes, the Father almost immediately returns to the present tense, suggesting that the exaltation during the resurrection is a recurrence of the exaltation just before the Fall of Man:

Here *shalt* thou *sit* incarnate, here *shalt reign*
 Both God and man, Son both of God and man,
 Anointed universal King, all power
I give thee, reign for ever, and assume
 Thy merits; under thee as head supreme
 Thrones, principdoms, powers, dominions *I reduce*. (3.315-20, emphasis mine)

Then, again as Empson observes, the Father suddenly shifts back to the future tense and emphatically persists with that tense for several lines, which puts particular emphasis on the Son's glorious kingdom as his final kingdom, the one that will precede his abdication:

All knees to thee *shall bow*, of them that bide
 In heaven, or earth, or under earth in hell,
 When thou attended gloriously from heaven
Shalt in the sky *appear*, and from thee send
 The summoning archangels to proclaim
 Thy dread tribunal: forthwith from all winds
 The living, and forthwith the cited dead
 Of all past Ages to the general doom
Shall hasten, such a peal *shall rouse* their sleep.
 Then all thy saints assembled, thou *shalt judge*
 Bad men and Angels, they arraigned *shall sink*
 Beneath thy sentence; hell her numbers full,
 Thenceforth *shall be* for ever shut. Mean while
 The world *shall burn*, and from her ashes spring
 New heaven and earth, wherein the just *shall dwell*
 And *after all their tribulations long*

See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With joy and love triumphing, and fair Truth.
 Then thou thy regal sceptre *shalt lay* by,
 For regal sceptre then no more *shall need*,
 God *shall be* all in all.

At the end of the speech, and recalling its beginning, the Father abruptly reverts to the present tense and an imperative voice that demands present submission:

But all ye gods,
 Adore him, who to compass all this dies,
 Adore the Son, and honour him as me. (3.305-33, emphasis mine)

There is a sense that the Son is dying for man in the present, and that angels must recognize the future sacrifice as if it were happening now before their eyes. Davies makes a similar observation about the exaltation in Book 5: “the account of the clustering angels around the deity suggests a kind of pity. . . . The son ‘bliss embosomed’ is made out of the ache of his assumption of mortality, built upon the agony of the garden, founded on the grief yet to be encountered.” For her, this effect is “seemingly unaccountable” except that Hunter’s metaphorical explanation of the exaltation explains it (140). I contend that, rather, the angels in both exaltations are experiencing real, not figurative, empathy. Generally speaking, the speech highlights the Father’s constant reiteration of his desire for union with his creatures through the Son, which is the essence of the Son’s kingdom. It also emphasizes that, though the full benefits of the Son’s ultimate humiliation will be available only in the spiritual and glorious kingdoms of the future, it is precisely this ultimate sacrifice that retroactively and recurrently enables oneness with the Godhead throughout time and beyond it.

This accounts for why in Book 12 of *Paradise Lost* Adam and Eve seem to have access to a unity with the Father that resembles that which Christians of the future will partake of. As Mary Ann Radzinowicz argues, Adam was “the first Christian worshipper” (168). After Michael relates to him the history of the old and new covenants (12.285-371), Adam seems to experience redemption himself. Michael takes a pause in his narrative,

Discerning Adam with such joy

Surcharged, as had like grief been dewed in tears,
Without the vent of words, which these he breathed.

O prophet of glad tidings, finisher
Of utmost hope! Now clear I understand
What oft my steadiest thoughts have searched in vain,
Why our great expectation should be called
The seed of woman: virgin Mother, hail,
High in the love of heaven, yet from my loins
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the Son
Of God most high; so God with man unites. (12.375-82)

Later on, after Michael has shared more details about the Son's ministry on earth, Adam seems to enjoy some of the bliss of the new heaven and earth:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! (12.469-73)

As Michael assures Adam, he needs only to add to "the sum / Of wisdom" (12.575-76) he has gained

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
By name to come called Charity, the soul
Of all the rest: then will thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shall possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far. (12.582-87)

As Fowler notes, the first four lines come from 1 Peter 1:5-7: "make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love." In so doing, the faithful is able to "participate in the divine nature" and "keep . . . from being ineffective and unproductive in . . . knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:4, 8). Adam is invited to seek a "Paradise

within,” reminiscent of the inner spiritual Kingdom of Christ, that will allow him unity with Father. But “knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” and his new covenant is only to be had far in the future. Even Eve has a sense of the potential paradise within her husband. At the end of the epic, when Adam and Eve leave Eden, Eve tells him to

lead on;

In me is no delay; with thee to go,
Is to stay here, without thee here to stay,
Is to go hence unwillingly. (12.615-17)

By depicting the eternally recurrent beginnings, the epic suggests that union with the Father is possible now and has been possible since the beginning of time and that God repeatedly and insistently urges his creatures to attain oneness with him. There is therefore no need to wait for some kind of visible and external perfectibility that will occur in some future millennium. Empson, in discussing the time when God shall be “All in All,” writes about that “union with Christ” discussed in “[Book 1,] Chapter XXIV. . . ‘Of Union and Fellowship with Christ and the Saints, wherein is considered the Mystical or Invisible Church’.” The “invisible union” described by Milton as “not confined to place or time, inasmuch as it is composed of individuals of widely separated countries, and of all ages from the foundation of the world” is “prefiguring the far distant real one” during the final kingdom. According to Empson, “We can now see that it is already offered in the otherwise harsh words by which the Father appointed the Son” (135-36):

Under his great vicegerent reign abide
United as one individual soul
For ever happy. (qtd. in 136)

However, the ultimate humiliation of the Son has effects that are not so much metaphorical as real. Consequently, union with the Father that approximates that achieved by the blessed when God shall be “All in All” is to a sufficient degree attainable in this world. Because of the workings of the Son’s mediatorial office, there is no need to settle for a prefiguration of union with the Father. As Milton writes in *De Doctrina* Book 1, Chapter 25, “On unfinished glorification,” which directly follows the chapter Empson mentions above,

unfinished [glorification] is that whereby, being justified and adopted by God the father, we are imbued with a kind of awareness both of present grace and worth, and of future glory, and begin already to be blessed.
(651)

The faithful believer will experience “the assurance of salvation” and “having begun to be glorified as a result of that union and communion with Christ and the father, he will most surely obtain everlasting life and consummate glory” (653). Finally, “Out of this assurance of salvation is born joy unspeakable” (657). The message of the epic is therefore a supremely hopeful one. Some part of the “golden days, fruitful of golden deeds / With joy and love triumphing” (3.337-38) may already be experienced in the present. This is the sort of bliss that Adam experiences when listening to Michael in Book 12, that is offered to the angels in the exaltations of Books 3 and 5, and that the reader of *Paradise Lost* is repeatedly invited to aspire for each time the Son’s kingdom begins again in the narrative.

3.3 From “heaven long absent”: Anti-millenarianism in *Paradise Lost*

Besides emphasizing the fact that Son’s kingdom has already begun and is always beginning, and omitting any explicit reference to the millennium, Milton in *Paradise Lost* implicitly challenges the notion of an earthly millennial reign during the Son’s exaltation in Book 3. When the Son offers to die for man, he oddly says he will be “long absent” from heaven during a single, extended earthly mission, as opposed to two (i.e., the incarnation and the second coming). The thirty-three year span of the Son’s ministry does not quite qualify as “long,” especially in the light of the vast time scales of heaven. So, the protracted absence anticipated by the Son suggests two possibilities: he is thinking about establishing a thousand-year terrestrial reign after resurrecting, or, else, in line with Milton’s mortalism, he imagines his body and soul being dead for the thousands of years that constitute the remainder of historical time, after which he is to rise again with the rest of humanity at the Last Judgment. However, the references to the Son’s ascension into heaven in the Father’s subsequent speech and in Michael’s retelling of the Son’s two missions in Book 12 negate any potential that the Son might linger on earth, whether as

an earthly king or as one of the dead awaiting redemption. They privilege the Son's spiritual kingdom, and, I contend, constitute an implicit rejection of millenarianism. A mortalist reading of "long absent," though it is a problematic one, denies the doctrine in a even more categorical manner—even if the Son were to remain on earth for a prolonged duration, a millennial reign is completely out of the question because he would be dead.

It is worthwhile to consider a sizable part of the pertinent speech by the Son and appreciate the large expanse of human history contained within its compact space. In the speech, the Son responds to the Father's call for a redeemer who might save mankind:

Behold me then, me for him, life for life
 I offer, on me let thine anger fall;
 Account me man; I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die
 Well pleased, on me let Death wreck all his rage;
 Under his gloomy power I shall not long
 Lie vanquished; thou hast given me to possess
 Life in my self for ever, by thee I live,
 Though now to Death I yield, and am his due
 All that of me can die, yet that debt paid,
 Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave
 His prey, nor suffer my unspotted soul
 For ever with corruption there to dwell;
 But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
 My vanquisher, spoiled of his vaunted spoil;
 Death his death's wound shall then receive, and stoop
 Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarmed.
 I through the ample air in Triumph high
 Shall lead hell captive maugre hell, and show
 The powers of darkness bound. Thou at the sight
 Pleased, out of heaven shalt look down and smile,
 While by thee raised I ruin all my foes,

Death last, and with his carcass glut the grave:
 Then with the multitude of my redeemed
 Shall enter Heaven long absent, and return,
 Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud
 Of anger shall remain, but peace assured,
 And reconcilment; wrath shall be no more
 Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire. (3.227-65)

As Fowler notes, “the Son speaks of only one absence,” “conflates his first with his second coming,” and “Since he thinks of his reentry into heaven ‘with the multitude of his redeemed’ as taking place after his final ruin of Death, it seems that he envisages being away throughout what we call history, and perhaps also during the millennium speculated by Michael at xii 461-5” (575). (I have already given my reasons for believing that 12.461-5 refers not to the millennium but to the final kingdom.) Empson also observes the anomalies in the speech, and explains them by pointing to the Son’s lack of foreknowledge. In his view, the Father probably had not informed the Son of the crucifixion. Consequently, the Son believes his undertaking will be easier than it actually will be and proposes “a longer mission” than that which the Father has in mind. In any case, as I mentioned above, Empson thinks that in the eyes of the Father and the Son the unspeakable suffering on the cross is “trivial” (127-29). Fowler suggests that the Son’s speech, similar to the shifting tenses of the Father’s response to the Son, “is a supratemporal vision. . . so that we should not look for detailed chronological sequence” (576).

I argue that, rather, Milton depicts the Son potentially imagining a long-lasting worldly kingdom for himself, one that calls into mind the millennium, and suggests an implicit repudiation of that kingdom by the Father and, later on, by Michael. Much of the Son’s speech is triumphant in tone, which would be consistent with the Son assuming a regal aspect. In his account, the Son ascends “through the ample air in Triumph high” to “lead hell captive maugre hell, and show / The powers of darkness bound,” but he does not return to heaven: “at the sight” of the Son’s exploits on earth, the Father “Pleased, out of heaven [shall] look down and smile.” That the Son holds “hell captive” is a reference to Psalm 68 and Ephesians 4, and that “he show[s] / The powers of darkness bound”

alludes to Colossians 2:16, but these lines also evoke Revelation 20, wherein Satan is “bound” for a thousand years at the beginning of the millennium by an angel. So at that point, the possibility of a thousand-year terrestrial reign of the Son emerges within the speech, though without the ascension and second coming that precede the millennium. Consequently the Son is from “heaven long absent.” Empson observes that if there is an ascension into heaven, then that absence would account for the millennial reign (127). Finally, after defeating his “foes,” including death itself, the Son anticipates returning to heaven to find a state of “peace” and “joy” with the Father. Because the “redeemed” accompany him in the end, in the Son’s view, the Last Judgment will have been completed prior to his final ascension back into heaven. If the millennium occurs during this long absence, it would be consistent with much of the Last Judgment occurring during the thousand years, as perfunctorily stated in *De Doctrina* (883). Even if the speech does not explicitly mention the millennial reign, the Son does envision being physically present on the earth for an extended period of time.

But “long absent” might not refer to any thousand-year reign whatsoever, in which case, the Son’s speech indicates an even stronger anti-millenarian position on Milton’s part. In *De Doctrina*, though not in the rest of his works, Milton declares that he adheres to mortalism, that is, the belief that upon the demise of an individual, both body and soul die and remain in a state of death until the general resurrection of the dead at the Last Judgment ([Oxford] 441-43, 447-49, Corns, *Encyclopedia* 248). As Empson suggests, the Son seems unaware of his future crucifixion, and volunteers for a “longer mission.” So the Son might simply be expecting his atonement on the behalf of man to involve a mortal birth, a less harrowing death (perhaps even a peaceful death from old age) and the long, drawn-out condition of non-being that the mortalists supposed. From the perspective of a divine personage like the Son, enduring all these while being from “heaven long absent” would seem like an appropriately disagreeable payment for man’s sins. Milton is thus conspicuously omitting the millennium from the epic, as the speech presents the perfect opportunity to include it within the long period of time the Son thinks he will be physically present on earth. However, the Son does say that “Under [death’s] gloomy power I shall *not long* / Lie vanquished” (my emphasis) and this presents a challenge to this reading. But the phrases “not long” and “long absent” seem to contradict

each other. If the Son were to resurrect after only three days, only a millennium-like thousand-year reign would explain the long absence, but, as I have mentioned, the speech does not explicitly refer to the millennium. Moreover, the Son also tells the Father that

Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave

His prey, nor suffer my unspotted soul

For ever with corruption there to dwell. (my emphasis)

“For ever,” an extremely long period of time, would awkwardly refer back to “not long,” if the latter phrase denoted just a short three days. Hence, when the Son says he “shall not long / Lie vanquished” by death, he is presenting two perspectives on the rest of human history. From the standpoint of an incarnate Son tasked to redeem mortal man, it can seem like, and should feel like, a long time. But from the perspective of “For ever” and vastness of heavenly time, it can also seem like a negligible duration. In this way, “not long” and “long absent” might be reconciled. Consider this paraphrase of the Son:

“Father, I do not think you will leave me in the grave forever. I can endure the rest of human history. It’s not that long if you consider eternity. But to be long dead as a human being on earth will serve as a sufficient payment for the sins of man, and it would be good homecoming in heaven afterwards.” The speech therefore calls attention to the Son as “Both God and man” (3.315) in a subtle and sophisticated way. The retroactive effects of his future humiliation might also be operating here in another way. The Son may be imploring the Father for a short (“not long”) death, thus already showing some human apprehension, but he is not presumptuous, so he assumes the Father will want an extended death in expiation for man’s transgressions, one that will necessitate him being from “heaven long absent.” The speech tempts readers of the epic, as human being themselves, to think “not long” means three days, but, in so doing, invites them to appreciate the moving offer of the Son to undergo a kind of absolute kenosis, wherein he not only empties himself of his divine being, but of any being whatsoever, which what being dead for millennia would amount to.

Milton leaves the speech open to either interpretation, explicitly mentioning neither millenarianism nor mortalism, in order to suggest a rejection of the former doctrine in favor of the beginning of yet another kingdom, the spiritual kingdom (along with its visible manifestation in the church). This gesture is signaled by the marked

repetition in the passage of the Father's words from heaven when the Son is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. As Matthew 3:17 has it, "and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (see also Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22). Firstly, after about one-third of his speech, the Son says,

Account me man; I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleased, on me let Death wreck all his rage. (3.238-41, my emphasis)

Then, in the final third of the passage, after the Son mentions his resurrection, he relates how:

I through the ample air in Triumph high
 Shall lead hell captive maugre hell, and show
 The powers of darkness bound. Thou at the sight
Pleased, out of heaven shalt look down and smile,
 While by thee raised I ruin all my foes,
 Death last, and with his carcass glut the grave. (3.254-59, my emphasis)

In each instance, the "Well pleased" or "Pleased" is given remarkable emphasis by its prominent position in the first stress of the line and by the early caesura, marked by a strong comma, that immediately follows it. The Son's baptism is also significant as another recurrent beginning of the Son's kingdom at a point in a history wherein the recurrences are particularly pronounced. In the first place, the baptism begins the Son's ministry on earth, which is a critical aspect of the Son's spiritual kingdom. That spiritual kingdom "had begun," as Milton writes in *De Doctrina*, "from [the time of] his first coming," that is, his incarnation. Moreover, it "had . . . been proclaimed by John the Baptist," but in this proclamation, which he utters just prior to the baptism of the Son, John does not refer to a kingdom in the relatively recent past but one in the immediate future: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The Son's ministry will, of course, begin yet again after the interruption of the forty days in the wilderness and the Son's victory over Satan's temptations there. Milton in *Paradise Regained* profoundly renders that beginning, which the brief epic preludes by its own repeated references to the Father's being "well pleased" at the Son's baptism (1.85, 286).

At this crucial juncture in human history, the Father's call for unity in creation is exceptionally persistent. And it is an invitation to communion that is powerfully present for all time, as suggested by references to the baptism here in the exaltation of Book 3, particularly in the Son's offer to die for man (3.241, 257), in the exaltation of Book 5, when "not all" of the angels are "well pleased" to see the Son anointed (5.617), and most importantly, during Christ's first coming itself, during which, as I shall argue in the next chapter on the brief epic, regains paradise for man in very real terms.

"Well pleased" is important not only as an allusion to the beginning of the Son's spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that negates the millennium, but it is also an indirect but clear reference to the Son's ultimate humiliation and exaltation that makes all the beginnings of his kingdom possible. In this way, it functions like the word "quitted." To please can mean "to satisfy" or "delight" (2a), but it can also mean "to satisfy by payment of compensation, a debt, etc." (5b) or "To appease, placate, pacify [or] propitiate (God)" (5a). In the latter senses of the word, "Well pleased" therefore refers to, as Milton puts it in *De Doctrina*, the "satisfaction" of "divine justice" (519) which is one "effect and end-purpose . . . of [the Son's] lowly state" and "exaltation," the other "effect and end-purpose" being "Man's restoration" (529-33). In other words, the incarnate Son dies to satisfy divine justice, and the resurrected and exalted Son "*at God's right hand . . . appeals for us* [Romans 8:34]" and serves as man's "*advocate with the Father* [1 John 2:1]" (531). This explains how the references to the baptism in the Jordan are positioned in the Son's speech during the exaltation of Book 3 (wherein he foresees being from "Heaven long absent"). The first, a reference to his humiliation to a "lowly state," occurs when the Son declares that he will leave heaven and for man "lastly die / Well pleased" (3.238-41), and the second, a reference to his exaltation, when the Son discusses his resurrection and victory over Hell, "at the sight" of which the Father "out of Heaven [shall] look down and smile" (3.250-57). Furthermore, in *De Doctrina*, Milton also provides a proof-text for the satisfaction of divine justice which suggests the retroactive and recurrent efficacy of the Son's ultimate humiliation: "Heb. 10: 14: *by a single offering he has made perfect for all time those who are to be sanctified*" (529). Finally, I suggest that "pleased" in the sense of "to delight" also operates in the speech to call to mind the bliss experienced by all concerned, that is, the Father, the Son, and all other

creatures, during the state of communion between creator and creation. Consequently, the Son imagines himself, oddly at first glance, “well pleased,” that is delighted, to die for man; the Father is “pleased” with the resurrection; and the angels who are not “well pleased” during the Son’s exaltation in Book 5 (5.617), will be forever unable to partake of this bliss.

In responding to the Son’s offer, the Father refers to the Son’s ascension into heaven following the resurrection, saying that after his humiliation, the Son will be exalted to his heavenly throne, where he shall “sit incarnate” and shall “reign / Both God and man” until he “attended gloriously from heaven / [shall] in the sky appear” to preside over the Last Judgment (3.315-16). The implication is that the Son will not remain on earth to rule for a thousand years or to remain dead for a similar period of time, but instead rule over a spiritual kingdom from heaven. Michael when speaking to Adam in Book 12 is even clearer. After his resurrecting and appearing to the apostles, the Son

shall ascend

With victory, triumphing through the air
 Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise
 The serpent, prince of air, and drag in chains
 Through all his realm, and there confounded leave;
 Then enter into glory, and resume
 His seat at God’s right hand, exalted high
 Above all names in heaven; and thence shall come
 When the world’s dissolution shall be ripe,
 With glory and power to judge both quick and dead,
 To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward
 His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
 Whether in heaven or earth, for then the earth
 Shall be all paradise, far happier place
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days. (12.451-65)

Here, not only is a thousand-year reign conspicuous by its absence, Satan’s binding in Revelation 20 is directly referenced such that the millennium begins at the ascension, not

at the second coming. Milton seems to take on an Augustinian perspective on the millennium. In his reply to Michael, Adam asks the angel,

If our deliverer up to heaven
Must reascend, what will betide the few
His faithful, left among the unfaithful herd,
The enemies of truth, who then shall guide
His people, who defend? (12.479-83).

Michael then goes on to describe the final recurrence of the beginning of the Son's kingdom presented in *Paradise Lost*, that of the Son's spiritual kingdom (12.485-551).

This is significant firstly as a further rejection of millenarianism. As it concludes, the epic foregrounds not a worldly kingdom of the Son, but one based on inward spirituality. The "Comforter" or Holy Spirit shall descend upon the faithful on earth and "shall dwell / His Spirit within them," "arm" them "with spiritual armour," and provide "inward consolations" (12.486, 491, 495). In this kingdom, scripture is "not but by the Spirit understood" (514, 532-33). Moreover, Michael explicitly condemns theocracy, which a millennial reign would amount to:

Secular power, though feigning still to act
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
The Spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers; and from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience. (12.517-22)

The spiritual kingdom is also significant because of its emphasis on hierarchy. Despite all of Empson's enthusiasm about pantheism and God's abdication, the epic does not end with an explicit reference to the time when God "shall be All in All." The Son establishes the spiritual kingdom through the apostles and rules over it from heaven through the Holy Spirit, which is there "To guide [the faithful] in all truth," and through the apostles (12.490, 497-507). The Father is not immanent, but venerated by "all who in the worship persevere / Of spirit and truth" (12.532-3). Spirit has supremacy over "written records pure" (12.513-4). Even the adversaries of the kingdom, the "grievous

wolves,” are organized hierarchically, “avail[ing] themselves of names, / Places and titles” (12.508, 515-16). Finally, in the end, while the Son may be about to “lay by” his “regal sceptre” as Book 3 suggests, our final vision of him is that of a supreme “Lord,” effecting the grand renewal of heaven and earth. At the Last Judgment, he shall come

Last in the clouds from heaven to be revealed
 In the glory of the Father, to dissolve
 Satan and his perverted world, then raise
 From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
 New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date
 Founded in righteousness and peace and love
 To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss. (12.545-51)

The old regime will be “refined” in the new heaven and earth, but the hierarchal aspects of the spiritual kingdom suggest that the final kingdom would be in accord with, as Empson put it, “what C.S. Lewis praised as [Milton’s] beautiful sense of the idea of social order” (146).

At the same time, however, the cyclical, centripetal energies of *Paradise Lost* created by its relentless evocation of the multiple recurrent beginnings draw the reader back to the exaltations and humiliations that occur earlier in the poem. As the “ages of endless date” dawn (12.549), the Son lays by his “regal sceptre” (3.339), “God shall be all in all” (3.341), and all creation is “United as one individual soul / Forever happy” (5.610-11). There is a sense that the Son’s kingship will therefore “dissolve” along with the rest of the universe. At the end of the human history, when they expect the Son’s thousand-year kingdom to begin, the millenarians are in for a shocking surprise: the Son’s kingdom will end. They might then bemoan their failure to realize that the kingdom had already begun in the beginning of time, and that it began again and again with every offer of communion that emanated from the Father through the Son. They will have hoped for the Son to descend upon the earth at his second coming to take up his sceptre for a thousand-year Golden Age of worldly peace and prosperity, and then for the eternity of the renewed universe. Instead, to their disappointment, the Son never sets foot on land at the second coming. Rather, he dreadfully judges men and angels in the heavens of the earth (perhaps for a thousand years, perhaps not), incinerates the world, and then

lays aside his sceptre. It will not be as if the Son had never been a king and then miraculously becomes one. He always has been a king and now abruptly ceases to be one. Milton perfunctorily acknowledges the millennium in *De Doctrina* without any commitment to the doctrine, but he decisively omits it from *Paradise Lost* and implies a repudiation of the doctrine in the epic because he is simply not interested in it. What interests him, what fills him in present with unspeakable joy and hope, what he believes in most deeply, is that in the end, there will be only one king in heaven: the Father, a king whose glory and ecstasy, ineffably intensified by the abdication of Son and the retention of hierarchy, will be indistinguishable from his own and that of all things.

Chapter 4

4 *Paradise Regained: Anti-millenarian Brief Epic*

Chapter Abstract: Using a discussion of Satan as a proto-millenarian figure in *Paradise Regained* as a starting point, I argue that Milton means what he says in the title of the brief epic: paradise has very literally been regained. There is thus no need to look forward to the future beginning of Christ's kingdom in a future millennium. The victory in the wilderness is itself another, and very crucial, recurrence of the beginning of the Son's kingdom, wherein the future final eschatological defeat of Satan has, to a greater degree than scholars have acknowledged, a very real and concrete presence and ramifications in the present time of the brief epic and that of its readers. Using *De Doctrina* to support my points, I will further submit that the biblical images of the tree and the stone in lines 4.146-53, as symbols of Christ's kingdom, are not allusions to the millennium as scholars have argued. Rather, they refer to the recurrent beginnings of the Son's kingdom during the first and second comings that form a single, coherent continuum. This continuum of the Son's kingdom is itself subsumed into the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth. Paradise thus recovered ultimately and provocatively suggests that the spiritual kingdom of the present is conflated with and essentially indistinguishable from the perfect conditions of the final kingdom when God shall be "All in All."

4.1 Proto-millenarian Satan

Millenarians will not be the first to be confounded by a long anticipated beginning that fails to materialize. They will have no less a precursor than Satan. Late in Book 4 of *Paradise Regained*, Satan makes what may be a joke about the Son's kingdom:

eternal sure, as without end,
Without beginning; for no date prefixed
Directs me in the starry rubric set. (4.391-93)

There is a small but significant change between John Carey's 1968 and 1997 notes on these lines. In the 1968 edition, he writes, "Satan is being ironic: an eternal kingdom can have no end, but neither can it have a beginning" (loc. cit.). As Leonard observes, Satan's

taunting point is that if the Son's kingdom is truly eternal, it is doomed to remain in a limbo of timeless non-existence (*Value* 110). In 1997, Carey revises his note to read as follows: "Satan is being ironic and / or fails to see that his astrology is warning him that he is up against the eternal son of God" (loc. cit.). The equivocation in the "and/or" suggests some trepidation on Carey's part. In his original note, he ascribes to Satan an apprehension of eternity as a metaphysical notion. The revised version proposes a very different possibility: Satan is unaware that the Son is eternal. Both notes neglect to mention the awkward little detail of Milton's Arianism, that is, his rejection of the orthodox belief that the Son is co-eternal with the Father (*De Doctrina* 129-31). Something like Milton's own iconoclastic snicker can be discerned, not without unease, in the mocking tone of Satan's joke, presuming it is one. The disdainful "eternal sure" is dripping with the sarcasm, not so very far even from the modern putdown "Yeah, sure!" Satan, Milton's millenarian contemporaries, Carey, and Miltonists in general all fail to realize that the Son's kingdom has already begun, is always beginning, and will effectively end in a renewed heaven and earth wherein the Son will not be king. As I argue in the previous chapter, the beginning of the Son's kingdom is not a singular historical event that will come to pass in the future. Rather, paraphrasing Fallon (*Grace* 250), it is both a singular historical event that has already occurred in the distant past and is eternally recurring. This explains why the heavens are unable to predict the inauguration of the kingdom. Moreover, the Son in the brief epic never himself refers to his kingdom as "eternal." He says that his kingdom will have "no end" twice, when he recalls the prophecy of the angel to his mother after his conception (1.241) and when he evokes the images of the tree and the stone from the Book of Daniel after rejecting the temptation of Rome (4.151). He also says that his reign will "never end" and that it will be "everlasting" when declining the temptation to immediately free Israel from Roman rule (3.185). Nevertheless, as I have discussed, when the Son "[his] regal sceptre shalt lay by, / For regal sceptre then no more shall need," the kingdom will undergo an end of sorts in the sublimation of the old hierarchy wherein "God shall be All in All" (3.339-41). Satan's joke is therefore not so wide off the mark, though Satan fails to see the full irony: the Son's kingdom *is* less than eternal. It had a beginning and it will transform sufficiently so as to have a temporal limit. Furthermore, like his kingdom, the Son

himself had a beginning, which Carey, by saying that Satan is unable to recognize “the eternal Son of God,” does not account for. This suggests that Milton’s non-millenarian view of the Son’s kingship is in part an expression of Milton’s belief that the Son is a created being, one who will eventually, like everything else, merge with the Father.

Satan might be considered a proto-millenarian in *Paradise Regained* and, as such, a parody of a seventeenth century English millenarian. As Michael Fixler has observed, the brief epic, through the character of Satan, calls attention to the origins of millenarianism’s obsession with a worldly, theocratic thousand-year reign of Christ and saints in the Jewish messianic tradition (235, 270). Achsah Guibbory reiterates Fixler’s analysis, writing that “Milton’s Satan embodies the views of seventeenth century millenarians whose understanding of Christ’s reign was criticized as “Jewish” and not “spiritual,” concerned with “temporal” rather than “everlasting glorie” (152). Like the millenarians, Satan anxiously hopes for an imminent beginning, but the beginning of the Son’s kingdom has already happened and is always happening. Offering assistance, he goads the Son to fulfill his role as the Messiah immediately and establish an eternal earthly kingdom, one that mirrors the worldly millennial kingdom of the second coming, now. However, just before he delivers his jibe on the Son’s supposedly eternal kingdom, he is completely frustrated:

Since neither wealth, nor honour, arms nor arts,
Kingdom nor empire pleases thee, nor aught
By me proposed in life contemplative,
Or active, tended on by glory, or fame,
What dost thou in this world? The wilderness
For thee is fittest place, I found thee there,
And thither will return thee, yet remember
What I foretell thee, soon thou shalt have cause
To wish thou never hadst rejected thus
Nicely or cautiously my offered aid,
Which would have set thee in short time with ease
On David’s throne; or throne of all the world,
Now at full age, fullness of time, thy season,

When prophecies of thee are best fulfilled.
 Now contrary, if I read aught in heaven,
 Or heaven write aught of fate, by what stars
 Voluminous or single characters,
 In their conjunction met, give me to spell,
 Sorrows, and labours, opposition, hate,
 Attends thee, scorns, reproaches, injuries,
 Violence and stripes, and lastly cruel death,
 A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom,
 Real or allegoric I discern not,
 Nor when, eternal sure, as without end,
 Without beginning. (4.368-92)

Like some of Milton's millenarian contemporaries (Simpson 213-14), Satan looks in vain for portents of the commencement of Christ's kingdom "in the starry rubric set" (4.293). Moreover, he fixates on the exalted Son physically and magnificently reigning "On David's throne; or throne of all the world" by miraculous means, failing to realize that, as Danielson and Davies argue, exaltation is the same thing as humiliation in the Son's kingdom (222, 162). And, of course, Satan hopes to provide the miracles himself.

Most importantly, as Leonard notes, Satan's joke about the beginning of the Son's eternal but material kingdom, and indeed his whole effort to tempt the Son, betray the fiend's anxiety that the Son who withdraws himself into the wilderness might be the same Son that expelled him and the other fallen angels during the War in Heaven in *Paradise Lost* (Value 108, 110). Satan had been witness to the Son's baptism in the Jordan and had heard the Father declare himself as being "pleased" with his "beloved" Son (1.70-85). He tells his demonic council in Book 1 of *Paradise Regained*:

[God's] first-begot we know, and sore have felt,
 When his fierce thunder drove us to the deep;
 Who this is we must learn, for man he seems
 In all his lineaments, though in his face
 The glimpses of his Father's glory shine. (1.89-93)

Satan does not assume that the Son whom John immerses in the river is identical to the Son who, wielding his iron sceptre, had cast him into Hell, but, as Leonard observes, he is apprehensive that that might be the case: “the fact that he even mentions the ‘first-begot’ (he could not even bring himself to do so in the debate in Hell in *Paradise Lost*) betrays alarm.” Some critics thus see the brief epic as an “identity test.” According to Leonard, “Satan is tortured by doubts and feels a desperate need to lay them to rest,” and, accordingly, through his various temptations, attempts to determine whether the Son is divine or merely mortal (*Value* 107-08).

Satan had also been witness to the exaltation of the Son before the creation of the world and the War in Heaven, as depicted in Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*—“all . . . angels, progeny of Light / Thrones, Dominions, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers” were at hand at the time (5.600-01). He might remember that he himself had been among those who were not “well pleased” (6.617) with the Son’s anointing. That old beginning haunts his every waking moment. And he is in denial about it, as suggested by his failure to even suspect the possibility that the kingdom founded before his expulsion from heaven might be the same one as the kingdom to be set up by the incarnate Son. This contributes to his befuddlement and frustration at the Son—“What dost thou in this world? / . . . A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom, / Real or allegoric I discern not” (4.372,389-90). Moreover, as I mentioned in previous chapters, Satan, along with the other devils, avoids mentioning the Son’s kingship in the first books of *Paradise Lost*. He acknowledges only the Father’s supremacy. He might be alluding to it in *Paradise Regained* when he mentions God’s “first-begot,” in the senses of “first-born” and “first exalted,” because the reference is made in the context of both the incarnate Son’s parentage and future kingship (1.85-99), but the allusion is brief, insubstantial, and obscured by the discussion of the incarnate Son’s birth. Satan’s fears would be allayed if the Son were to accept his offer for a completely new beginning in the establishment of a material kingdom. The Son would prove to be distinct from the heavenly conqueror who relegated him and his cohorts to hell fire, and Satan would gladly engage with a newly minted, worldly, and human monarch that would be well within his purview. Millenarians obsessed about a future earthly kingdom at the expense of the spiritual one that already and vibrantly existed. I submit that the brief epic deplores this misplaced

emphasis by comparing it with Satan's state of nervous denial concerning the ancient beginning of Son's kingdom.

Besides, Satan is constitutionally incapable of comprehending a spiritual kingdom, whether in the past, present, or future, and can only conceive of the Son's kingdom in worldly or millenarian terms. As Stephen Fallon has suggested, once he and the other rebel angels fall into Hell after their unsuccessful rebellion in heaven, they "renounce the spirit and immerse themselves in the material" (212). In this sense, Satan is genuinely perplexed when he asks the Son, "What dost thou in this world?" And he itemizes all he can imagine the Son might desire: "wealth," "honour," "arms," "arts," "Kingdom," "empire," "life contemplative, / Or active," "glory," and "fame." But it does not even cross his mind that the "spirit," that which is not of this world, might best please the Son. For Satan, the Son's kingdom must be "real," that is, material. There might be a pun here. In Book 10 of *Paradise Lost*, the Son refers to Adam's "real dignity," which is compromised by his "subjection" of himself to Eve when they eat of the Tree of Knowledge (10.151). According to Fowler, "real" primarily means "regal" (*OED real, adj.*¹), as in Montreal. The same sense might be operating here to suggest that Satan sees an equivalence between reality and material royalty. In any case, the best Satan's comprehension can do is to propose an "allegoric" kingdom, one that through worldly imagery (for example, the tree and the stone from the Book of Daniel) symbolizes something he cannot grasp or even name. The Son does allude to the spirit, however, at the end of Book 2 when he says, "he who reigns within himself, and rules / Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more a King." According to him,

to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly; this attracts the Soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part. (466-67, 473-77)

Unable to understand the otherworldly nature of the Son's emphasis on the spirit, Satan "stood / A while mute confounded what to say" (3.2) and idiotically proceeds to tempt the Son with the worldly glory of the conquests of Alexander, Scipio, Pompey and Julius Caesar, which in his opinion is

the reward

That sole excites to high attempts the flame
Of most erected spirits, most tempered pure
Ethereal, who all pleasures else despise (3.25-28).

Through Satan, Milton critiques the millenarians' fixation on a materiality of the millennial kingdom of Christ and his Saints and strongly encourages a greater focus on the spiritual kingdom.

As Fredric Jameson writes, echoing the traditional view on Milton's attitude to the millennium after the Restoration, there was an "inward turn—a displacement from politics to psychology and ethics— . . . marked not merely by the revival of the Calvinist meditation on original sin and the Fall, but very explicitly by the emphasis on personal, private salvation and the repudiation of millenarianism in *Paradise Regained* and the last two books of *Paradise Lost*" (36-37). For him, this was wholly the result of the demoralizing, traumatic foundering of the English revolution. Milton's depiction of paradise accordingly defamiliarizes our postlapsarian existence to simultaneously "reinforce the very opposite of a revolutionary and millenarian materialism" and "document the classic anti-millenarian position that goes back to Saint Augustine, where it is precisely the fact of the Garden and the fact of the Fall that preclude the re-establishment on Earth of paradise in anything but an internal and allegorical sense" (50-51):

The vision of the Garden of Eden . . . in one of the classic semiotic functions of ideology emits two distinct and contradictory messages all at once: that a carnal heaven on earth is imaginable and thus to be sought for here and now by means which in Milton's time have become irredeemably political ones (the Hussites, the Anabaptists, the Diggers),⁶⁸ but also that it is impossible in this life and that only renunciation, personal repentance and self-discipline remain for us. (51)

Jameson laments that in *Paradise Lost* there "is no longer any place for the army of the saints, . . . the very protagonist of the bourgeois revolution" (49). He does not identify the

⁶⁸ Jameson might have also mentioned the millenarian Fifth Monarchists.

image in the brief epic that corresponds to Eden in this way, but this would be the Kingdom of Christ on earth in its various iterations, including the millennium. Such carnal kingdoms are indeed tantalizingly imaginable, as the temptations of Satan demonstrate, but they are discredited as inconsistent with Augustinian and Pauline doctrine by the obedience of the Son.

I agree with Jameson that there exists in the brief epic a “repudiation of millenarianism,” but it is not quite as explicit as he suggests. Rather, it is very strongly implied. The poem references neither millenarianism nor the millennium itself in plain and direct terms. Lewalski, Revard, and Loewenstein argue in *Milton and the Ends of Time* that the “tree / Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth” and the “stone that shall to pieces dash / All Monarchies” (*Paradise Regained* 4.146-53) allude to the millennium, but I shall challenge this contention.⁶⁹ In *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*, Michael Fixler does not use terms “anti-millenarian” or “repudiation of millenarianism” as far as the brief epic is concerned, but he vigorously argues along these lines, mainly by going into detail about how Satan’s temptation of the earthly kingdoms is a critique of worldly Jewish messianism and its “illusory expectations” inherent in English millenarianism during Milton’s time (213-71). Fixler’s text, though over fifty years old, is still the principal critical work that holds the view that Milton abandoned millenarianism by the time the Cromwellian regime collapsed. More recently, Achsah Guibbory, building on Fixler’s research, writes that Milton in the brief epic “rejects the millenarian concern with . . . a terrestrial kingdom” and “the outmoded ‘Jewish’ way of reading the prophecies literally” (“Millenarianism” 153, 136). Because of the lack of an explicit reference to millenarianism, the contention that Milton adopted an anti-millenarian position in *Paradise Regained* is a big claim.

On the other hand, Lewalski, Revard, and Loewenstein vigorously challenge this traditional perspective that Milton renounces millenarian dogma after the restoration. They do so on the basis of what they regard as the persistence of Milton’s radical Christian and apocalyptic ideology and politics (Lewalski 14-15, 21-26, Revard 56-71,

⁶⁹ Lewalski, “millennium” 25, Revard 57, 67-8, Loewenstein, “Afterword” 246. See also Loewenstein, *Representing* 265.

Loewenstein “Afterword” 241-47). Ken Simpson, another contributor to *Milton and the Ends of Time*, eschews labeling Milton a millenarian, but persists in the notion that “the literal Second Coming and reign of Christ” with his saints remained important for Milton’s radical political aspirations even after Charles II came to the throne (203-04, 206, 218, 220 note 5). Christopher Hill, who played a leading role in the development of arguments for a radical Milton (*Revolution* 93-116), believes that Milton continued to be a millenarian after 1660. According to him, Milton at about mid-century gradually ceased to consider the millennium to be an impending event, though he continued to believe it would eventually come. Lewalski generally agrees with this assessment (“Millennium” 15-21). However, according to Hill, Milton by the end of the republic began to focus on the inner spiritual kingdom. Though his works continued to be political, the millennium became less important (*Revolution* 415-16, 420-21, 446-47). C. A. Patrides and Ashraf Rushdy, meanwhile, occupy a middle ground. Both agree that *Paradise Regained* depicts an “inward turn.” However, Patrides suggests that, though Milton did not categorically deny the millennial reign, he was careful, evasive, and even uncertain as far as it was concerned (226), and while Rushdy does not argue for any specific reference to the millennium at all in the brief epic, he does emphasize the “deferral” of complete spiritual fulfillment to a “future” “religious kingdom” (272, 274).

A crucial related issue is whether *Paradise Regained* is a quietist text or not. The traditional perspective, held by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Arthur Barker, Andrew Milner, Michael Wilding, Herman Rapaport, Gordon Teskey, Guibbory, and, though he is a Marxist, Fredric Jameson, is that the vanquished and despondent Milton abandons politics as he withdraws into the spiritual kingdom of Christ in the brief epic. Conversely, Christopher Hill, Lewalski, Revard, Loewenstein, Simpson, Stanley Fish, Rushdy, and, perhaps surprisingly, Fixler all contend that Milton continues to pursue some kind of political agenda in *Paradise Regained*.⁷⁰ Important recurring themes include, on the one hand, how Milton’s abandonment of millenarianism demonstrates his quietism in *Paradise Regained* (Jameson, Guibbory), and, on the other hand, how the “inward turn”

⁷⁰ Hill, *Revolution* 421-22, Loewenstein, *Representing* 242-68, Teskey 548-50, Guibbory, “Millenarianism” 155-56, Fish 388, 561-73, Rushdy 432-33, Fixler 235, 243-48. See Rushdy 345-57 and Simpson 202.

to the spiritual kingdom within each free believer necessitates a political statement in the poem agitating for separation of church and state (Hill, Simpson, Rushdy, Fixler).

I would like to strengthen the case made by Fixler, Jameson, and Guibbory and argue that *Paradise Regained* is indeed anti-millenarian. I would also like to enhance Fixler's contention that it is precisely because of its anti-millenarian positioning, one designed to promote a properly Christian spirit-centered orientation, that the brief epic is a political text, and hence not quietist. I argue that Milton means what he says in the title of the brief epic, and we should take him seriously. Satan has been decisively defeated, and paradise, very literally regained. There is no need to look forward to the future beginning of Christ's kingdom. It already began in the distant past and this beginning repeatedly recurs in the present time of the brief epic. I suggest that the victory in the wilderness is itself another, and very crucial, recurrence of the beginning of the Son's kingdom, and, like the beginnings in *Paradise Lost*, involves both humiliation and exaltation. As a result, the recurrent and retroactive effects of his ultimate humiliation, that is, his incarnation and death, are manifest, and paradise is recovered. To support my case, I shall discuss the Son's standing on the pinnacle as a purely human feat, Satan's fall in 4.562, the Son's subsequent elevation from the pinnacle (4.581-85) by the angels, and his descent onto a valley that evokes the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21 (4.586-90). The Son's triumph over the temptations in the wilderness is a moment wherein the future final eschatological defeat of Satan has, to a greater degree than scholars have acknowledged, a very real and concrete presence and ramifications in the present time of the brief epic and that of its readers.

Moreover, I contend that the biblical images of the tree and the stone in 4.146-53, as symbols of Christ's kingdom, are not allusions to the millennium as Lewalski, Revard, and Loewenstein have argued. In these lines, the Son refuses Satan's offer of Rome:

Know therefore when my season comes to sit
 On *David's* Throne, it shall be like a tree
 Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth,
 Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
 All Monarchies besides throughout the world,

And of my Kingdom there shall be no end:
 Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
 Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.

John Leonard notes that while the image of the stone was seen as portending the destruction of terrestrial kingdoms that was to precede the establishment of the millennium, it was also interpreted as a reference to the first advent of Christ. Revard herself admits that two of the most important English millenarians of the period, Joseph Mede and Henry More, believed that the stone “denotes [Christ’s] present church.” According to the original biblical verse, Daniel 2:35, the stone “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” Leonard and Revard agree that it was specifically this “great mountain” that formed from the stone that millenarians thought pertained to the thousand-year reign. Moreover, the image of the tree was also read as a representation of the church (“Millennium” 267, Revard 68, see Hutton 30). Unlike Lewalski, Loewenstein, and Revard, Hill interprets the images of the stone and tree as representations of the Christian “regeneration,” or spiritual rebirth, that occurs in the inner spiritual kingdom of Christ. Similarly, Simpson reads the stone as an apocalyptic symbol of the church (*Revolution* 205). However, for Hill, the stone “smashing the kingdoms” also symbolizes the second coming that is to precede the millennium and, for Simpson, the faithful of the church continued to expect worldly fulfillment in the future literal kingdom of Christ and his saints (421-22, see Milton *De Doctrina* 559).

Building on Hill and Simpson, I shall argue that lines 4.146-53 in *Paradise Regained* do not hint at the millennium. Rather, they refer to the recurrent beginnings of the Son’s kingdom during the first and second comings that form a single, coherent continuum that incorporates the “kingdom of heaven” (i.e. the current spiritual kingdom), the “present church,” and “kingdom of glory” (i.e., the second coming). The essential spiritual sameness of each of these kingdoms, and indeed of all the Son’s kingdoms stretching back to the exaltation of Book 5 and the literal begetting of the Son, makes this possible. This continuum of the Son’s kingdom is itself subsumed into the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth in the process of sublimation that ends it. To support my case, I shall examine references to Daniel 2:44, wherein Daniel interprets the image of the stone for Nebuchadnezzar, in *De Doctrina Christiana* and revisit the reference in

Paradise Lost to the “ages of endless date” in the “New heav’ns, new earth” (12.549). Furthermore, although *De Doctrina* does refer to Daniel 2:44, it tellingly never mentions Daniel 4:10-12 and Daniel 2:31-5, which, as the biblical sources of the images of the tree, stone, and the mountain, are important for a millenarian reading of lines 4.146-53. In addition, because sections of Daniel 2:44 used as proof-texts in *De Doctrina* do not allude to the “great mountain” into which the stone transforms, that important millenarian image is completely absent from *De Doctrina*. Finally, lines 4.146-53 do not specify a kingdom that will last a thousand years but, rather, one in which “there shall be no end” (4:151). Instead of signaling an “eschatologically deferred” kingdom of Christ, as critics have suggested (Fixler 266, see also Guibbory, “Millenarianism” 154, 156, Rushdy 272), lines 4.146-53 celebrate an already existing kingdom, whose ancient prelapsarian beginning recurs at the incarnation and does so again and again. And it is a kingdom that will sufficiently manifest itself, not in an undetermined future, but in the time immediately after the Son’s triumph at the pinnacle over Satan’s temptations and for all eternity. Paradise thus regained ultimately and provocatively suggests that the spiritual kingdom of the present is conflated with and essentially indistinguishable from the perfect conditions of the final kingdom when God shall be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 28).

While the *De Doctrina* does explicitly refer to the millennium, it casts doubt on the doctrine of millenarianism, as I have previously argued in my chapter on Milton’s prose, and mentions the thousand years only in a non-ideological and tentative way. Entire chapters that I shall discuss shortly (Chapters 14, 15, and 25 of Book 1) do not refer to the millennium at all. Moreover, in the chapter which does discuss it (Book 1, Chapter 33), the millennium is radically deemphasized in what I have called the continuum of Christ’s kingdom. Firstly, the millennium is subsumed into the second coming’s “kingdom of glory” (883-87). Secondly, the kingdom of glory is subsumed into the “kingdom of the heavens” that begins during the incarnation (507) (i.e, the spiritual kingdom) and these two kingdoms constitute Christ’s kingdom. Thirdly, as I mention above, Milton conflates Christ’s kingdom with the “new heav’ns and new earth.” Finally, as Stanley Fish might argue, Milton might have implicitly invalidated the millennium as “corrupted” “external scripture of the written word” in favor of the “internal [scripture] of the Holy Spirit” (71, *De Doctrina* 881). The millennium is thus omitted in *Paradise*

Regained. All things considered, the brief epic is quite literally about paradise regained in the present time, not, as the contributors of *Milton and the Ends of Time* would have it, in the future event of a millennium that would be the fulfillment of what they regard as Milton's radical religious politics. As such, the poem is not about disillusionment after defeat or about patience under an oppressive monarchy, but about profound and very real hope and fulfillment, one that inspires political engagement that will ensure continual access to that hope and fulfillment.

Despite its profound concern with the spiritual and final kingdoms, *Paradise Regained* thus eschews quietism. As Fixler suggests, Milton critiques a resurgent millenarianism during the Restoration and the theocratic tendencies that underpinned it in *Paradise Regained* to assert his concern about the need to separate church and state. Such a separation was vital for an individual's sustained and free connection with the recovery of paradise (207, 219-20, 235-7, 243, 247-8). However, Fixler argues that by the time he writes *De Doctrina*, Milton was disenchanted enough with the "Puritan Revolution" that "Collective spiritual progress as such, the object of holy community, was no longer a possibility which particularly attracted his attention." Consequently, by the time he writes *Paradise Regained*, Christ's kingdom is only "individually experienced" and "ultimately independent of any political program whatsoever" (214, 220). *Paradise Regained* is thus political only insofar as it works to ensure individual religious liberty to withdraw into the "inward Kingdom of Christ" (220). Simpson contests this view by suggesting that Milton does not turn his back on holy community because the apocalyptic image of the stone represents the church (205), particularly the English church of the non-conformists facing government repression after the Restoration (202, 208). Consequently, the scope of Milton's continued political engagement in the brief epic is wider than scholars have previously thought. I agree with Simpson, and my argument that lines 4:146-53 encompass the church as well as the spiritual and final kingdoms strengthens his case. Simpson also argues that Milton deploys symbols of apocalypticism in the brief epic to call for separation of church and state in the face of government repression of the nonconformists (202, 208). I contest this and submit that the anti-millenarianism of *Paradise Regained* more prominently serves to challenge the Restoration monarchy's actions against religious liberty. As I suggested in my chapter in the early poetry and

academic proflusions, Milton uses his non-millenarian 1645 volume of poetry to reposition himself as a respectable artist and activist in the face of unwelcome perceptions of him as a radical and millenarian. Similarly, I shall argue that Milton uses *De Doctrina* and an anti-millenarian *Paradise Regained* to distance himself from Cromwell's government, which did not distinguish the secular sphere from the religious to his satisfaction (Woolrych 196-97). I suggest that Milton's anti-millenarian stance helps support the contention that the "short and scandalous night of interruption" in Milton's *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings* (1659) (Wolfe VII.274) is a rejection of the Protectorate (Woolrych 201-12), one that Milton reiterates during the Restoration in order to foreground the "Good Old Cause."

4.2 Milton's Rejection of Millenarianism in *Paradise Regained* and the Deferral of Fulfillment

Jameson, focusing primarily on *Paradise Lost*, does not discuss the "anti-millenarianism" of *Paradise Regained* in any detail. Fixler and Guibbory exhaustively consider it. According to Fixler, by the time Milton wrote *Paradise Regained*, he no longer "dreamt of the millennium nor of the establishment of the perfect state" (222). Judaism's belief that the Messiah would effect earthly salvation through "a universal temporal theocracy to be established with the supremacy of the chosen people and ruled from Jerusalem" mirrored and had been feeding into millenarian ideas of a personal, physical reign of Christ and his saints (235). Along with this, there had already been a "periodic condemnation of the recrudescence of temporal millenarianism as Judaizing and Judaistic" in Christendom that had begun at the onset of the first millennium and to which Calvin had added his voice (235-36). Milton makes his own contribution in *Paradise Regained* possibly because two particular events constituted a significant resurgent messianic hope in England. The first was the campaign, made popular by the notion that the conversion of the Jews was a prelude to the millennium, to readmit Jews into England. It was seriously considered in 1655 and 1656 by Cromwell's government but in the end faced stiff resistance from a public that grew doubtful the Jews would actually convert. It was finally unsuccessful (237-43, Sauer 44). Significantly, Achsah Guibbory, in an article entitled "England, Israel, and the Jews in Milton's Prose, 1649-

1660,” informs us that “Milton, despite an early millenarian strain” was “curiously silent” over this issue (“Israel” 113). Similarly, Elizabeth Sauer points out that by the time of the readmission controversy, Milton had stopped identifying the backsliding English nation as a whole with the ancient Israelite chosen race (49). The second was the strange case of Sabbatai Zevi, who in the near East claimed to be the Jewish messiah. He married a prostitute with supposedly prophetic abilities, gained a substantial and increasingly antinomian following, and held court in the regal manner of an earthly ruler under the auspices of the Turks in Constantinople. He ultimately abandoned his charade when challenged to demonstrate his divinity by an enemy, and was forced to become a Muslim. Nevertheless, like the campaign to readmit the Jews, the episode created much millenarian excitement in England (Fixler 236-49).

Essentially, Satan’s temptations in *Paradise Regained*, particularly the third grouping of temptations related to a terrestrial kingdom and the different earthly strategies though which to achieve it (money, divination, force, geo-political alliance, and pagan wisdom), represent the misguided aspirations for a worldly and external Kingdom of Christ that were prevalent in the period. As such, they vigorously though implicitly discredit the millenarian notion of a thousand-year physical reign of Christ and his saints on earth and deprecate it as Jewish (247-71). Fixler intimates that *Paradise Regained*, together with *De Doctrina*, even goes so far as to disavow politics altogether, except when it might help ensure the inviolability of the spiritual kingdom (218-20, 247-48). Milton found in the subject matter of the brief epic “actual confirmation that the Jewish messianism of Jesus’ time was a kind of timeless pattern of error, a perpetual stumbling block to the understanding of the true spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God” (247). According to Fixler’s account, Satan “reflect[s] and sum[s] up the illusory expectations which from Milton’s point of view were rooted in Judaism and survived in Christian chiliasm” (270). The temptations “were intended to be varied enough to appeal to almost every kind of justification for the possession and exercise of power, the hunger for which Milton’s Satan shrewdly senses as the worm at the root of messianism” and, by extension, Puritan millenarianism (225). In other words, the millennium was inextricably linked in the minds of the saints to worldly power at a time when Milton was focusing on

an internal spiritual kingdom disengaged from politics (220). The “apocalyptic longing” of the saints was “idolatry” (271).

Furthermore, the saints’ desire for power indicated a further remove from the spiritual kingdom because that worldly power was miraculously endowed by external supernatural forces. Influenced by Jewish messianism, Christians, particularly millenarians, held steadfastly to the notion that the “second coming might yet without delay accomplish that miraculous transformation of things” but (235), as the first temptation of the stones in the brief epic demonstrates, now with Christ “faith needs no reliance on miracles” (253). Moreover, as some critics have suggested, the Son’s standing on the pinnacle is not necessarily miraculous (4.561 and 4.584; see Carey edition 418-19). In my chapter on the early poetry and prose, I discussed this general point as it related to the rise of ordinary providence and decline of extraordinary providence (i.e., miracles), a trend which in turn renders the millennium, which is necessarily reliant on external providence, a questionable doctrine.

Christ’s work during his first coming focused on “evangelical and redemptive” activity (250) rather than on establishing a “Messianic kingdom” that had the “materialistic form” of the millennial reign imagined by the Fifth Monarchists of Milton’s day (250, 242-43). The implication is that such a materialistic reign has no place in the second coming either. As I have suggested, the culmination of the Son’s return for Milton is not the millennial reign, but rather, the end of the Son’s spiritual kingdom, and its sublimation in the renewed heaven and earth. Milton emphasizes the proper, Pauline typology, according to which “coming to fulfill the Law of Moses, Christ came to replace the material or carnal types by their spiritual reality” (252-53), as opposed to the Satanic typology of the fiend’s temptations, wherein types of “flesh” deteriorate to even “more corrupt flesh” (234). Rather, Jesus is meant to “transcend” them (262). Milton writes in *Paradise Lost* that the correct typological progression is “From shadowy Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit” (qtd. in 234, *Paradise Lost* 12.303). Fixler suggests that similarly, in *De Doctrina*, Milton cautions against the use of “force and fleshy weapons” to achieve Christ’s kingdom (qtd. in 262, *De Doctrina* [Columbia] 299, Vol. 15). Fixler implies that Milton’s emphasis on this Pauline teaching at this time would be inconsistent with a

belief in the millennium. More categorically, Milton also writes in the treatise that Christ in fulfilling his function as king “governs and preserves, chiefly by an inward law and spiritual power the Church” (qtd. in 261, *De Doctrina* [Columbia] 297, Vol. 15).

Accordingly, Fixler interprets lines 4.146-53 on the Daniellian stone and tree (4.146-51) as references to the final kingdom where “heaven and earth will be indistinguishable,” not to the millennium (273). In this kingdom, which will follow the Last Judgment and the final conflagration, God will “make all things new, restoring on earth the reign of perfection which will make heaven and earth one realm” (269-70). Fixler writes that this “absolute subordination of the world to Christ, or of temporal power to religion, is eschatologically deferred but it is nevertheless certain” (266). As I have argued, Milton does not emphasize the deferral of spiritual fulfillment to a future time at the end of and beyond history. Rather, he brings us to a present time experience of that perfect fulfillment.

Fixler’s preoccupation with history can be seen when he encapsulates Satan’s temptations in terms of “the three-fold mediatorial messianic nature [of Christ], as prophet, priest, and king” (248), as discussed in *De Doctrina* (269). The fiend “hedges, quibbles with, and distorts [the] distinctions” between “the three distinct stages of his dealing with mankind.” Initially, as a prophet, the Son triumphs over Satan’s temptations in the desert and attains the recovery of paradise for man. Subsequently, as priest, he serves as the guardian over the church he has established and as the model for its redemptive work. Finally, as king or “Messiah of the eschatological prophecies,” he will renew heaven and earth after the end of time (269-70). For example, when Satan tempts Christ to use his prophetic powers for military purposes (qtd. in 262, 3.12-15), this is in effect a Satanic proposal that Christ initiate a “theocratic rule of priestly augurs and seers who may acquire effective domination by preying on the superstitions of rulers and peoples” (262). The idea reductively conflates Jesus’s roles as priest and as king and deploys Satanic typology as well. However, overall, the entire strategy backfires on Satan and exposes radical misconceptions of a millenarianism rooted in false Jewish hopes and “superstitions” (270). Fixler conceives of the “the three-fold mediatorial messianic nature” from too much of a human historical point of view in the temporal development

of Christ's three roles. Rather, in *Paradise Regained*, history, as a sort of type in itself, is transcended as the law is, such that a new conception of time emerges which makes a "Paradise Regained" immediately and literally possible and final kingdom apprehensible in the present.

In a more recent 2008 historicist article, entitled "Rethinking Millenarianism, Messianism, and Deliverance in *Paradise Regained*," Achsah Guibbory revisits Fixler's argument on millenarianism's relationship to Jewish messianic ideology.⁷¹ She does so in the context of the efforts by scholars in *Milton and the Ends of Time* to question Milton's supposed abandonment of millenarianism when Charles II returned to the throne. Like Fixler, she emphasizes the "Pauline opposition between the physical and spiritual" in *Paradise Regained*, which renders Satan "the voice of what now seems an outmoded, reductively physical sense of deliverance" (144). Guibbory writes compellingly that

Millenarian beliefs that Christ would have an earthly kingdom and that the Jews would be restored to glory derived from reading the biblical verses literally (according to the flesh, as Paul would say) rather than figuratively, according to the spirit. Paul had contrasted "the letter" which "killeth" with "the spirit" which gives "life" (2 Cor. 3:6), and described "the children of Israel" (that is, the Jews) as "blinded" to the truth contained in the "old testament," unable to see beyond the "veil" of the letter (2 Cor. 3:1). (151)

Guibbory and Fixler both acknowledge the fact that this fundamental Christian doctrine (i.e., the Pauline emphasis on the spiritual) calls millenarianism into question. As I discussed above, Fixler had covered similar ground when discussing Christian typology, wherein flesh sees its fulfillment in spirit, as opposed to Satanic typology, wherein flesh looks forward to even more degenerate flesh (234). In Book 1, Chapter 27 on "the Gospel and Christian Freedom" in *De Doctrina*, Milton uses 2 Cor. 3:6 on the "letter" that "killeth" as a proof text for the typological relationship between the Old and New Testaments:

The gospel is the new dispensation of the covenant of grace, much more

⁷¹ Oddly, she notes that "This belief in the 'personal' reign of Christ was a minority, heterodox belief among Christians" (17). Revard feels otherwise (42-55).

excellent and perfect than the law, announced first rather obscurely by Moses and the prophets, afterwards with full clarity by Christ himself and his apostles and evangelists, [and] then written in the hearts of the faithful through the holy spirit. (*De Doctrina* [Oxford], 691)

The millennium would thus be an example of Satanic typology because a material reign of Christ and his saints would be the dubious fulfillment of the spiritual kingdom within the individual believers living in the world. I argue that Pauline teaching is not just incompatible with the millennium at this point in Milton's career. Milton, as a Christian theologian, would have not have deviated from such a basic teaching so as to entertain millenarianism at any point in his life.

In response to *Milton and the Ends of Time*, Guibbory does affirm the traditional view that Milton "in the Restoration climate of 'defeat,' moved away from the millenarian expectations" (135). Note that Milton "moved away" from millenarianism, implying that he does not completely abandon it. The evolution of the Son's attitude in *Paradise Regained* towards deliverance or the Kingdom, for Guibbory, directly mirrors the progression of Milton's attitudes towards millenarianism. Tracing the Son's thinking, beginning from the point where he fantasizes about acting "To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke, / Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth / Brute violence and proud Tyrannic pow'r / Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd" (qtd. in 138, 1.217-20), she suggests that

Milton is charting the trajectory of his own career as he describes the Son learning (as he does not in the New Testament account) to reject all those he finds undeserving of liberty, to redefine deliverance as something spiritual, and to put off millenarian dreams of a terrestrial redemption until such a time (if ever) when it might be God's will that they be realized. (141)

Later on in the paper, Guibbory writes that when the Son distances himself from the various Jewish and Gentile nationalities, Milton signifies that he has "decisively abandon[ed] his earlier millenarian desire to deliver the English and bring liberty to the larger world—as if it were a youthful hope he has, like Jesus, outgrown" (154). The implication here seems to be that Milton had at one time, particularly in the 1640s (139),

been millenarian. Furthermore, in Guibbory's estimation, there is a palpable sense of Milton's nostalgia for a discredited millenarianism in *Paradise Regained*:

Milton expanded the biblical version of the Son's wilderness trial to emphasize the temptation to perform material, temporal deliverance suggests the strong appeal of millenarianism for Milton. The desire for an earthly kingdom of peace and freedom had been for Milton a deep passion, and he had used his talent as a writer, often modeling himself on the Hebrew prophets, to try to create a better world. (153)

Hence, for Guibbory, the critical lines 4:146-53 on the tree and the stone constitute the sole passage in the epic that potentially hints at the millennium. Although "the idea of a terrestrial reign—that there will be an earthly kingdom—is so repeatedly and rigorously deferred that one wonders if it is even imaginable" (154), there is "the distant possibility of an earthly embodiment to keep human hope alive" (156).

Proponents of the radical Milton, on the other hand, are quite certain that these lines constitute a millenarian reference, and their comments demonstrate ideological coloring. Lewalski writes that Christ "prophesies, in metaphor, how his millennial kingdom will – at last—subdue all others. . . . The tree seems to refer to the power of his kingdom to transform the earth, and the stone to its power to crush all earthly monarchies and their evils" ("millennium," 25). For her, *Paradise Regained*, along with *Samson Agonistes*, discourages the anticipation of an imminent millennium, "while at the same time underscoring the continuing necessity to prepare rightly for it by rigorous moral and political analysis and personal reformation, under the harsh conditions that obtained for dissenters after the Restoration" (22). According to Revard, Henry More saw the references to the tree as evocative of "these happy times of the *Messias* in the expected *Millennium*," and that he and Joseph Mede saw the thousand-year reign in the mountain that the stone transformed into (68). As she sees it, "With millenarianism seen as signaling dissent" during the Restoration, Milton could only promote millenarianism through the coded "cryptic mode" of the stirring biblical imagery from the book of Daniel. Loewenstein agrees with her that the passage was "an expression of Milton's ongoing millenarianism after the Restoration" (246) and in *Representing Revolution in Milton and his Contemporaries*, he notes the "millenarian implications" and continuing

political activism in the passage, the anti-monarchical sentiments of which were shared by non-conformist spokesmen in Restoration England (265).

As I have discussed in previous chapters, John T. Shawcross and William B. Hunter, have raised questions about millenarianism in Milton's work in their articles in *Milton and the Ends of Time*. One other contributor to the anthology, Ken Simpson, emulates Shawcross's concerns. His article "The apocalypse in *Paradise Regained*" is important to my discussion on the brief epic, but with some qualifications. Simpson writes,

I use 'apocalyptic' rather than 'millennial' or 'millenarian' to refer to Milton's views of the end of the world for reasons outlined by John Shawcross in this book. Essentially, Milton held a *broadly apocalyptic view of history* throughout his career and *continued to refer to a literal Second Coming and reign of Christ even when Christ's imminence was unlikely*, but remained circumspect about a thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints preceding or separate from the Last Judgment. (220, note 5, emphases mine)

I think "broadly apocalyptic" is apropos, but to continue to allow for the political and religious importance of Milton's anticipation of a "literal . . . reign of Christ," whenever it falls in time in relation to the Last Judgment, still renders the doctrine in question millenarian. Indeed, the language of his paper still very much echoes the millenarianism ascribed to Milton by the others. Simpson writes that "Throughout his career Milton's political hopes were linked to the Second Coming of Christ to defeat Antichrist and reign with the saints *in judgment*." According to him, "Vigorous spiritual preparedness is never absent from Milton's early hope for *a literal reign of Christ*," government repression during the Restoration "was a sign of the coming apocalypse and the final defeat of Satan by the Son, *whether this defeat would bring about the imminent, earthly kingdom or not*"; and, finally, "Not force of arms but patience and scriptural combat will lead to Christ's kingdom" (203-04, 206, 218 emphasis mine). Despite his more careful terminology, Simpson continues to strongly associate Milton with mainstream millenarians who "emphasized the progressive nature of the apocalypse" wherein "the Second Coming . . .

imminent in the newly reformed church” would progress into and be capped by the “literal reign of Christ and his saints.”

Generally, scholars on both sides of the argument about Milton’s millenarianism read in these lines a deferral of religious fulfillment to a future kingdom of Christ. While most believe that kingdom to be the millennial one, Fixler discerns a reference to the final kingdom. John Leonard has written that he cautiously inclines towards Revard’s millenarian interpretation of these lines, but that he is open to possibility that they simply allude to the present church. In his opinion, “The evidence is not conclusive” as far as Danielic Imagery in 4.146-51 is concerned (“Millennium,” 263-64, 267-68). Ken Simpson and Christopher Hill, on the other hand, do argue that the lines 4.146-51 refer to the church and the spiritual kingdom.

Arguing that Milton uses imagery of the end times to question the monarchy’s repressive religious policies (202, 208), Simpson writes that in the image of the stone the church “is announced in apocalyptic terms”: “Christ’s kingdom, imperfectly shadowed in the earthly church, will have no end and ‘shall to pieces dash / All monarchies besides throughout the world,’ without force of arms” (205), that is, by “patience, argument, and exegesis” inspired by the example of Christ’s victory in the wilderness (209). In other words, the image of the stone evokes at the surface level the second coming and the thousand-year reign, but on a deeper level it signifies an active, dissenting church, which presages this future Kingdom. But even so, patient and faithful endurance will not be enough as Christ during his second coming will still have to “defeat Antichrist and rule with the saints in judgment” (203-04). I shall argue that lines 4.146-53 are more significant than that. The recurrent beginnings of the Son’s kingdom do establish the church and the spiritual kingdom, but once the Son triumphs over the temptations, the spiritual fulfillment of the renewed heaven and earth (not the millennium) may already be experienced in real, not figurative, terms in the present.

Like Simpson, Christopher Hill sees in lines 4.146-53 a reference to the spiritual kingdom and the church that precedes the second coming and the millennium:

Before the time comes for the Son of God “to sit on David’s throne”,
regeneration must spread and overshadow the earth, “like a tree”, or like

the Biblical stone which grew until it “became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”, after smashing the kingdoms. When all the elect are truly kings (II. 466-80), “godlike men, / The Holiest of Holies, and his saints” (IV. 348-9), when the sons are all incorporated in the Son, then “all monarchies . . . throughout the world” shall be overthrown (IV. 132-50). This is still Milton’s aim. Victory comes when the Son of God overcomes Satanic violence by his moral strength. “A fairer Paradise is founded now.” But the conclusion is not passivity. “On thy glorious work / Now enter and begin to save mankind” (IV. 634-5) is a call to action.

(*Revolution* 420-21)

However, we see again a focus on a future kingdom of Christ. Regeneration must occur “before the time comes for the Son of God ‘to sit on David’s throne.’” The delayed fulfillment detracts from the reassurance, blessedness and bliss already available here and now. Christ’s objectives “are in the first resort internal, until Christ himself comes” (421). Hill, though perhaps the most important proponent of the radical Milton (*Revolution* 93-116), believed Milton was steadfast in his millenarianism (284, 417, 421) but progressively lost faith in the imminence of the millennium, which he “had to rethink and redate” (415-17, 284). According to Hill, “By 1659 Milton was emphasizing that Christ’s ‘spiritual kingdom’ is ‘able, without force, to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world, which are upheld by outward force only’” (qtd. in 415-16, Wolfe VII.256).⁷² Nevertheless, instead of celebrating the prospect of already experiencing the final

⁷² Quoted from Milton’s anti-theocratic, and thus implicitly anti-millenarian, *A Treatise of Civil Power* (1659). In this work, Milton reiterates his commitment to the spiritual kingdom, which, as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, is also evident in *Of Reformation* (1641), *De Doctrina*, and “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” (1629). In Chapters 3 and 4, I discuss how Milton engages with the spiritual kingdom at length in the epics. Here is the full quote from *A Treatise of Civil Power*: “The other reason why Christ rejects outward force in the government of his church, is, as I said before, to shew us the divine excellence of his spiritual kingdom, able without worldly force to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world, which are upheld by outward force only: by which to uphold religion otherwise then to defend the religious from outward violence, is no service to Christ or his kingdom but rather a disparagement, and degrades it from a divine and spiritual kingdom to a kingdom of this world: which he denies it to be, because it needs not force to confirm it: *Joh. 18. 36: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jewes*” (256).

kingdom through the spiritual one, Hill highlights “the wilderness” where “through our own experience of adversity, suffering, [and] temptation,” readers may find “the way back to a better paradise” (416), a paradise that still has to be perfected in the millennium. In the following section of this chapter, I would like to build on the ideas Simpson and Hill and suggest that the brief epic refers not so much to the future but to the present.

4.3 The “real” Kingdom: Taking *Paradise Regained* seriously

With a rather negative perspective on the brief epic, Gordon Teskey writes that “neither word in the title of *Paradise Regained* is what it is or means what it says. There is no *Paradise* and nothing is *regained* or even *gained*” (519). While other critics see the image of the tree and stone as portending the millennial kingdom, for him, the “fairer Paradise. . . founded now” (4.613) is the New Jerusalem, prophesied by Revelation 22, which is even farther in the future (520, 547-8). With Christ’s victory in the wilderness, “the direction of history is reversed, from fall to restoration, although history is far from complete.” The “world with which Milton was politically engaged. . . is now gradually improving” (502) and “Satan has been quelled, or he will be at length, if we are very, very patient” (547). The Son spurns politics in favor of regenerating man through the spirit, and so the brief epic is something of a dead end for Milton, whose heart is really in the activism suggested by *Samson Agonistes* (548-50).

The problem lies in the failure of scholars to take Milton at his word. I argue that the title of the brief epic says it all and ought to be taken at face value, that paradise has, in fact and for all intents and purposes, been regained. While deliverance and the kingdom cannot be read literally, the title of the brief epic can. In other words, the question is not whether the Kingdom is “real or allegoric” (*Paradise Regained* 4.390). Satan gets it wrong as usual. The kingdom of Christ is *both* real *and* allegoric, and hence renders a millennial kingdom and its deferred beginning completely redundant and unnecessary. Scholars have argued (*Paradise Regained* [Carey] 511) that the paradise the Son regains is the “paradise within” mentioned in *Paradise Lost* (12.587). I agree with them, but if they are right, then that paradise is not founded during Christ’s victory in the wilderness, nor will it be established in the final kingdom of the future. It began long ago

and was available to Adam and Eve. I suggest that the “paradise within” and the “Paradise regained” are equivalent to the Son’s kingdom, which repeatedly begins. In other words, when the Son recovers paradise in the wilderness, the Son’s kingdom, which had first begun at the dawn of time, begins yet again. Moreover, the New Jerusalem (i.e., the final kingdom), is not out of reach in the future, but rendered already accessible in the present. All this is made possible by the Son’s humiliation and exaltation in the wilderness, and the recurrent and retroactive effects of his incarnation and death. The Kingdom of Christ is therefore not allegoric in the sense that, as the inner spiritual kingdom in the present, it only represents its own future fulfillment in the concrete historical event of the millennium. Rather, the present kingdom and the final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth are essentially the same spiritual reality. As far as the brief epic is concerned, the millennium is Satanic. Christ’s kingdom is allegoric because it is represented in parabolically symbolic terms that confound Satan and that challenge the faithful reader to actively understand its true spiritual nature. Rushdy calls this approach the “poetics of enigma” (218-27).

Scholars have not fully appreciated the recovery of paradise in the brief epic because of their fixation on the deferrals and future eschatological kingdoms they perceive in the images of the tree and stone in the Son’s rejection of Satan’s offer of Rome (4.146-53):

Know therefore when my season comes to sit
 On *David’s* Throne, it shall be like a tree
 Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth,
 Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
 All Monarchies besides throughout the world,
 And of my Kingdom there shall be no end:
 Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
 Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.

However, in Book 3, when Satan encourages the Son to take the earliest opportunity “to sit upon thy father David’s throne” (3.153, 171-80), the Son clearly suggests that the Davidic kingdom they are discussing will begin, not in the future, but during his death for man’s sins, which is to shortly come to pass:

All things are best fulfilled in their due time,
 And time there is for all things, Truth hath said:
 If of my reign prophetic writ hath told,
 That it shall never end, so when begin
 The Father in his purpose hath decreed,
 He in whose hand all times and seasons roll.
 What if he hath decreed that I shall first
 Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,
 By tribulations, injuries, insults,
 Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
 Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting
 Without distrust or doubt, that he may know
 What I can suffer, how obey? Who best
 Can suffer, best can do; best reign, who first
 Well hath obeyed; just trial ere I merit
 My exaltation without change or end.
 But what concerns it thee when I begin
 My everlasting kingdom. . . ? (3.182-99)

The first six lines in this passage seem to imply a reign in the far future: “All things are best fulfilled in their due time, / And time there is for all things.” There is a similar effect when the Son chides the persistent fiend later: “My time I told thee (and that time for thee / Were better farthest off) is not yet come” (3.396-97). However, because the only precondition for the kingdom to begin is for the Son “to be tried in humble state,” that is, to die as mortal during the Passion, the “reign [which] prophetic writ hath told, that . . . shall never end” immediately refers to the Son’s spiritual kingdom and its manifestation in the church. Moreover, since the Son’s incarnation and death exert retroactive effects upon all beginnings of the Son’s kingdom, including the exaltation in Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, the beginning of the spiritual kingdom is not so much a new one as it is a recurrence. The very same obedient endurance of “just trial” (*Paradise Regained* 3.196) that merits his “exaltation” in 33 A.D., had already “merited” both his prelapsarian exaltations before the angels in Books 3 and 5 of *Paradise Lost*. As I have argued, these

beginnings are not limited to single points in historical time. These events can transcend time and eternally recur, and their benefits are always available across eras. In the Father's hand, history loses its linearity and "all times and seasons roll" (3.187). In addition, the "Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting / Without distrust or doubt" that the Son must experience and the "tribulations, injuries, insults, / Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence" he must endure before he can "reign" (3.184, 190-93), can also describe his treatment at the hands of Satan in the wilderness. Thus, the Son's triumph over Satan's temptations is also itself a recurrent beginning of the kingdom. It enables him to resume a ministry that had been interrupted by the forty days in the desert. It crucially entails its own humiliation and exaltation.

The disciples Andrew and Simon therefore rightly say that "the time is come" (2.43), though the Son is missing, enduring temptations in the wilderness. They are in the midst of recurring beginnings, that is, the baptism and the victory in the wilderness. The Son himself says in Book 1 that at the Jordan he

. . . knew *the time*

Now full, that I no more should live obscure

But openly begin, as best becomes

The authority which I derived from Heav'n. (1.286-89, emphasis mine)

Here, he is referring to the earthly ministry of his first coming that is about "to openly begin" and the spiritual kingdom it inaugurates. "To begin" might suggest futurity and incompleteness in the sense that the Son is "To start or take the first step in [the] matter in question, or in action generally" (*OED* 1b.). However, it can also mean "to give origin to, bring into existence, create" (*OED* 3). I suggest that both senses are operating in the brief epic. At the end of the poem, the angels urge the Son "to begin to save mankind" (4.635), but he will also "begin / [his] everlasting kingdom" (3.198). However, "To openly begin" (1.288), without any direct object or infinitive, is open-ended. The spiritual kingdom requires ongoing action, but when the Son begins it, it is whole and complete.

Hence, when the Son says "All things are best fulfilled in their due time / And time there is for all things" (3.182-83), he is evoking multiple recurrent beginnings. Moreover, like the Father's speech during the exaltation of Book 3, there are multiple

time frames and tenses in operation: “the time / Now full” (1.286-87), “the time is come” (2.43), “when my season comes to sit / On *David’s* Throne” (4.146-7), “My time I told thee (and that time for thee / Were better farthest off) is not yet come” (3.396-97). From the surface-level perspective of purely chronological time, the kingdom will begin at the resurrection, when the Son will be exalted. But on a deeper level, the temporal ambiguity suggests that the kingdom has already begun, is beginning again now, and will begin again and again in the future. It does not suggest that the kingdom is elusive or inaccessible until some future time. Time also seems unstable in the following lines:

If of my reign prophetic writ hath told,
 That it shall never end, so when begin
 The Father in his purpose hath decreed

 But what concerns it thee when I begin
 My everlasting kingdom. . . ? (3.184-86, 198-99)

While the Son is definitive that his reign “shall never end”, the grammar and syntactical compression of “when begin” is strange and ambiguous. In line 185, the modal verb “shall” may or may not apply to “begin.” That “begin” is dissociated from “shall,” and a clear and stable temporal reference point, suggests that the beginnings of the Son’s kingdom transcend time. In addition, “when I shall begin” would certainly indicate a future beginning, but “when I begin” in line 198 suggests an imminent one, such as the spiritual kingdom that the Son reestablishes immediately after the victory in the wilderness. In any case, it is Satan, not the Son, who is obsessed with the timing of the kingdom: “Of gaining David’s throne no man knows when, / For both the when and how is nowhere told” (4.471-72). For his part, the Son, emphasizes not the “when,” but the “how.” After mentioning the Danielic tree and stone, he says “Means there shall be to this, but what the means, / Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell” (4.152-53). The Son crucially does not say that the timing is unknown. When Satan mirrors this line in 4.471-72 (“For both the when and how is nowhere told”) that omission is foregrounded. Finally, I submit that some of the suggestions of a future kingdom deliberately tempt readers, as Stanley Fish might put it (357-58), into a millenarian interpretation. When the Son speaks of the time “when [his] season comes to sit / On *David’s* Throne,” he does not

categorically declare to Satan that the kingdom will begin at his death. The Son only hints at it—“*What if the Father hath decreed that I shall first / Be tried in humble state*” (emphasis mine). By having the Son do that, Milton deemphasizes that beginning so that readers’ minds might leap to the millennial reign, as they also might do when the Son tells Satan that his “time for thee / Were better *farthest off*.” However, the “fit though few” who faithfully and attentively read the brief epic will know what the Son is referring to and recognize the anti-millenarian sentiment.

However, Lewalski, Revard, Loewenstein, and Guibbory seem to have given in to the temptation. As opposed to what they have argued, the crucial lines 4:146-53, wherein the Son says his kingdom will “be like a tree / Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth, / Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash / All Monarchies,” do not immediately reference a future, earthly Kingdom of Christ, but, rather, the spiritual kingdom that his ministry will initiate, a kingdom that will continue on as the eschatological kingdom of the second coming. Although the lines do allude to the end times, they do not evoke the thousand-year reign, but, rather, to end of the Son’s kingdom. As I discussed in the previous chapter, upon the destruction of all the Son’s “enemies,” including all worldly kingdoms, Satan, and death, the Son “[will hand] over the kingdom to God the father” and effectively end his own kingdom (*De Doctrina* [Oxford] 887-89). Leonard writes of the tree in 4.146-53 that “Orthodox commentators took it to be [a] prophecy of the church now existing but millenarians took it as a prophecy of the kingdom yet to come.” In addition, according to him, “The stone that smote the image ‘was cut without hands’. Christians of all persuasions took these words to be a reference to the miracle of the incarnation” (267-68). Revard similarly acknowledges that the stone, prior to its transformation into a mountain, was interpreted by millenarians as a symbol for Christ and also as one for the church; she also writes that the tree was seen by the Church father Tertullian as representing the church (68). Given the anti-millenarian suggestions of the brief epic and the Son’s definitive identification (though he is evasive about it to Satan) of the kingdom he and Satan have been discussing as the spiritual kingdom, Milton’s interpretation of these lines is non-millenarian. Moreover, as I shall fully discuss in the next section of this chapter, Milton’s references in *De Doctrina* to the image of the stone in the Book of Daniel support this contention.

In addition, I argue that the eschatological kingdom alluded to by lines 4:146-53 manifests itself in the spiritual kingdom. Shortly after he utters these lines, the Son triumphs over Satan at the pinnacle. As I have suggested, this is yet another recurrent beginning of the kingdom, and consequently the Son undergoes a humiliation and an exaltation that are particular to that moment in history. Because the Son's incarnation and death for man's sins are recurrently and retroactively efficacious, the benefits of the Son's ultimate humiliation, including the future defeat of Satan in the eschatological kingdom, are experienced during the humiliation and exaltation specific to the victory in the wilderness. In this way, the Son's victory transcends time so as to render Satan's ultimate defeat as much a present event as future one, and the Son fully accedes to "David's throne" not in a future eschatological kingdom but once his victory has prepared him to begin the ministry of his first advent. As a result, the Son during the pinnacle scene does in reality and, simultaneously, at the level of symbolism regain paradise for man. By focusing on the temptations in the wilderness as opposed to the crucifixion, Milton privileges "one man's firm obedience fully tried" (*Paradise Regained* 1.4) over the horrible suffering on the cross as the primary precondition for the beginning of the Son's kingdom and the recovery of paradise. Gordon Teskey insightfully writes that "As Milton sees it, Jesus's Crucifixion is a victory over the *consequences* of the original sin of Adam and Eve, the chief consequence being death. But Christ's victory in the desert is a victory over the *cause* of original sin, the temptation of Adam and Eve. This is a more radical solution" (513). However, this victory does more than effect a slow reversal of history in the direction of human regeneration; its effect is immediate. Three elements in the end of Book Four support this reading: the ambiguity of whether the Son stands at the pinnacle through miraculous or human means, Satan's fall, and the Son's elevation from the pinnacle by the Angels, which is followed by his descent with their aid to "a green bank" evocative of the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21 and 22 (4.581-635).

Satan's pivotal fall occurs just after the Son is transported to the "highest pinnacle" of the temple of Jerusalem and challenged by the fiend to

Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God
For it is written, he will give command

Concerning thee to his angels, in their hands

They shall uplift thee, lest at any time

Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone. (4.549, 555-59)

The son powerfully retorts, quoting from Luke 4.12, “Also it is written / Tempt not the Lord the God,” and stands on the pinnacle, “But Satan smitten with amazement fell” (4.560-62). This fall is emphasized by two epic similes, the first comparing Satan to the giant Antaeus, who battles with Hercules, the second comparing him to the Sphinx, who was defeated by Oedipus. As Stanley Fish observes, the answer to both the Sphinx’s famous riddle and Satan’s anxiety-ridden question about the identity of the Son is “man” (388, Leonard, *Value* 122). This suggests, I argue, that at this moment the Son experiences a humiliation or kenosis, which causes Satan’s fall at the pinnacle. As Leonard puts it, “Satan’s whole endeavor until this moment has been to reassure himself that Jesus is just a man, fallible and fallen” (*Value* 122). However, it is ironically as a man that the Son defeats Satan in the wilderness.

Scholars have been divided about whether the Son stands on the pinnacle by virtue of a miracle or by completely human means. Lewalski, for example, taking the pinnacle to be a spire, believes it is “impossible” to stand on it and that, therefore, the Son needs to use his “divine power.” Carey, on the other hand, interprets the Son’s “uneasy station” (4.584) on the pinnacle, from which the angels later lift him up, as an indication that the Son’s standing on the pinnacle is a difficult “balancing feat” but one that does not require “miraculous aid.” If there is a miracle involved, scholars argue that the Son attests to his divinity through it, which horrifies Satan and causes him to fall. Thus when the Son quotes Luke, he is actually telling Satan not to tempt *him*, for he is God (Leonard *Value*, 120-21, qtd. in 120). Leonard, for his part, argues that “It is the Son’s *refusal* to play the divine trump that strikes Satan with amazement” (121). The Son, as a consummate man, defeats Satan, not by employing the power of his divine nature, but, rather, by asserting the power of scripture. To support his case, Leonard cites Fish’s remark on the answer to the Sphinx’s riddle and Margaret Kean’s note on the internal rhyme in lines 4.561-62, which suggests that the Son relies on scripture rather than on a miracle (122-23): Also it is *written* / Tempt not the Lord the God, he said and stood / But Satan *smitten* with amazement fell” (4.560-62, emphasis mine). As Leonard writes, “‘God’ is the answer that

Satan has been dreading, but the answer he gets is even more dreadful,” man, that is, “perfect and unassisted,” and it “shatters him” (123). However, according to Leonard, Satan’s fall in the pinnacle scene only “recalls” Satan’s final defeat at the end of time, it “does not fulfill it” (124). I agree with Leonard that the Son refuses “to play the divine trump,” but in so doing, he empties himself of his divine potential and thus reenacts the process of humiliation that is a necessary component of each recurrent beginning of his kingdom. Consequently, Satan falls as a retroactive, but very real, effect of the Son’s ultimate humiliation in the future. It does not simply foretell Satan’s eventual downfall.

Does the Son’s humiliation in the wilderness necessarily mean that he does not perform the miracle? To stand on a pinnacle is indeed, after all, a daunting task. When the Son quotes Luke, is he necessarily only quoting scripture? Or, is the line ambiguous, as some scholars have suggested (*Value* 121)? Is it possible that the Son is asserting his divinity with these words? Milton deliberately provokes these questions, but provides no clear answers. As Leonard writes, he “does not give us access to the mind of either Satan or Jesus at this climactic moment. He could easily have done so, but chooses not to” (121). Milton resists doing so because he wishes to emphasize the irrelevance of these questions to Satan’s fall at the pinnacle. As Leonard points out, citing Book 1, Chapter 8 of *De Doctrina*, the performance of miracle does not necessarily demonstrate one’s divine nature (120). In that section of the treatise, Milton writes that “God alone is the primary Author of miracles,” or “extraordinary providence,” but may give “the power of producing [a miracle] solely to whom he wishes,” that is, to human beings (339, 341). He gives the example of Elijah, a “*man of God*” who miraculously resurrects a deceased child through the power of God in 1 Kings 12: 24, which he uses as a proof-text for this section of *De Doctrina* (341, qtd. in *Value* 120). Other merely human miracle workers include Moses, through whom God commanded the waters of the Red Sea to make way for the fleeing Israelites (*Value* 120), Samson, who destroys Dagon’s temple in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*, and many other biblical figures. As Leonard puts it, “Were Jesus to stand [on the pinnacle] by a miracle, he would establish his credentials as ‘man of God’, but he would not reveal himself to be God” (120). Therefore, even if the Son does perform this miracle, and Milton leaves open the possibility that he does, this is not the reason why Satan falls. Similarly, when the Son utters the words “Also it is written /

Tempt not the Lord the God” to Satan, the potential that he proclaims his own divinity does exist. As Leonard acknowledges, “the ambiguity is there and . . . Satan hears it” (121), but, again, whether or not this utterance is a declaration of the Son’s divine nature has no bearing on Satan’s defeat. The irrelevance of this ambiguity and of the means through which the Son stands on the pinnacle, that is, through a miracle or human effort, helps to emphasize that the Son triumphs over Satan in the wilderness as a man, and that this victory is not achieved through any external power that millenarians valued, that is, worldly kingship, the extraordinary providence of miracles, or any spectacular display of divine puissance. Rather, this one specific humiliation of the Son at the pinnacle, wherein all his future and past humiliations and exaltations reverberate, amazes Satan, who not only experiences his future ultimate defeat in the present, but also intuits the awesome power of the internal, spiritual kingdom, which, buttressed by scripture, unites God and man to his detriment. Thus Satan falls.

Citing E. M. Pope, John Carey writes that “no other writer states that Satan fell after his final defeat” during the temptation episode and that “traditional accounts follow *Luke* iv 13 in saying that Satan when he had ‘ended all the temptation, . . . departed from him for a season’” (508). In the same vein, Leonard says that the Gospels do not mention Satan falling at this juncture (914). The uniqueness of this addition to the temptation narrative suggests that it conveys a crucial notion, and that notion is captured in the following scene by a portion of the Angel’s hymn, which, addressed directly to the Son, describes the “fairer Paradise”:

him [Satan] long of old
 Thou didst debel, and down from heaven cast
 With all his army, now thou hast avenged
 Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
 Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
 And frustrated the conquest fraudulent:
 He [Satan] never more henceforth will dare set foot
 In Paradise to tempt; his snares are broke:
 For though that seat of earthly bliss be failed,
 A fairer Paradise is founded now

For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou
 A Saviour art come down to reinstall.
 Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be
 Of tempter and temptation without fear.
 But thou, Infernal Serpent, shalt not long
 Rule in the Clouds; like an Autumnal Star
 Or Lighting thou shalt fall from Heav'n trod down
 Under his feet: for proof, e're this thou feel'st
 Thy wound, yet not thy last and deadliest wound
 By this repulse receiv'd, and hold'st in Hell
 No triumph. (4.604-24)

Satan in the end times “like an Autumnal Star / Or Lighting” shall “fall from Heav'n trod down / Under his [the Son's] feet,” but because the Son's victory in the wilderness wounds him in the present, he already “feel'st” the future “wound” that will finally defeat him. As “proof” of the ultimate and final wound, the present wound demonstrates and prefigures the future one's decisive power. However, “proof” can also mean “The action or fact of experiencing or having experience of something” (*OED* II.6). I suggest that Satan also literally experiences his final defeat to a significant extent in the present, and, as a result, Satan actually falls in the pinnacle scene. To shed light on this point, let us revisit the exaltation of *Paradise Lost* Book 3 for a moment. When the Son has “quitted all to save / A world from utter loss,” his “humiliation shall exalt” his “manhood to this throne” and he shall “reign / Both God and man” (3.307-08, 313-16). As “Anointed Universal king,” for all time, his “power” is thus based on the “merits” he earns from his dying for man as the incarnate Son (3.317, 319). Therefore, when, as Michael in Book 12 tells us, the Son will “dissolve / Satan and his perverted world” as “Saviour” and “Lord” at the Last Judgment (12.546-47, 544, emphasis mine), this final defeat is in the end an effect of the Son's ultimate humiliation and exaltation, and, as such, manifests backward in time during the Son's victory in the wilderness.

In other words, when the Son “repulses” Satan by declining “to play the divine trump,” at the pinnacle, Satan's downfall at the end of time is actually happening, as if the Son's present time humiliation is directly causing it. And in a sense, it is causing it,

because the Son's future exaltation is a recurrence of all previous beginnings, including the one in the wilderness. As the passage suggests, Satan's "last and deadliest wound," along with the present wound he experiences at the pinnacle, will be both "By this repulse receiv'd" (4.622-23). The referent of "this repulse" is the Son having "now . . . avenged / Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing / Temptation, . . . regained lost Paradise" (4.606-08). The full ramifications of the Son's victory in the wilderness are still to come at the end of time, but they are also already happening to a significant extent in the present. Not only has Satan already fallen and felt his final wound, the Son has already recovered Paradise, where Satan "never more henceforth will dare set foot / . . . to tempt" (4.610-11). Satan's future eschatological defeat is thus realized in the present time of the brief epic, and, by extension, that of the readers. It will simply recur in a more conclusive way in the end of time. In *De Doctrina*, Satan is finally "routed by fire sent by heaven" in the end times. Quoting 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Milton writes that "that outlaw will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall cause to vanish by that glorious coming of his" (886). However, brought about by the "glorious" conditions of the second coming, this is merely a more spectacular manifestation of the Satan's fall at the pinnacle.⁷³ Besides, that "the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth" calls to mind the Son's powerful verbal rebuke on the pinnacle: "Tempt not the Lord your God."

Thus, when the Son challenges Satan, asking him, "Know'st thou not that my rising is thy fall, / And my promotion will be thy destruction?" (3.201-02), he means what he says. When the spiritual kingdom begins again in the wilderness, Satan will experience a very real defeat, though this defeat will not have the fireworks and special effects of Satan's ultimate downfall. As Michael tells Adam in Book 12 of *Paradise Lost*, the Son redeems man "Not by destroying Satan" himself, but "his works in thee and in thy seed" (12.394-95). The Son's "death for man . . . Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength / Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms, / And fix far deeper in his head their stings / Than temporal death shall bruise the Victor's heel" (12.425, 430-33).

⁷³ Furthermore, Satan's fall in the end of time and his fall at the pinnacle are recurrences of his original fall from heaven at the beginning of time.

The Son's humiliation in the wilderness plays an important part in this recovery of paradise. Satan's "amazement" as he plummets is significant in this regard. I suggest that this amazement is foretold by the Son when he mentions the manner in which his kingdom is to be established in the lines "Means there shall be to this, but what the means,/Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell" (4.152-53). The "means" is the Son's act of profound and triumphant obedience in the wilderness, that is, to the Father's will that he "o'ercome Satanic strength, / And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh" through "His weakness" before he is sent "To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes, / By humiliation and strong sufferance" (1.159-61). Thus, the Son declines "to play the divine trump" and utterly rejects worldly kingship, which is precisely the sort of rule millenarianism looks forwards to. Because this obedience mirrors the Son's obedient willingness to die for man's sins during his ultimate humiliation, the retroactive effects of that humiliation can be realized in the present time of the brief epic. The spiritual kingdom of Christ (with its external manifestation in the church), as symbolized by the images of the tree and the stone, begins. But the eschatological kingdom of the future, which the "stone" that shall "dash / All the Monarchies besides throughout the world" (4.147-49) also alludes to, is also manifest in the present time, particularly in Satan's fall at the pinnacle. This creates the necessary conditions for the present kingdom. Satan is amazed, that is, utterly befuddled, because he is constitutionally incapable of comprehending obedience and the notion of an inner, spiritual, and non-worldly kingdom.

This real presence of the future eschatological kingdom in the present, emergent spiritual one also explains how Satan will never again hazard venturing into the recovered paradise (4.611-12). John Carey, in his edition of *Paradise Regained*, is bewildered by this:

The Angels' claim that Satan 'never more henceforth will dare set foot' in Paradise is curious, since Paradise no longer exists. The 'fairer Paradise' of iv 613 might, it has been suggested, mean the 'paradise within' of *PL* xii 587, which is not, however, a place (in which Satan might 'set foot') but a mental state. Or it might mean the new Jerusalem of Rev. xxi. But this will come about only after the devil has been cast into the lake of fire

and brimstone (*Rev.* xx 10 – the ‘last and deadliest wound’ of iv 622), so there is no question of his daring to set his foot in it. Clarity seems to be sacrificed for the sake of a triumphal ending, and since it is stressed throughout *PR* that any power Satan has is merely allowed him by the Almighty, it is not apparent that Christ’s victory actually alters anything, so far as Satan’s power and scope are concerned. (511)

As I suggested at the beginning of this section of the chapter, the paradise regained is the “paradise within” mentioned in *Paradise Lost*, the inner spiritual kingdom, that is. However, it is also the future eschatological kingdom. Since the future eschatological kingdom is also present in real terms during this moment, the complete defeat of Satan during that future kingdom also has a presence in the present time of the triumph in the wilderness. Consequently, it is this future eschatological defeat that manifests in Satan’s fall from the pinnacle, bars Satan from entering the present kingdom within and paves the way for the recovery of Paradise. The Son’s ultimate humiliation and exaltation make it all possible. Carey, however, rightly notes that Satan does retain “power and scope” despite being barred from the spiritual kingdom. Paradise has been regained in that inner kingdom, but men “shall dwell secure” there only “when time shall be / Of tempter and temptation without fear” (4.616-17). But Satan exerts his influence from the physical world outside this inner kingdom. The spiritual kingdom is thus internally pure and perfect, but man must vigilantly battle against external temptation from the fiend.

Scholars have already noted how the future can exist in the present in the epics, as well as other alternate senses of time. Fixler, for example, writes that “If the temptations of Jesus recapitulate the trials of mankind, then the miraculous vindications on the pinnacle of the Temple where Satan falls for the second time anticipates the eschatological vindication of the just in *Paradise Lost* when at the hands of Christ the King ‘Satan and his perverted World’ will be dissolved (XII, 546-47)” (233). He also discusses how in line with tradition the future eschatological kingdom is “transpose[d]” into the garden in *Paradise Lost* (226-27). More recently, Stephen Fallon, analyzing the same *Paradise Regained* lines that befuddle Carey, writes that

The angels insist both that the tempter “never more henceforth will dare set foot / In Paradise to tempt,” and that a *future* “time shall be / Of

tempter and temptation without fear” (4.610-11, 616-17). Milton is of course playing with the ancient Christian theme of the intersection of the timeless with time; if Christ’s passion is both a unique event in history and a sacrifice played out at all times since, so is the temptation in the desert. (250)

However, as I have suggested, I think that Milton does more than play with this theme. The profound obedience of Christ in the wilderness *actually* makes the “unique event in history” of the Son’s ultimate triumph over Satan in the end of time *literally* “play out at all times.” That is how paradise is regained in the present. To put it in another way, the eternal resonance of this final victory renders the “allegoric” image of Christ’s victory over temptation (and Satan’s Fall) “real.”

Stanley Fish similarly analyzes the various instances that Satan falls referred to in *Paradise Regained*. Besides Satan’s fall in the pinnacle scene and his ultimate one, there was his first fall, when he was “down from Heav’n cast / With all his Army” after the war in heaven (4.605-606, qtd. in 189), and the epic similes wherein Satan is likened to the giant Antaeus and the Sphinx. Fighting with Alcides, Antaeus “oft foiled, still rose, / Receiving from his mother Earth new strength” until he is strangled by his opponent in mid-air (4.565-68). This mirrors Satan’s persistent and vain attempts at tempting the Son in the wilderness. The Sphinx, of course, “Cast herself headlong from the Ismenian steep,” her horror after Oedipus answered her riddle correctly comparable to Satan’s amazement in the pinnacle scene (4.572-76). Fish writes,

The effect of what Joan Webber⁷⁴ has called “these remarkable lines” is to diminish the dramatic impact of any one of these falls by removing them from the story line of a plot into a timeless realm where they are eternally occurring. It is, as Webber goes on to say, a story “which is without beginning or end, and yet begins and ends at every point” (206). I can do no better than to reproduce her summary statement: “Both space and time are of infinite importance and of no importance at all. The Son is everywhere. He has warred, and has yet to war down Satan. Paradise is

⁷⁴ That is, in *Milton and His Epic Tradition* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1979).

regained and Satan's power ended as if it had never been; Satan still rules and is yet to be cast out. His snares are broken, but Jesus has not yet begun to save mankind. The Son is everywhere and the battle is within" (207-208). (389-90)

The problem with this reading is its emphasis on radical indeterminacy and constant struggle: "When, at line [4.]634, the Son receives the epithet "Queller of Satan," one can only read it as referring not to an action already performed and done with, but to an action that will have to be performed again and again" (207). Milton was more hopeful than that. It is not that all these falls eternally *occur*, rather, it is that one fall, the ultimate and decisive defeat of Satan, eternally *recurs* so as to render the recovered paradise always available in the present.

The Son alludes to the paradise he is about to regain in a passage in Book Two, when he is offered wealth with which to found his kingdom. It is certainly anti-millenarian and focuses on the inner spiritual kingdom, but it also makes sure to reference the final kingdom of the new heaven and the new earth (that has a real presence in the present time):

Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
 Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
 Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
 And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
 Cities of men, or head-strong multitudes,
 Subject himself to anarchy within,
 Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.
 But to guide nations in the way of truth
 By saving doctrine, and from error lead
 To know, and knowing worship God aright,
 Is yet more kingly; this attracts the soul,
 Governs the inner man, the nobler part,
 That other o're the body only reigns,
 And oft by force, which to a generous mind
 So reigning can be no sincere delight.

Besides to give a kingdom hath been thought
 Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
 Far more magnanimous, then to assume.
 Riches are needless then, both for themselves,
 And for thy reason why they should be sought,
 To gain a sceptre, ofttest better missed. (2.466-86)

The Son's suggestion that "to give a Kingdom hath been thought / Greater and nobler done, and to lay down / Far more magnanimous, then to assume," I suggest, calls to mind the section in *De Doctrina* when "*he* [i.e. Jesus] *hands over the kingdom to God the father . . . so that God may be all in all*" in the new Jerusalem (887, 889). In the passage, we see how the Son's "kingly function" might operate "principally by internal law and spiritual power" so that "all external coercion must be absent from the kingdom of Christ" and "the pre-eminence of Christ's kingdom above all the rest shines out, equally with its divine principal" (*De Doctrina*, 505), but the Son has yet to defeat Satan in the pinnacle scene and inaugurate the spiritual kingdom. The man who "who reigns within himself" is alone, still without the benefit of the "mediatorial office" of Christ the king "by which peace with God and everlasting salvation may be obtained by the human race" (495). Nevertheless, the passage hints at the immense joys shortly to be had from the spiritual kingdom: "the sincere delight" from "guid[ing] Nations in the way of truth / By saving Doctrine" that "attracts the Soul" and "Governs the inner man."

Because scholars have not fully recognized just how real the regaining of paradise is, because they have not treated the brief epic with enough seriousness, they have gravitated towards endlessly deferred millennial kingdoms. There is, in fact, no millennial kingdom in the brief epic. The future final kingdom of "the new Jerusalem of Rev. xxi" (that is, the renewed heaven and earth that will emerge after the final conflagration) that Carey considers, but ultimately rejects, is actually present in the present kingdom within. The scene with the Angels following Satan's fall at the pinnacle attests to this:

So Satan fell and straight a fiery globe
 Of angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
 Who on their plummy vans received him soft

From his uneasy station, and upbore
 As on a floating couch through the blithe air,
 Then in a flowery valley set him down
 On a green bank, and set before him spread
 A table of celestial food, divine,
 Ambrosial, fruits fetched from the tree of life,
 And from the fount of life ambrosial drink. (4.581-90)

As Leonard observes, the “tree of life” and “fount of life” are images from Revelation 22 and 21 respectively, which pertain to the new heaven and earth, and not to the millennium of Revelation 20. Carey, oddly, does not make this connection. The only eschatological kingdom in the brief epic is the new heaven and new earth. This evocation of the final kingdom further reinforces the future defeat of Satan (which directly precedes the new heaven and earth) as inherent in the present. Additionally, the claim by critics like Revard and Loewenstein that the Danielic tree and stone suggest a millennial kingdom is rendered questionable by the Angels’ banquet. If the tree and stone refer to any eschatological kingdom at all, it is to the new heaven and earth. The tree in Daniel calls to mind the tree of life of Revelation 22 as well as the spiritual kingdom. And as we shall see shortly in a further analysis of *De Doctrina*, the destruction of earthly kingdoms by the stone does not necessarily initiate the millennium, but certainly contributes to the complete destruction of the world, which will culminate in the final conflagration and the renewal of heaven and earth.

The scene with the Angels is also significant because it suggests the Son’s enthronement upon the throne of David to rule, not a millennial kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom of the present wherein the final eschatological kingdom also exists. The angels “received [the Son] soft / From his uneasy station, and upbore” him. To upbear can simply mean to “lift up” or “raise” (*OED* 1), but it can also mean “to exalt” (*OED* 2). Most importantly, going back to the Angels’ hymn, which they sing as the Son enjoys the banquet, it begins with an explicit reference to the Son as a monarch in heaven:

True image of the Father whether throned
 In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
 Conceiving, or remote from heaven, enshrined

In fleshly tabernacle, and human form,
 Wondering the wilderness, whatever place,
 Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
 The Son of God, with godlike force endued. . . . (4.596-602)

The son is humbly “enshrined / In fleshly tabernacle,” but his enshrinement is equated with his enthronement “In the bosom of bliss,” a reference to the Son’s installation as “Lord” of the angels by the Father in the beginning of time in *Paradise Lost* 5.600-615. Having just “begot” the Son and “in bliss embosomed” him, the father endows him with a “great vicegerent reign” (5.603, 597, 609). Even in lowly “human form,” the Son as “True image of the Father” exudes “godlike force” that attests to his heavenly kingship. Moreover, the Son’s incarnation or first coming in “fleshly tabernacle” is itself the establishment of the kingdom. As I shall discuss later, when Milton examines the incarnation in Book 1, Chapter 14 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, he uses the following proof-text from Daniel 2:44: “*in the times of those kings* [i.e., the time of the incarnation] *God will raise up a kingdom of heaven*” (489). Thus, the Angel’s exaltation of the Son after the pinnacle scene in *Paradise Regained* is the Son’s enthronement recurring or playing out again—as Satan’s fall had done—to mark the beginning of a new realm, the spiritual kingdom that will emerge from the Son’s ministry. As I mentioned, this kingdom is also the eschatological kingdom, and this is reiterated here by the word “tabernacle,” which also appears in Revelation 21 (1-3):

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

By conflating the spiritual kingdom of the present with the eternally recurrent eschatological one of the future, Milton suggests that the ecstatic and never ending spiritual fulfillment promised by the New Jerusalem, wherein the blessed enjoy pure union with a God that will be “all in all,” is sufficiently, through imperfectly, attainable in

the present. There is thus no place in the brief epic for the temporary and worldly millennial kingdom and the “external coercion” associated with it.

4.4 The “allegoric” Kingdom: the tree, the stone, and David’s throne in *Paradise Regained* 4.146-53

De Doctrina Christiana provides strong evidence that the tree, the stone, and the Son’s “season to sit / On David’s throne” in 4.146-53 refer in the first place to the spiritual kingdom, which the treatise calls “the kingdom of grace” or “the kingdom of heaven,” not to the millennium. These images do not immediately look forward to the second coming, that is, the “kingdom or glory” as the *De Doctrina* terms it; rather, the “kingdom of glory” is a continuation of the “kingdom of the heavens” (507). In Book 1, Chapter 15 of the treatise, “On the Mediatorial Office,” after describing the spiritual kingdom of Christ,⁷⁵ Milton writes:

The kingdom of Christ is called the kingdom of grace [i.e., the spiritual kingdom] and the kingdom of glory [i.e., the eschatological kingdom]. Of grace, because [it is] also ‘the kingdom of the heavens’, Matt. 3: 2 *and is already coming*. Of glory, because it is going to be more manifest at the second coming.

Christ’s kingdom, like his priesthood, is eternal. . . , that is, lasting as long as the world shall last, and regular pursuance of the mediatorial office shall continue—as the apostle lucidly teaches in 1 Cor. 15: 24, 28, [saying that] *Christ will at the end of the age hand over the kingdom to God the father, and will be subjected to him*—in the same way as an end will be put both to the priestly function even (although that too is called eternal), and to the prophetic one, *so that God may be all in all*. On this topic, see further in the final chapter [33] of this book, where the glorious Kingdom of Christ is discussed. (507)

The kingdom of Christ as a whole is a continuum⁷⁶ that begins as the spiritual kingdom, “ends” gloriously, “*and is already coming*.” The verb phrase “*and is already coming*

⁷⁵ See page 197 above on Pauline typology in *Paradise Regained*.

⁷⁶ Fixler also uses the word “continuum” but only with reference to the Bucerian kingdom (78).

[*iàmque advenit*]” is interesting because Milton does not directly translate, but rather paraphrases, as Hale and Cullington point out, Matthew 3:2 (*De Doctrina* [Oxford] 506; note 63), which reads “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In the original Latin of Junius-Tremellius-Beza Bible, the version Milton used, the verb is “*appropinquavit*” (*De Doctrina* [Oxford] 506; note 63) or “*is coming near,*” “*is drawing near,*” or “*is approaching,*” This is close to “is at hand,” which is how Sumner (301) and Carey (437) translate the original Latin verb. There is no “*already* [*iàm*]” in the original. I suggest that Milton’s paraphrase emphasizes the recurrent beginnings of the Son’s kingdom. The kingdom is already, and always, in the process of “coming,” that is, a process of beginning and then beginning again. So, in effect, the kingdom has already come (and will come again and again). It is not perpetually “at hand” or in the future. In the passage, Milton also introduces a very specific and unusual definition of “eternal”: the kingdom is everlasting insofar as it endures until the very end of the world. Here, we again see how Satan’s joke on the Son’s kingdom (“eternal sure, as without end, / Without beginning” (*Paradise Regained* 4.391-93)) betrays his failure to understand the true nature of the Son’s kingship.

Milton will reiterate this definition of “eternal” in Book 1, Chapter 33 of *De Doctrina*, which describes the “kingdom of glory.” Therefore, it might be argued that the tree, stone, and David’s throne do represent the millennial kingdom of which “there shall be no end” (*Paradise Regained* 4.150) because this endlessness corresponds to this unusual definition. Indeed, as I discuss in my chapter on the treatise, the kingdom of glory does encompass the millennium, which I suggest Milton questions. As Book 1, Chapter 33 of *De Doctrina* tells us, the kingdom of glory, and I shall come back to this point later, also includes the final defeat of Satan, which follows his release after the thousand years; “the judgment of evil angels and chief enemies followed by that of all humankind,” which apparently will not have been completed during the thousand year reign; the “punishment of the wicked, and the complete glorification of the righteous”; and it lasts until the Son “hand[s] over the kingdom to God the father” (887, 889) so that the latter can be “all in all” (887). However, Milton identifies certain biblical passages, such as Luke 1:33 (“*of his kingdom there will be no end*”) that indicate that the kingdom will be eternal. To explain how this might be so despite the Son’s abdication, Milton

writes, going back to the point he had made in Book 1, Chapter 15, that “there will not be an end of his kingdom ‘for age upon age’ (*in seculum seculi*), that is, while the world’s ages endure, until ‘time shall be no more’ [Revelation 10:6]” (889). In other words, Christ’s “kingdom” will indeed exist endlessly as long as earthly historical time (as distinct from time in heaven) exists. For Milton, the end of earthly time itself does not signify the end of the kingdom; after all, the kingdom will never in fact have ended at any point during the course of earthly time. One might thus make the case that line 4.150 in *Paradise Regained* on an everlasting kingdom is the “kingdom of glory,” of which the millennium is an episode, discussed in Book 1, Chapter 33 of *De Doctrina*. However, Chapter 15 makes clear that it is the entire continuum of the kingdom of Christ that is “eternal . . . , that is, lasting as long as the world shall last.”

In this sense, then, it might be said that Milton subsumes the kingdom of glory (and, hence, the millennium) into the spiritual kingdom of Christ. *Paradise Regained* clearly emphasizes the primacy of the latter and *De Doctrina* defines the former as merely a form of the latter that is “going to be more manifest at the second coming.” “More manifest” includes the physical presence and rule of Christ with his saints on earth during the millennium. It is glorious from this standpoint, but I would argue that it is not necessarily superior in nature to the spiritual kingdom. Because the kingdom of glory is *physical* (i.e., material), it is less spiritual and compromises the spiritual kingdom’s reign over “not only bodies, as the civil magistrate does [rule], but *above all else mind and conscience; and that not by force and bodily arms* but by those things which in the world’s judgement are weakest. Wherefore also *all external coercion must be absent from the kingdom of Christ, which is the church*” (*De Doctrina*, 505 [Book1, Chapter 15], emphasis mine). That control will be physically imposed from the outside of the individual soul to a greater extent in the kingdom of glory detracts from the fundamental spiritual power and legitimacy of that kingdom. This is one important reason why, as I have been arguing in this dissertation, Milton takes a non-ideological stance on the millennium. The significance of the materiality of the kingdom of glory for Milton lies not so much in the personal reign of Christ and his saints but on the material destruction of earthly monarchies during the second coming. Indeed, the image Milton uses makes this explicitly clear: “a stone that shall to pieces dash/All Monarchies besides throughout

the world.” And, he does not specify that his kingdom will last a thousand years in the following line; rather, “there shall be no end” (4.151). At the end of the world, however, his kingdom will “end” as it sublimates into the renewed heaven and earth wherein the Father shall be “All in All.” As I mentioned above, the Son in lines 2.481-83 of *Paradise Regained* does allude to his laying by his scepter in the end of time:

Besides to give a kingdom hath been thought
Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
Far more magnanimous, then to assume.

Hence, given that in Book 1, Chapter 15 of *De Doctrina* Milton talks of the spiritual and eschatological kingdoms as a continuum, the image of the tree does represent the spiritual kingdom and the church, and that of the stone, in one sense, the subsequent eschatological one, that is, one that is important as the end of earthly kingdoms, as opposed to the inauguration of Christ’s own. However, in another sense, the stone also symbolizes the spiritual kingdom. In Daniel 2:34 and 2:44, it does not appear instantaneously. Actually, there is the suggestion that it takes shape gradually. Daniel 2:34 states that the “stone was cut out without hands” before it “smote the image,” and, according to Daniel 2:44 (as Milton himself has pointed out), the corresponding kingdom that “shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms” must first be “set up” “in the days of these kings” by “the God of heaven” ([Columbia] 282-83). I suggest that the image of the stone being “cut without hands” signifies the gradual, centuries-long establishment of the church or spiritual kingdom of Christ. That the stone is formed “without hands” is quite appropriate for a kingdom established on a spiritual rather than a fleshly basis. Even the tree, in another sense, can resonate as symbol of destruction of earthly kingdoms. While it alludes to Matthew 13:32 (i.e., the parable wherein the “tree” that the mustard seed becomes represents the kingdom of heaven) (Revard 80, note 92), the tree of the older Daniel 4:12 that it also echoes more immediately symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. The tree is cut down in the king’s dream and Nebuchadnezzar loses his kingdom, though it is later restored after he repents and submits to the supremacy of God (Daniel 4:13-36, *Paradise Regained* [Leonard] 905, note on line 147). Laura Knoppers observes that “Both visions [tree and stone] portend Nebuchadnezzar’s downfall” (*Paradise Regained* 138, note on lines 147-50).

Furthermore, although editors have glossed lines 4-146-53 as alluding to Daniel 4:10-12 (on the tree) and Daniel 2:31-35 (on the stone),⁷⁷ these specific biblical passages, which were linked to millenarians (Revard 68), never appear at all in *De Doctrina* (see Bauman 81). Though *De Doctrina* never mentions the tree and never cites the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the stone and mountain by Daniel (Daniel 2:31-35), it does use Daniel 2:44, the interpretation of that dream by Daniel, three times: "In the days of these kings the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."⁷⁸ (Note that Milton then never cites a verse that directly and explicitly mentions the stone and the mountain.) These three references are quite remarkable in that they do not suggest simply a millenarian kingdom; rather, they evoke the entire continuum composed of the spiritual kingdom *and* the kingdom of glory, and none of them appear in Book 1, Chapter 33, where the millennium is mentioned. The first two references, at the end of Book 1, Chapter 14 ("On Man's restoration, and Christ as redeemer") ([Oxford] 469) and towards the end of Chapter 15 ("On the mediatorial Office and its Threefold function") (495), are deployed by Milton to support his explicit interpretation of the Danielic stone as a symbol that represents, among other things, the spiritual kingdom of Christ (i.e., the church). The Chapter 14 reference to Daniel 2:44, which includes the slightly erroneous quotation "*in the times of those kings God will raise up a kingdom of heaven,*" is presented as evidence for the incarnation (and, by extension, the spiritual kingdom inaugurated by the incarnation), that is, "that his [first] advent would occur while the second temple and the Jewish state were [still] standing" (489), and "That the messiah has already come, against Jewish belief" (487). According to Hale and Cullington, Milton alters the order of "coeli regnum" in the original Latin of the Junius-Tremellius-Beza Bible to "regnum coeli" such that what should have been "the God of heaven [will raise up] a kingdom" becomes "*God will raise up a kingdom of heaven*" (492; note xxxv). This is suggestive because John the

⁷⁷ *Paradise Regained* [Carey] 490, *Paradise Regained* [Leonard] 905, *Paradise Regained* [Knoppers] 138.

⁷⁸ As the next verse, Daniel 2:45, makes clear, this verse refers to the stone: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold."

Baptist calls the kingdom inaugurated by the first coming “a kingdom of heaven.” Daniel does not. Milton thus clearly connects this “millenarian” passage not to a future thousand-year reign of Christ at his second advent, but to the kingdom of his first advent. The following reference to Daniel 2:44 in Chapter 15 strongly reinforces this connection. It serves as a proof-text for the particular phrase “[Made] king by God the father” in the key doctrinal statement, mentioned above, that “The kingly function is that by which Christ, made king by God the father, rules and preserves the church gained by him, principally by internal law and spiritual power, [and] conquers and subdues his enemies” (505). This second reference includes the quotation “the God of heaven shall raise up a kingdom” (correct this time) from the Daniellitic verse. The final destruction of earthly monarchies, which scholars have associated with the millennium, is mentioned only in the third reference to Daniel 2:44, which occurs at the end of Chapter 15. This last reference, a proof-text for the phrase “He conquers and subdues his enemies” in the key doctrinal statement above on “The kingly function . . . of Christ,” finally alludes to the most memorable part of the Daniellitic image of the stone: “*a kingdom [. . .] it will shatter and absorb all these kingdoms*” (507). Here we see clearly that the destruction of earthly kingdoms is emphasized and the millennium not even mentioned. Furthermore, other proof-texts used for this same phrase include 1 Corinthians 15:26, 56, 57, which concern the Christ’s final victory over death, which directly precedes his handing over the kingdom to God the Father and the beginning of the final kingdom. A few lines later, Chapter 15 ends with the description of Christ’s kingdom, which I began this chapter section with. That description, in discussing the end of the kingdom, paraphrases other verses from 1 Corinthians 15, (verses 24 and 28): “*Christ will at the end of the age hand over the kingdom to God the father, and will be subjected to him.*” Millenarians may have associated the image of the stone with the millennium, but Milton connected it with the beginning of the final kingdom.

In fact, in his account of the end times in Book 1, Chapter 33 of *De Doctrina*, Milton does not associate the final destruction of the earthly monarchies with the thousand-year reign itself. At first he does suggest that the “so often promised glorious kingdom of Christ with his saints will come into being on earth; until all his enemies have been vanquished” (883), but in his full discussion of glorious kingdom, we find that the

millennium concludes before Christ's enemies are destroyed. Milton does suggest that some monarchies will indeed be crushed during the millennium:

Ps. 2: 8–9, with Rev 2: 25–7: *I shall give the nations into your possession, and the ends of the earth as a right for your possession: you will smash them with an iron rod; you will shatter them like a potter's vessel; and no: 5–6: the Lord, [who sits] at your right hand, breaking kings on the day of his wrath, will execute judgement against the nations, filling [the terrain] with corpses, breaking the head in very many countries.* (885)

But the final, complete destruction of all earthly monarchies will occur after the thousand years have elapsed, when Gog and Magog stand as the last nations:

Rev. 20: 7–9: *but after the thousand years have been completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and he will go out to lead astray the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, so that he may gather them for battle ...; and they surrounded the camp of the saints and that beloved city: but there came down from God fire from heaven, which devoured them ...* (887)

It is at this point, and not prior to or during the millennium, that the “nations” (i.e., the earthly monarchies) are finally destroyed. Indeed, as I alluded to earlier, for Milton, the millennial kingdom is merely a component of the “kingdom of glory,” which encompasses the entirety of the second coming and thus includes the release of Satan after the thousand year reign, his destruction along with that of the earthly monarchies allied with him, the conclusion of final judgment, the condemnation of the damned, heavenly reward for the righteous, and, finally, Christ's surrender of his kingdom to the Father. After *De Doctrina* mentions the ultimate ruin of the world's nations, Milton writes that “The judgment of the evil angels and chief enemies is followed by that of all humankind” (887). Consequently, there is some ambiguity concerning who are to be judged during the millennium and who were to be judged after the ultimate defeat of Satan. Milton had suggested that “myriads of angels and people” are to “be assembled and judged” beginning at the start of the millennium (883). Since Satan, Gog, and Magog must surely be among “the evil angels and chief enemies,” judgment certainly continues and concludes after the millennium. What follows is “The punishment of the wicked, and

the complete glorification of the righteous” (887).

The kingdom of Christ, that is to say, the entire continuum consisting of the kingdom of heaven (i.e., the spiritual kingdom of Christ initiated by the incarnation) and the kingdom of glory (i.e. the second coming and final judgment, of which the millennium is only one element), ends with the Son handing over the kingdom and submitting to the supremacy of the all permeating Father:

then there will be an end, when he [i.e. Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the father; when he causes every empire and every ruling force and power to vanish: for he must reign until he has put all his foes under his feet. But the last enemy to vanish will be death: for ‘he has subjected all things under his feet’. . . . then will the son himself also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all. (888-89)

Lines 4.146-53 in *Paradise Regained* thus refer to the entire continuum that includes “the kingdom of heaven,” that is, the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth or the church, which precedes the second coming, and the “kingdom of glory,” which comes after it, and its various components, enumerated above, of which the millennium is but one. And, given the emphasis of the brief epic on the spiritual kingdom, it is that component of the continuum that Milton calls attention to in the passage, not the more material or more earthly manifestation of the Christ’s kingdom, namely, the millennium.

Milton thus subsumes the millennium into greater time periods in a number of ways. Firstly, the thousand-year reign is part, and not necessarily the most significant part, of the kingdom of glory. None of the following critical events occur during the millennium: the final defeat of Satan and Antichrist, the conclusion of the Last Judgment, and the handing over of the kingdom by Christ to the God the Father (i.e., when the Son lays by his sceptre). Secondly, the kingdom of glory, into which the millennium is subsumed, is itself subsumed into the continuum that is comprised of both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of glory itself that follows it. For Milton, this continuum as a whole is “the kingdom of Christ” (507). Finally, it might be argued that there is a measure of ambiguity in the declaration of *Paradise Regained* 4.151 that “there shall be

no end” to Christ’s kingdom. While it does refer to the end of earthly time, and the “end” of the kingdom of Christ, it might also allude to the final kingdom of the new heaven and the new earth, when the Father shall be “all in all.” As I discuss in my previous chapters, *Paradise Lost* describes this time frame, which follows the Son “dissolve[ing] / Satan with his perverted world”:

rais[ed]

From the conflagr[ant] mass, purged and refined,

New heav’ns, new earth, ages of *endless date*

Founded in righteousness and peace and love

To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss. (12.546-551, emphasis mine)

Having argued that Milton had abandoned millenarianism by the time he wrote the brief epic, Fixler does read *Paradise Regained* 4.146-53 as a reference to “the kingdom of glory on earth,” that is, “The absolute subordination of the world to Christ, or of temporal power to religion” that “is eschatologically deferred but it is nevertheless certain” (266). But it is not the millennium that Fixler has in mind. It is the really the final kingdom, when God will “make all things new, restoring the reign of perfection which will make of the heaven and earth one realm” (269-70).

Applying Stanley Fish’s ideas *How Milton Works* helps to illuminate my argument. These resonances in *PR* 4:146-53 constitute what Fish would call a temptation to read into the passage an indirect reference to the millennium and to thus depend on “events in their sequence” for the “determination of meaning” rather than interacting with experience “within an assumption of a meaning that gives shape to events” (358). In other words, the enticement is for readers to be “looking to the world for guidance,” in this case the governance imposed externally on the inward spiritual kingdom within the individual believer by the personal millennial rule of Christ and his saints on earth, as opposed to “looking at the world—or better still, *looking* the world in an already guided way” (358), namely, “obedience to the will of God” (356). Fish calls this “the strategy of temptations in Milton’s poetry” and writes that it “has only one object: to cause God’s servants or would-be servants to exchange their single obligation, in relation to which value is already determined, for the manifold obligations which appear once one allows the determination of value to be made by external circumstances.” In the millennium, the

obedience of individuals to God's will would be, in Milton's words in *De Doctrina*, from "external coercion [that] must be absent from the kingdom of Christ, which is the church." True obedience must be motivated by the "internal. . . law of freedom and spirit" (505) and enabled by "*righteousness and peace and joy through the holy spirit* [Romans 14:17]" and "*gifts to humankind* [Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:8]" from God, "namely, spiritual ones." God rules "not only bodies, as the civil magistrate does, but above all else mind and conscience; and that not by force or bodily arms but by those things which in the world's judgment are weakest" (505).

According to Fish, Milton contrasts "any prefabricated, external codified packaging of the truth, any identification of the truth with a piece of the world or a piece of behavior or a piece of language that may or may not be its local expression" (205-06) with

the nature of the spirit always to resist any attempt to circumscribe or delineate it. Spirit or the law of love is a disposition or orientation of the human heart, an orientation that can take many forms—of action, writing, thought—but cannot be equated with any of them. To mistake a possible manifestation of the spirit for the spirit itself is to have literalized it and to have made that manifestation into an idol. . . .and since all idolatry presents the opportunity of substituting some easy formula (such as the Ten Commandments) for the strenuous life of following the spirit, it is a persuasive and powerful human temptation. . . . (206)

The millennium would also qualify as such an easy formula and can thus be considered idolatrous. According to Fish, the brief epic critiques the yearning of readers and scholars for chain of distinct events that constitutes the rising dramatic action of plot—"one cannot say this or that moment is crucial, because every moment is crucial (every moment offers an opportunity to be either faithful or idolatrous)" (380). I suggest that *PR* 4:146-53 baits readers into looking forward to the millennium as a "crucial" and climactic historical event, but at the same time invites the reader to emulate the Son, who, seeing the world through the lens of the spirit, recognizes the "sameness" of the obedience to God demanded by every moment "amid so many signs of difference" that the "temptation of plot" presents. The son, however, is a "difficult model—one who, as

often as not, leaves out the steps that would enable us to follow him and therefore contributes to the possibility that we will misunderstand the nature of what he does” (382).

Presented as a “temptation of plot,” the millennium, while explicitly mentioned in Book 1, Chapter 33 of *De Doctrina*, is effectively called into question. It is an example of what Fish calls, the “decentering of Scripture as a self-sufficient and publicly available source of authority in favor of the internal authority of rightly constituted hearts” (71). As Milton writes in *De Doctrina*,

For we have, particularly under the gospel, a twofold scripture: the external scripture of the written word, and the internal one of the holy spirit, which he, as a result of God’s promise, has etched on believers’ hearts as by no means to be neglected. . . . the external authority for our faith, [contained] indeed in the scriptures, is very great, and generally first, temporally; but each person has the internal authority, and likewise the supreme and preeminent one: the spirit itself.

For the external scripture, especially that of the New Testament. . . has often been liable to corruption, and has actually been corrupted, because, [having been] in the charge of diverse untrustworthy custodians, [having] accordingly [been drawn] from diverse and discrepant manuscripts, it was finally transcribed and printed diversely too. (811; see also Fish 71)

Paradise Regained 4:146-53 and *De Doctrina*’s Chapter 33 (Book 1), which tantalizingly call to mind both the kingdom of glory and the thousand-year reign, thus tempt the reader into a wrongheaded anticipation of the millennium as a culminating point and ideal state in the plot-line of history. If Fish is right, this notion is then implicitly rejected as corrupted scripture. However, the Son’s emphasis on the spiritual kingdom within in the brief epic and Milton’s elucidation of the continuum of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of glory in Chapters 14 and 15 the of treatise’s Book 1 enjoin the reader to apprehend the kingdom of glory as evoked in *PR* 4:146-53 in terms of the spiritual kingdom of the present. This is the correct path to knowledge advocated by Milton that Fish suggests. The elements of the kingdom of glory, namely, the destruction of earthly kingdoms, the Last Judgment, the final conflagration of the world, and the ultimate

reunion of all remaining matter with God when He shall be “all in all,” should consequently be understood as serving to make “more manifest” the spiritual kingdom of the present. Certainly the passing of all that is worldly does this, and the perfect spiritual state is attained when God is “all in all.” Moreover, spiritual connections afforded by an inwardly motivated obedience to God are also perfected during these stages of the kingdom of glory. And while there is a higher degree of spiritualization in the kingdom of glory, there is still a sense of what Fish calls “sameness” in the primacy of the spirit that is consistent in both the spiritual kingdom and the kingdom of glory. Considering the kingdom of glory in the context of the spiritual kingdom enhances an individual’s experience of the spiritual kingdom, because one realizes that the final, ecstatic union with the deity in the final kingdom is fundamentally the same thing as simple obedience in the present. As the brief epic poem emphasizes, paradise has already been regained in very real terms.

Conclusion: Fixing Milton's Eschatology and Epistemology

After surveying his great epics, his Latin and English poetry collection, his theological treatise, his historical tome, and his political prose, I would like to conclude this reconsideration of Milton's millenarianism with a two-line verse fragment "Fix Here" (1638), which reads: "Fix here ye overdated⁷⁹ spheres / That wing the restless foot of Time." I realize that I risk being "overdated" myself by returning to Milton's early years, but I would like to come full circle, as it were, like the spheres. Milton scribbled the couplet on the reverse side of a missive from Henry Lawes, which had enclosed the passport he used during his Italian journey of 1638-39 (Teskey 203). Lawes, the composer of the music of *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* who had likely commissioned Milton to write the text of the play, helped Milton acquire the travel document (Campbell and Corns 79, 103). Gordon Teskey, who, similar to my argument, calls the period of Milton's early poetry one of "transcendence," wherein "the problem of history" that Milton faced was "a question of how to get out of this world and into the next" (6), writes that

The fragment sounds once again, almost for the last time, the theme we have followed through the early poetry: the expectation of transcendent ecstasy in heaven, and a corresponding contempt for the world. The spheres are "overdated" because they have gone on moving past the date at which they should stop because the Apocalypse has come—or at least they have gone on too long as far as the poet's feelings are concerned. . . . He is asking them to annihilate themselves, so that he can transcend them. (204).

On the one hand, this interpretation supports my thesis: Milton wants the world and historical time, represented by the "overdated spheres," to end. These are the very same "enclosed spheres" that "the primum mobile" "drags" as it "turns with daily rotation [*Volvitur hinc lapsu mundi rota prima diurno; / Raptat et ambitos socia vertigine caelos.*] in "Naturam non pati senium," the poem which Milton would shortly recite at one destination of his Italian trip, the Accademia degli Svogliati in Florence. As the spheres

⁷⁹ "Antiquated; outdated; obsolete" (*OED*).

energetically “wing the restless foot of Time,” they are not in any state of decay, as “Naturam” suggests, though they are part of a universe that has lasted way too long for Milton. He wants to enter the overdue final kingdom of the renewed heaven and earth posthaste. He is certainly no millenarian at this point in his life, for the millennium would have required another thousand years of “overdated” historical time.

On the other hand, the “Fix here” might also mean that the poet wishes that an especially fulfilling instant within historical time might to come to standstill so that he can linger and bask in a fleeting moment of communion with the divine, wherein unfinished glorification approximates the finished glorification of the final kingdom. According to Teskey, the fragment calls to mind lines 240-41 (stanza XXVII) in the Nativity Ode on the star of Bethlehem:

But see the virgin blest,
 Hath laid her babe to rest
 Time is our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest teemed star,
Hath fixed her polished car
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
 And all about the courtly stable,
 Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable. (237-44, emphasis mine)

Teskey writes that the “pause” of the new star over the manger “anticipates the stoppage of all celestial motions at the Apocalypse, when the heavens disappear and Heaven opens her gates” (203-04), and indeed the “overdated spheres” of “Fix here” reiterates “Time is our tedious song should here have ending.” But the frozen star also underscores the timeless sublimity of the Son’s humiliation in his birth as a mortal child within history: God becomes one with man, and the Son’s spiritual kingdom begins. It feels like the end of the world insofar as the oneness with God during the incarnation evokes the unity of all things in final kingdom.

The multi-dimensionality of the fragment thus succinctly captures what my thesis has attempted to negate and assert at length. Milton did not believe in an imminent millennium, but this perspective entailed a deeply felt yearning for union with an

immanent divinity, whether in the final kingdom of the new heaven and new earth or in the paradise regained of the present within himself in the old earth. He deplored fleshly and coercive theocracy and instead celebrated individual Christian liberty guaranteed by a provident natural world alive with the voice of God. He does not wish for a transformative improvement in our fallen condition that a millennial kingdom might bring. Rather, he desires the reversal of the fall itself, albeit with the retention of the beautiful hierarchy established by the humanly mediation of the Son and the earthly virtue of the righteous, who shall enjoy rewards in heaven. He promotes the Reformation not for its own sake or for that of any external and progressive kingdom that will pave the way for the millennium, but for the preservation of the sanctity of the spiritual kingdom within. As Fish says, “The priority of the inside over the outside is thematized obsessively in Milton’s prose and poetry” (23). Indeed, in line with St. Paul, Milton aspires for perfect, spiritual unity with the divine, not for the material and fleshly benefits and order of a millennial reign. The Son has constantly humiliated (and exalted) himself in order to connect with creation. Milton is enraptured by this in the present, but ultimately he looks forward for his own exaltation in heaven when all things will be renewed. He longs not for yet another beginning of Son’s kingdom, but for its end so that the benefits he imagines might be fully attained. Finally, he does not become a disillusioned, disappointed, bitter quietist because the future millennium failed to come to pass. Rather, he perseveres through the trials and tribulations of the last days following the end of the Augustinian-Parean millennium in order to gain hope for heavenly reward and blessedness. The incompatibility of millenarianism with Milton’s core beliefs is therefore so marked that, while some of these beliefs may have changed over time (i.e., his perspective on the Trinity), his non-millenarianism was consistent throughout his career. In fact, this reconsideration of millenarianism in Milton’s work has proved to be a prism that highlights the spectrum of Milton’s basic convictions. To reject Milton’s millenarianism is to better understand Miltonic thought.

Hence, it is quite surprising that at least two generations of Miltonists have affixed the misleading label of millenarian upon the subject of their studies with the same vigor Milton himself demonstrates when he would have the spheres “Fix” themselves “here.” I have suggested that critics like Lewalski, Revard, Loewenstein, Hill, and

Jameson argue for a millenarian Milton because of their adherence to the notion of a radical Milton, which betrays the dangers of ideologically oriented scholarship. I submit that, rather than revealing any ideological commitment or tendency on Milton's part, a careful study of Milton's eschatology exposes an epistemological fluidity that precludes such ideological stability. His flexible epistemology in turn enables his political pragmatism. Milton can thus question millenarianism, and yet disinterestedly recognize the ideology as scriptural truth in *De Doctrina* while deploying it tactically in his controversial prose. He does not imagine the end times with the rigid, materialistic and fantastical specificity of millenarians like Archer and Lactantius, but with the spiritual openness, faith, and hope that allows him to already experience the blessedness of the final kingdom through the immanent divinity that presently exists in the paradise within and in the vital natural world. His contemplating the new heaven and the new earth in this way thus contributes to what Thomas Corns calls the "plurality of Miltonic ideology" and, consequently, to "the richness and diversity of the Milton *oeuvre*" ("plurality" 110, 113). Miltonists have thus been barking up the wrong tree in arguing for a millenarian Milton who helps substantiate their various particular self-interested ideological claims. As William Walker observes, Milton has been associated with liberalism, radicalism, republicanism, nationalism, monism, Arianism, Arminianism, even terrorism: "Constituting subject-matters by way of identifying an -ism has thus been one of the main ways in which Miltonists have staked out territories for themselves, promoted their scholarship, and contributed to Milton studies" (2). Corns is more positive. According to him, we should not

be surprised or alarmed at such interpretative diversity. Each perspective is produced, among other things, by the cultural and political predilections of its authors, and it would be naïve to expect anything other. However, what is striking about Milton criticism is not only the diversity but the plausibility of the alternatives. Each in its way produces a version of Milton which is richly documented and substantiated in the text.

However, according to Corns, the success of one interpretation requires the rejection of other competing ones, so he recommends "an opener, looser, more skeptical reading which admits the coexistence of contradictions, originating in the complexities of

regstral and political situations Milton negotiated and the complexities of political psychology” (113). Embracing epistemological uncertainty and avoiding labels like millenarianism thus enriches our experience of Milton’s works, as the New Milton Critics have shown us.

But however ambivalent we might find “Fix Here,” wherein Milton wishes for the world to end and last forever, however rich and sublime his work and thought, Milton also equates eschatological with epistemological bliss. He would have instantly forgone the beautiful complexity of his art and life experience if in the next moment he could drink deep from “the fountain of the water of life” (Revelation 21:6), see “every joynt and member” of “the mangl’d body of *Osiris*” be brought together again (*Areopagitica* 549), and know God not “described or outlined . . . as we can grasp him,” but “as he really is” (*De Doctrina* 10).

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