

Revisiting the History of the *De Doctrina Christiana* Authorship Debate and Its Ramifications for Milton Scholarship: A Response to Falcone and Kerr¹

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Abstract

This essay details the history of the *De Doctrina Christiana* authorship controversy, suggesting that the debate’s conclusion in favor of Miltonic provenance was declared prematurely. It considers Falcone’s and Kerr’s recent essays in light of the larger controversy and proposes that one consequence of the larger debate should be the liberty for scholars to analyze Milton’s theological presentations in his poetry apart from the specter of *DDC*.

As a Milton scholar who throughout his career has remained quite undecided on the question of Milton’s authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana* (*DDC*), I have been heartened by the lively recent exchange in *Connotations* between Filippo Falcone and Jason Kerr regarding *DDC*’s provenance, a discussion that encourages me to rethink this important subject, one that has lain largely dormant in Milton studies since the 2007 publication of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* and the ensuing—and perhaps premature—declaration that this book had conclusively resolved the provenance controversy. In the course of my present essay, I wish to address not primarily specific details of Falcone’s and Kerr’s debate but rather the history of the larger *DDC* provenance debate (a scholarly history that has never been recounted in a

sustained manner), to consider Falcone's and Kerr's contributions within the context of that larger debate, and to reflect on what their exchange means to the larger field of Milton studies, and specifically to me personally as one whose scholarship consistently addresses matters of Bible and theology in Milton. Along the way, I will share my own scholarly journey with *DDC* and its attendant controversies, concluding with some reflections regarding how, in light of Falcone's and Kerr's interchange, scholars might choose to use or not use *DDC* in their future work.

My own engagement with the *DDC* controversy began in early 2000 as I commenced researching my doctoral dissertation on Milton. One night I unexpectedly awoke at 2 a.m. and, being unable to get back to sleep, I began reading William B. Hunter's *Visitation Unimplor'd* (1998)—to this day the most sustained challenge to Milton's authorship—and proceeded to read it through to its end before noon. Although I was already aware that most Milton scholars had rejected Hunter's position, I found Hunter's arguments genuinely fascinating and, though I was not completely convinced, largely compelling. What struck me most powerfully was that, if Hunter was right, a great deal of important Milton scholarship reliant on *DDC* and its Miltonic authorship would be seriously compromised. Soon afterwards, as a naïve graduate student still rather in awe of my scholarly superiors, I spoke in hushed tones of this matter with a celebrated Miltonist at the Chicago Newberry Library Milton Seminar.

"Some of his arguments are really good," I said.

"They sure are," s/he soberly answered.

I then said, "If Hunter is right, then the whole of Milton scholarship will have to speak a collective 'Oops!'"

"We sure will," s/he answered.

As I will discuss later, no such collective mea culpa or anything close to it was ever uttered, but I share this anecdote to remind us of how very threatening Hunter's thesis was before the matter of Miltonic authorship of *DDC* became an essentially dead issue within Milton scholarship, a deadness, I will suggest, that is more the product of inertia and

convenience than of decisive argumentation, a deadness that Falcone's article and, perhaps unintentionally, Kerr's response have challenged.

A History of the *DDC* Authorship Debate, 1991-2006

How times in Milton scholarship have changed. We do well to remember that, when Hunter first put forth his thesis, which contested Miltonic authorship based both on differences between the treatise's theology and the theology of Milton's poetry and on historical matters regarding *DDC*'s manuscript—including Hunter's distrust of copyist Daniel Skinner—it was offered within an atmosphere of vigorous, collegial, and sustained debate. Hunter's seminal 1992 *Studies in English Literature* article, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," was originally presented at an August 1991 session at the Fourth International Milton Symposium, followed by responses by two of the most eminent living Miltonists, Barbara K. Lewalski—who emphasized theological similarities between *DDC* and Milton's poetry—and John T. Shawcross—who found Hunter's concerns about *DDC*'s copyists to be unpersuasive. Hunter then responded to Lewalski and Shawcross, calling for a deeper investigation into *DDC*'s Latin alongside Milton's indisputable Latin prose. Lewalski's, Shawcross's, and Hunter's responses all appeared in the same 1992 issue of *SEL* (Lewalski, Shawcross and Hunter) immediately after Hunter's essay, which was subsequently awarded the Milton Society of America's James Holly Hanford Award for the year's most distinguished article in Milton studies.

And the provenance debate was only beginning. The next year Hunter published another essay in *SEL* which highlighted the work of Bishop Thomas Burgess, who had challenged Miltonic authorship when *DDC* was first translated and published in 1825 ("The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*: Addenda"). Then, in 1994, *SEL* published three more articles in the same issue: in separate essays, both Maurice Kelley ("The Provenance") and Christopher Hill ("Professor William B. Hunter") challenged Hunter's original 1992 arguments even

as they both insisted on various parallels between *DDC* and other of Milton's works and, in Hill's case, attacked Bishop Burgess's competency. In his own response to Kelley and Hill, Hunter maintained the "[b]asic contradictions of dogma" between *DDC* and the indisputable Milton canon ("Animadversions" 202). Hunter accused Kelley and Hill of sidestepping his most persuasive claims, arguing that, although they "certainly demonstrate Milton's connection with *DDC*," they nonetheless "have not conclusively proved his authorship of it" (202).

At this point, if the matter of authorship remained unresolved, what was clear was the degree to which Hunter's thesis threatened the established order of Milton scholarship, a phenomenon clearly represented by Hunter's prominent interlocutors. Most obviously, Kelley's stature as a Miltonist rested largely on his influential *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost* (1941). Kelley's subtitle reveals exactly what was at stake for him in his attempts to refute Hunter's thesis. And Kelley's other most significant work in Milton studies was his editing the *The Christian Doctrine* for the Yale University Press *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, a 1973 volume in which, throughout his "masterful" (Falcone, "Irreconcilable (Dis)Continuity" 91) footnotes to *DDC*'s English translation's text, Kelley restated his aforementioned connections between *DDC* and *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, as recently as 1989, the venerable Kelley had urged scholars to make use of *DDC* "as a gloss for *Paradise Lost*" ("On the State" 47).

DDC's significance to Lewalski's and Hill's scholarship was similarly crucial. In *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning and Art of Paradise Regained* (1966), the first of her many celebrated books on Milton, Lewalski predicated her analysis of Milton's Son on *DDC*'s Arian Christology. For his part, Hill drew upon the heterodox *DDC* to buttress his portrait of the politically and religiously radical Milton in *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977). And if Shawcross had less direct investment in Miltonic provenance, he too, as had long been typical in Milton scholarship, regularly utilized *DDC* to support his analysis of Milton's poetry and prose. I must emphasize that I accuse none of these scholars or anyone else of dishonesty in their opposition to Hunter's arguments.

Nonetheless, it was obvious that they, like so many other Milton scholars, had much to lose if Hunter's thesis proved correct.²

Curiously enough, Hunter's claims strikingly undermined some of his own most important previous scholarship, which included his earlier arguments that *DDC*'s Christology was actually compatible with early orthodox Christianity ("Milton's Arianism Reconsidered"), and the fact that Hunter was willing to go against his earlier scholarship indeed gained his views credibility in the eyes of some readers (Urban, "On Christian Doctrine" 238). But both Hunter's earlier and later writings regarding *DDC* sought, in one way or another, to bring Milton into the fold of orthodox Christianity. Indeed, Hunter's 1992 response noted that if *DDC* were demonstrated to not be authored by Milton, then Milton and his writings could be recognized as "closer to the great traditions of Christianity, no longer associated with a merely eccentric fringe" (Lewalski, Shawcross and Hunter 166). I will admit that I heard scholarly whisperings that Hunter's assertions against Miltonic provenance were motivated by Hunter's trinitarian Christianity, and his obituary does suggest his significant involvement in a historic, albeit mainline, Christian Protestant church (Obituary). But we do well to remember that scholars' own religious commitments do not necessarily coincide with their handling of *DDC*. Indeed, it bears mentioning that two Miltonists whose books argue vigorously for an Arian interpretation of *Paradise Lost*—Michael Bauman and Larry Isitt—were and are themselves identifiably orthodox in their own Christian beliefs.³ Significantly, Bauman's highly influential *Milton's Arianism* (1987), which specifically contested Hunter's claims that *DDC* was compatible with orthodox Christianity, appeared just four years before Hunter's initial presentation of his thesis, and although Hunter did not cite it, Bauman's book may have influenced Hunter's change of mind regarding *DDC*'s essential orthodoxy (*Visitation* 99).⁴

Amid Hunter's efforts, another highly regarded scholar, Paul R. Sellin, without explicitly accepting Hunter's arguments, added his voice to Hunter's skepticism regarding Miltonic authorship, and Sellin's efforts display how the controversy was expanding beyond *SEL*

into other respected journals. In a 1996 *Milton Studies* article, Sellin challenged *DDC*'s compatibility with *Paradise Lost*, particularly emphasizing the works' differences regarding predestination, contingent grace, and free will. In light of these differences, Sellin cautioned against using *DDC* "as the authoritative gloss on *Paradise Lost* that Maurice Kelley envisioned" ("John Milton's" 58). The next year, Sellin continued to push back against the allegedly close relationship between *DDC* and Milton's uncontested canon, publishing an article in *SEL* challenging the scholarly claim that *DDC* refers to Milton's divorce tract *Tetrachordon* ("Reference").

Meanwhile, Gordon Campbell led a committee of scholars who were studying the Latin manuscript, publishing in 1997 in *Milton Quarterly* a history of the manuscript (including the involvement of its scribes, Jeremie Picard and Daniel Skinner), a comparison of the contents of *DDC* and the indisputably Miltonic canon, and a discussion of *DDC*'s Latin stylometry (Campbell et al., "Provenance"). The committee's conclusions were cautious but overall more sanguine about Miltonic authorship than Hunter, calling *DDC* "a working manuscript" that Milton was revising (110). At the same time, the committee postulated, among other things, both that some sections seemed more authentically Miltonic than others and that Milton's work on the manuscript largely took place "during the late 1650s" (110). The committee cautioned that *DDC*'s "relationship [...] to the Milton oeuvre must remain uncertain," a matter punctuated by *DDC*'s being an unfinished work and the attendant uncertainty regarding "what other changes, especially what deletions of doctrines to which he did not subscribe, Milton would have made in completing his task" (110). The following year, the committee's subcommittee, supplementing the 1997 report, also advised caution. Publishing in 1998 in *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, these scholars focused on *DDC*'s Latin stylometry, emphasizing stylometry's importance to the authorship controversy. Like the 1997 report, this report suggested that some parts of *DDC* appeared much more Miltonic than others, explicitly warning against *DDC*'s being "appropriated [...] straightforwardly as a gloss on Milton's theological musings in *Paradise Lost*" (Tweedie, Holmes and Corns 86).

Such caution, however, did not sit well with various Milton scholars. Lewalski, in a 1998 *Milton Studies* essay, pushed back against the 1997 report as well as Hunter's *SEL* articles and Sellin's *Milton Studies* article, specifically disputing these works' warnings against using *DDC* to elucidate *Paradise Lost* and other of Milton's works. In response, Lewalski cited eleven parallel passages on various subjects, emphasizing "how closely, in ideas, language, and characteristic attitudes, *De Doctrina Christiana* conforms to Milton's other writing" ("Milton" 203). Lewalski's article, which also expressed incredulity toward the committee's use of stylometry, suggested that she was ready to be done with the provenance controversy, a sentiment articulated more forcefully by Stephen M. Fallon in an essay appearing in the 1998 collection *Milton and Heresy*. There, Fallon unapologetically used *DDC* as a gloss upon *Paradise Lost*, stating, "the case for Milton's authorship mounted in response to Hunter strikes me as insurmountable" ("Elect Above the Rest" 97). The editors of *Milton and Heresy*, Stephen J. Dobranski and John T. Rumrich, asserted their position even more resolutely, like Lewalski casting doubt on the 1997 report's use of stylometry, and declaring: "[B]y ordinary standards of attribution—which none of the participants in the controversy has challenged—Milton's authorship [...] is [...] indisputable" (7). In his own essay in *Milton and Heresy*, Rumrich also supported Kelley's model of using *DDC* as a gloss for *Paradise Lost*, arguing that the two works' "coherence" is "far-reaching, detailed, and, in their shared deviations from Christian orthodoxy, distinctive" ("Milton's Arianism" 75). And in a 1999 article in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Fallon warned that the ongoing provenance controversy could harm Milton studies on a whole, for *DDC*, being "an invaluable quarry of Milton's engaged critical and theological intelligence, will be considerably more difficult to use if scholars must in every essay and every book rehearse yet once more the overwhelming reasons for accepting the work as Milton's" ("Milton's Arianism" 122).

But Hunter's *Visitation Unimplor'd* also appeared in 1998, ensuring that, contrary to Fallon's wishes, the controversy would be alive for the

foreseeable future. *Visitation* offers chapters on topics such as “The Evidence of the Early [Milton] Biographers”; DDC’s “Two Scribes”—developing Hunter’s aforementioned concerns regarding Daniel Skinner as well as his reservations regarding Jeremie Picard; and DDC’s “Continental Context”—something Hunter believed was at odds with Milton as a British author. *Visitation* also contains several chapters analyzing discrepancies between DDC and Milton’s canon, particularly *Paradise Lost*. Reviews were positive but emphasized the controversy’s continued uncertainty, praising, like Hunter himself did, the 1997 report.⁵ In his review of *Visitation*, John Hale, an author of the 1997 report, noted the most significant problem with the ongoing controversy: “that the outstanding proponents have by now become entrenched” (30). Hale called for greater Latin expertise in Milton studies and emphasized the importance of stylometry even as he noted that “stylometricians [...] have their own vigorous debate about evidence, method and standards of probability in proofs” (30). In another review, *Milton Quarterly* editor Roy Flannagan commented that many scholars “have deplored” Hunter’s “trouble-making” efforts (271), concluding that “Milton scholars are staying tuned in for the next installment in this theological soap opera” (272). I specifically quote these reviews because, in their own very different ways, they each emphasize both the controversy’s continued uncertainty and a growing frustration among scholars with the controversy itself.

For his own part, Hunter seemed content with DDC’s authorship remaining perpetually unresolved. In his 1999 *Milton Quarterly* response to *Milton and Heresy* and Lewalski’s 1998 essay, he wrote, “I recognize that I have not been able finally to prove that Milton did not author *De Doctrina*, which I suppose would require his notarized affidavit” (“Responses” 36). At the same time, he insisted that his opponents had not “demonstrated that he authored all of it,” adding his hope that Miltonists could “agree that the work is a composite one” (36). He pushed back more strongly against Lewalski’s and Rumrich’s respective uses of DDC as a gloss for Milton’s canon, particularly *Paradise Lost*, a practice that Hunter argued brought about various misunderstandings of Milton’s epic. And in an essay immediately following Hunter’s, Sellin

responded to Lewalski's and Fallon's respective disagreements with his own aforementioned essays. He repeated his misgivings regarding scholars' insisting that *DDC* has numerous passages analogous to those in Milton's prose and *Paradise Lost*, a practice Sellin contended led to readings of Milton's canon so strained that he felt "concerned about quality of argument" pertaining to "the current controversy" ("Further Responses" 48). Significantly, even as Fallon argued that skepticism regarding *DDC* would hurt Milton scholarship by depriving scholars of an invaluable resource, Sellin rather asserted that unchecked enthusiasm for *DDC* was leading scholars to use the treatise to justify sloppy argumentation regarding Milton's writings.

In any case, the matter of continued uncertainty regarding *DDC*'s authorship manifested itself in what became for a time a common if not begrudged habit among Milton scholars, who, while continuing to use *DDC* in their articles and books, nonetheless included in footnotes or introductions disclaimers explaining that, although they recognized that the controversy regarding *DDC* had not been fully resolved, they did not find Hunter's arguments ultimately persuasive and still believed *DDC* to be thoroughly Miltonic and thus appropriate for their own scholarly endeavors. Such statements were a source of the frustration that Fallon articulated in his 1999 essay. But these disclaimers continued for some years. A particularly lengthy, memorable, and perhaps even whimsical statement was offered by Stanley Fish in the introduction to his magisterial *How Milton Works* (2001). There, after analyzing the controversy for some three and a half pages, Fish writes:

At any rate, given what we do know and what we don't know, I come to the conclusion that the answer to the question "Who wrote Milton's *Christian Doctrine*" is "Milton." To be sure, the fact that I have come to that conclusion will not settle the matter, but it does settle it for the purposes of this book. (19)

Fish's blunt final clause is memorable because it reflects the attitude of most Miltonists during the height of the provenance controversy:

Whatever the merits of Hunter's thesis, they are not sufficiently persuasive to refrain from significantly incorporating *DDC* in any given study of Milton's writings.

But if in 2001 Fish felt the need to offer the above disclaimer, Lewalski, in her award-winning 2000 *The Life of John Milton*, did not. She does not mention the controversy until well into her biography, where she simply writes, "Though a few scholars have called into question Milton's authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*—some of them seeking to distance Milton's poetry from its radical heterodoxies—their arguments have not been widely accepted" (416). Representing the participants in the controversy in a surprisingly brief footnote, Lewalski lists only Hunter's book and articles with regard to skepticism toward *DDC*, making no mention of Sellin or of either the committee or the subcommittee report even as she cites her and Shawcross's 1992 "Forum" responses, Hill's essay, Dobranski and Rumrich's volume, and her own *Milton Studies* essay in favor of Milton's authorship. For Lewalski, the controversy was effectively over, and her statement about scholars being motivated to distance Milton from *DDC*'s heresies perhaps underscored the lack of scholarly merit she was willing to concede to Hunter's position. In any case, Lewalski did not allow the controversy to distract from her own presentation of a Milton for whom the heterodox *DDC* was an integral part. Indeed, Lewalski devotes twenty-six pages to her discussion of *DDC*, a document she postulates, in contrast to the 1997 *Milton Quarterly* report, "was finished in all essential respects in 1658-65, in tandem with *Paradise Lost*" (416). Lewalski's statement anticipates her own practice in the biography of using *DDC* as a gloss to Milton's epics, something she notably does in arguing that, in *Paradise Lost*, "Milton's Arianism"—a matter "set forth in *De Doctrina Christiana*"—"allows him to portray the Son as a genuinely dramatic and heroic character" (473); and that "Milton's Arianism is central to [*Paradise Regained*], allowing for some drama in the debate-duel between Jesus and Satan even though the reader knows that Jesus will not fall" (513).

But while Lewalski was effectively dismissing the controversy, another major Miltonist, Michael Lieb, though not completely accepting

Hunter's arguments, was embracing the notion of *DDC*'s authorial uncertainty. At both the April 2001 Midwest Conference on Christianity and Literature and the June 2002 International Milton Symposium, Lieb announced that he would no longer call Milton the author of *DDC*, but rather refer to "the [unnamed] author of *De Doctrina Christiana*." Lieb's efforts to champion matters of authorial uncertainty reached their apex with his lengthy 2002 *Milton Studies* essay, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," which offers a thorough study of *DDC*'s Latin manuscript, Bishop Burgess's writings on *DDC*, and the involvement of Picard and Skinner. Early in his essay, Lieb both commends Hunter's efforts and states, "I do not think we shall ever know conclusively whether or not Milton authored all of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, part of it, or none of it" (172).⁶ Although Lieb conceded that "not many" scholars had sided with Hunter (172), the fact that Lieb's article won the Milton Society of America's James Holly Hanford Award for the year's distinguished essay indicated that the *DDC* controversy was still deemed significant within the larger Milton community.

But despite its celebrated reception, Lieb's essay marked the final high-profile effort challenging Miltonic provenance of *DDC*, and strong voices in Milton Studies continued to challenge the legitimacy of the controversy's continuance. In 2003, John Rumrich published an essay about the state of the controversy which developed his earlier concerns about matters of stylometry.⁷ Rumrich begins his essay by suggesting that the aforementioned replies to Hunter by Lewalski, Hill, and Kelley should have been sufficiently "decisive" to end skepticism regarding *DDC*'s provenance ("Provenance" 214). What has prolonged the ongoing controversy—and the "heavily annotated disclaimers" offered by "politic Milton scholars" is "not so much" Hunter and his "persistence" but rather "the efforts of a self-appointed committee of experts"—the report offered by Campbell et al. in 1997, as well as the 1998 report offered by Tweedie et al.—that "[deny] the reliability of *De doctrina Christiana* as a guide to Milton's beliefs and [recommend] skepticism as to the authorship of the treatise" (214, 215). From his opening paragraph,

Rumrich reveals his exasperation with the degree to which the provenance controversy has dragged out because of the influence of this “self-appointed” (215) group of authorities. He expresses particular frustration toward Campbell, whom Rumrich states is behind the committee’s 1997 conclusion that *DDC* is unfinished and incomplete, a position “that no scholar but Campbell has found tenable since Maurice Kelley, more than a decade ago, refuted it” (216).⁸ Rumrich goes on to assert that, although the committee presents itself as “unbiased” (216), the desire to [present] Milton as an orthodox Trinitarian” (220), “though largely unacknowledged in the committee’s report, influences it profoundly” (221).⁹ Rumrich then argues that the 1998 report’s stylistic methodology is not appropriate for the genre of *DDC* because it “neglect[s] the obvious explanation for the heterogeneity of the treatise’s style—Milton’s reliance on the commonplace tradition” (225), something that assured that *DDC* would quote the writings of various authors without explicit acknowledgement. A better measure of *DDC*’s Miltonic consistency is “Milton’s most distinctive authorial practice—his extraordinary dependence on and synthesis of Scripture” (231), a practice, Rumrich suggests, that likely exceeded that of any other theologian of Milton’s era.

Although the matter of *DDC*’s authorship still remained unresolved, by this point the debate implicitly receded from prominence, articles on *DDC*’s provenance became rare, and the disclaimers that Fallon and Rumrich found so distasteful became less frequent or at least more perfunctory and even dismissive.¹⁰ And those who had emphasized the authorial uncertainty of *DDC* either ceased to do so or modulated their message. The venerable Hunter died in 2006 at the age of 91; Sellin, who was himself well into his seventies, wrote no more on the topic; and Lieb, in the introduction to a book published the same year as Hunter’s death, proclaimed himself “a firm believer in Miltonic authorship” of *DDC* (*Theological Milton* 4); moreover, moving away from his earlier declarations, Lieb called *DDC*’s author “Milton” throughout his book. At the same time, however, Lieb still maintained that “Milton’s exact presence” in *DDC*’s manuscript “is obscured by a host of factors” (4),

also emphasizing his belief that *DDC* ought not “in any sense be construed as a ‘gloss’ on [Milton’s] poetry” (2).

Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana and the Effective Cessation of the DDC Controversy: 2007-2018

Perhaps Lieb’s shift regarding the provenance of *DDC* was influenced by the fact that, at the June 2005 International Milton Symposium, Campbell’s committee presented a report that, in contrast to the cautious reports of 1997 and 1998, affirmed Milton as the author of *DDC*. The committee’s 2007 publication of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* effectively ended the controversy that Hunter instigated in 1991. In this book, which also offered detailed historical evidence connecting Milton to *DDC*’s manuscript, the committee revealed additional stylometric studies that indicated that, despite the stylometric diversity within *DDC*, the treatise actually demonstrates greater internal consistency than do the theological treatises of Ames and Wollebius (Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript* 84-88), whose writings *DDC* seems largely modeled upon. Indeed, according to the committee, “Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana* is at least as much his work as Wollebius’s or Ames’s treatises belong to the writers to which they are, uncontestedly, ascribed” (159). Concluding its stylometric analysis, the committee asserted: “Since the stylometry points to Milton’s near certain involvement in some sections of the text, we may postulate his authorship (or perhaps ‘authorship’) of the whole, given that this is a genre in which the work of others is silently appropriated” (88). But despite the committee’s confidence regarding Miltonic authorship, it bears mentioning that, Rumrich’s protests notwithstanding, the committee still maintained that *DDC*’s manuscript remained unfinished and far from ready to be sent to a press (156-57).¹¹ Moreover, the committee concluded that Milton’s work on *DDC* ended by 1660 or earlier (157-58), cautioning that the treatise’s “value as a guide to the interpretation of [*Paradise Lost*] is limited” (161).¹²

Overall, *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* was regarded as an unqualified success, one that liberated Milton scholarship from the constricting burden that Hunter had placed upon it. The Milton Society of America awarded it the James Holly Hanford Award for the distinguished book published in 2007, and reviewing the book in *Milton Quarterly*, the prestigious Miltonist John Rogers celebrated the end of the controversy, declaring victory not only for Miltonic provenance but also for Milton studies as a whole:

[T]he authorship question hovering over Milton studies has now been authoritatively resolved. The critics committed to the study of Milton's religious concerns are now officially released from the faint but unmistakable form of scholarly bondage under which they have been writing for over 15 years now: we no longer need shackle our scholarly prose with the hollow gestures of uncertainty concerning Milton's responsibility for the *De Doctrina Christiana*. (66)

We may presume that Rogers's words represent the relief felt by scholars such as Fallon and Rumrich who had earlier expressed their annoyance and anxiety toward the lingering specter of uncertainty regarding *DDC*'s authorship. Indeed, *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* allowed scholars to again use *DDC* without apology in their critical endeavors. It is noteworthy, however, that Rogers—another scholar who has regularly used *DDC* to promote a heretical understanding of Milton and *Paradise Lost*¹³—in his review made no mention of the authors' expressed caution regarding using *DDC* to interpret *Paradise Lost*. But such cautions notwithstanding, it seems accurate to suggest that the committee's book effectively returned *DDC* to its pre-1991 status regarding its usefulness to help interpret *Paradise Lost* and various other works in Milton's canon.

Significantly, however, not all reviewers were as sanguine as Rogers.¹⁴ Writing in *The Review of English Studies*, Ernest W. Sullivan criticized the committee's failure to find watermarks in *DDC*'s manuscript, a failure that directly contrasted with Sullivan's own discovery, during his 2001 inspection of the manuscript, of five watermarks and two countermarks, markings that suggested "an erratic production of the

manuscript over a substantial period of time, possibly beginning in 1625—a date that would preclude Milton’s authorship of a manuscript not in his hand” (153). Sullivan lamented that the book’s authors “fail to apply the watermark evidence to the authorship debate, evidence that could break, if not make, their case” (154). Stating that “the evidence from stylometrics, Latin style, and theology is inconclusive,” Sullivan concluded his review by declaring: “The debate remains open” (154). One might think that Sullivan’s concerns, published in a highly influential journal a year and a half before Rogers’s celebratory review appeared,¹⁵ would have mitigated scholarly enthusiasm for the book’s confident assertions of Miltonic authorship, but with very few exceptions, I see little evidence that such mitigation ever occurred. Rather, the controversy was essentially declared over amid a vacuum of any sustained high-profile opposition to *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana*.

Indeed, as Kerr rightly notes, since the book’s publication and celebratory reception, “skepticism about the treatise’s authorship has mostly gone underground” (128), with a striking paucity of developed published challenges to the committee’s confident assertions regarding Milton’s authorship. Most notable is Sullivan’s subsequent silence after his review. I remember reading Sullivan’s review when it first appeared, and, because the review specifically mentioned his presenting his watermark findings in “a paper at the Milton Society session at the 2001 MLA” (153), I fully expected Sullivan to follow his review with a developed article detailing the significance of these watermarks to the authorship of *DDC*. But no such article ever appeared. Lingering skepticism toward authorship has also been expressed by John Mulryan in his 2013 review of John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington’s translation of *DDC*, where Mulryan writes:

The editors contend that the Latinity of the treatise is superior to other systematic theologies of the time, a “fact” which “proves” Milton wrote it. I do not find it so. The Latin, by and large, is neither polished nor sophisticated in its syntax and is almost totally devoid of rhetorical ornament. (81)

As was the case regarding Sullivan and his review, one might hope that Mulryan would have followed up his objection with a developed article explaining why *DDC*'s Latin makes ascribing it to Milton problematic, but no such article has yet appeared. Finally, Hugh Wilson, perhaps the most indefatigable skeptic regarding authorship, has presented numerous conference papers arguing against Milton's authorship, but as of now, none of Wilson's papers has appeared in published form. Indeed, to my knowledge, in the years between the publication of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* and Falcone's 2018 *Connotations* article, only one article appeared that offered a developed challenge to Milton's authorship of *DDC*: Falcone's 2010 piece—published in an Italy-based journal unknown to most Milton scholars—which discusses discrepancies between *DDC* and various passages in *Paradise Lost* and Milton's final prose tract, *Of True Religion* ("More Challenges").

Of course, this dearth of published challenges does not in and of itself validate Milton's authorship of *DDC*, but there is definitely an overall sense that scholars in the field consider the matter a non-issue, a long-resolved relic of the past to which they are not interested in returning. Indeed, practically speaking, why spend time re-investigating a theory that cannot be proved, that in the minds of most Miltonists has effectively been *disproved*, when there are, to paraphrase Fallon, treasures to mine from *DDC* applicable to so many dimensions of Milton scholarship? In my own experience, the degree to which the scholarly community has moved beyond the controversy was demonstrated most profoundly when, at the most recent (October 2019) Conference on John Milton, I chaired a session on the Provenance of *DDC* which involved only an extended presentation by Wilson and his colleague James Clawson, followed by ample discussion. It was a fascinating session, made memorable by the contribution of Clawson, a stylometrician who emphasized that he had no scholarly or emotional investment in the matter of Milton's authorship. Having said that, he argued, based on his stylometric analysis, that Milton was probably not the author of *DDC*. But what was perhaps even more memorable—and indeed unsettling—was the fact that, in addition to the presenters and me, only three people, Kerr being one, attended the session.¹⁶ For myself, I came

away from the session with my somewhat dormant suspicions regarding *DDC*'s authorship renewed, but also with a conviction that if those who dissent regarding Miltonic authorship want the matter not to fade further into oblivion, they need to aggressively publish their arguments.

The Significance of the Falcone-Kerr Debate to Our Understandings of the Larger *DDC* Authorship Controversy and *DDC*'s Relationship to *Paradise Lost*

And this is part of what makes the current *Connotations* debate between Falcone and Kerr so important. Falcone has, as it were, brought to the surface the lingering underground skepticism regarding *DDC* and Milton—not yet prominently, but at least in view for those who would reexamine the topic or perhaps discover it for the first time. Falcone's 2018 article is particularly valuable for its discussion of discontinuity between *DDC* and *Paradise Lost*, especially regarding their respective portrayals of the Mosaic Law. At the very least, Falcone reminds us that any application of *DDC* to the rest of Milton's canon must be done with discretion and humility, something the authors of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* themselves suggest. And the publication of this article in *Connotations* invites, indeed exhorts contribution, whether in *Connotations* or elsewhere, by those other underground scholars, named or yet unnamed, to publish their cases in a developed manner. For his part, Kerr merits commendation for responding to Falcone. It would have been easier for him to not reply, to simply say that the matter had been resolved. Instead, his essay offers, at least on one level, a remarkable point of basic agreement with Falcone, for in recognizing discontinuity within the manuscript of *DDC* itself, Kerr also advocates for a cautious use of *DDC* with relation to the epic. Memorably, Kerr argues that "the treatise has a life of its own independent of *Paradise Lost*," and he challenges the idea of "hold[ing] *Paradise Lost* firmly to [*DDC*'s] theological standard," suggesting rather that *Paradise Lost*

“might simply represent a further change of mind” (131). As Falcone recognizes in his very recent answer to Kerr, “Kerr’s response” actually “enhances [Falcone’s] argument” in that “for all the ‘shifting perspectives’ underlying *De Doctrina*, no shift but rather continuity informs the early prose and *Paradise Lost* as well as later works when it comes to the respective portrayals of the law” (“Milton’s Consistency” 127).

Falcone’s and Kerr’s reengagement of the controversy has encouraged me to examine again the debate’s history; to recognize factors involved that might motivate one position or another; and to consider the possibility that the debate was prematurely squelched, either from matters of self-interest, or weariness, or simply individual scholars’ need or desire to get on to something else. These are all understandable motivations, but they are not conducive to the rigorous examination of scholarly pronouncements on matters of such critical import for one’s field. Indeed, I feel the need to revisit what I consider a particularly problematic statement that the committee offers in its 2007 efforts to affirm Milton’s authorship of *DDC*. Let us consider again, carefully, this sentence: “Since the stylometry points to Milton’s near certain involvement in some sections of the text, we may postulate his authorship (or perhaps ‘authorship’) of the whole” (Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript* 88). We should appreciate the logical jump being made here. Because Milton is “near[ly] certain[ly]” involved with “some sections of the text,” the committee therefore “postulate[s]” “his authorship [...] of the whole.” Hmm. Does this statement honestly inspire a confident declaration—and indeed a celebration—that the matter of *DDC*’s authorship has been settled? Why did the committee’s conclusions so easily win the day in the face of Sullivan’s concerns? What of those watermarks that Sullivan briefly but disturbingly addressed? What of Sullivan’s saying that the stylometry was “inconclusive”? Why did Rogers’s celebration of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* so easily prevail over Sullivan’s skepticism? And what about Rumrich’s 2003 grievances against both the inexact science of stylometry and the audacity of a “self-appointed committee of experts” declaring their authority over the larger process? Should not Rumrich’s concern cut both

ways, as Sellin had suggested in a 2001 article?¹⁷ And, at the risk of repeating myself, why have the skeptics offered such anemic published resistance to the committee's conclusions? In the end, had the belief in authorial uncertainty, already a rather anti-social position even before the 2007 book, fallen so out of fashion that it simply was not worth the effort?

We might recognize that on some level the committee's 2007 conclusions stand on tenuous ground. Certainly Falcone's 2010 and 2018 articles have added to the notion of theological discontinuity between the treatise and the rest of Milton's canon. Of course, Campbell and Corns can answer such concerns by reminding us that Milton's "opinions on many theological issues changed in the course of his life"; *DDC* simply "affords a view of his theological thinking in the 1650s" (*John Milton* 273). But as Falcone cogently argues throughout his 2018 essay and effectively reiterates in his 2020 response to Kerr, the degree of continuity between Milton's works besides *DDC*—a continuity which can be traced through works both preceding *DDC*'s presumed time period and works following it, without interruption besides *DDC*, without any "clear indications of major shifts toward heterodoxy" (Falcone, "Irreconcilable (Dis)Continuity" 95)—is striking. May we go so far as to say that this continuity within the undisputed Miltonic canon, combined with various examples of discontinuity between *DDC* and the undisputed canon, is enough so that Campbell and Corns's explanation is ultimately less persuasive than the notion that *DDC* is substantially not Milton's work? We should also note that the committee's 2007 chapter on stylometry is still largely the same as what the subcommittee offered in their 1998 report that pronounced uncertainty regarding authorship (compare Tweedie et al. 80-86; and Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript* 72-80). The fact that the 2007 stylometric analysis suggests that *DDC* is more internally consistent than Ames's and Wollebius's treatises does not in and of itself conclusively point to Miltonic authorship, a matter reflected by the committee's cautious wording that I quote in the previous paragraph.

But in any case, it merits notice that many voices on both sides of the controversy—both older voices and newer voices, both the quick and the dead—regarding their hesitancy toward using *DDC* to explicate *Paradise Lost* or other Miltonic works. Such voices include Hunter, Sellin, Lieb (both in 2002 and 2006), the 1997 report, the 1998 report, and the 2007 book, Campbell and Corns's 2008 biography, and, more recently, Falcone and Kerr. Those who during the course of the controversy have spoken most passionately in defense of using *DDC* to explicate the larger Miltonic canon—Lewalski, Kelley, Hill, Fallon, Rumrich, and Rogers—are also scholars whose writings are strongly dependent on the notion of a heretical Milton whose heresy is primarily dependent on Milton's being the author of *DDC*. In their defense, it seems quixotic at this point to think that the controversy, such as it still exists in the eyes of a minority of scholars, will ever reverse itself enough to authoritatively disprove Miltonic authorship and thus deprive scholars of *DDC*'s helpful portrait of the heterodox Milton. Still, it bears repeating that the authors of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana*, the work that liberated them from Hunter's doubting specter, themselves recommend a cautious use of *DDC*, a recommendation that scholars who emphasize Milton's heterodoxies do not generally follow.

And yet the committee's continued recommendation regarding a cautious use of *DDC* does on at least one extremely significant level serve to vindicate Hunter's efforts. For if Hunter announced that his skeptical approach to *DDC* liberates *Paradise Lost* from the treatise's "endless mazes of theological split hairs" (*Visitation* 9), then the committee, even amid its eventual conversion to an enthusiastic embrace of Miltonic authorship, ironically enough, implicitly grants Hunter's wish for *Paradise Lost*'s liberation—a matter strikingly analogous to how the committee's latter-day belief in Milton's authorship was, as noted earlier, celebrated by Rogers (and, we must assume, by Fallon and Rumrich) for liberating Milton scholars from the bondage of *not* being able to freely apply *DDC* to Milton's epic. Significantly, these respective visions of liberation are in tension with each other, but, remarkably, the

former is arguably more in keeping with the committee's 2007 conclusions, even as the latter vision is what has prevailed in Milton studies as a whole.

And so the practice of using *DDC* to buttress scholarship on the entire Miltonic canon continues to ride high, and truly it never really stopped—it was only slowed down for a time by the tedious need, in book after book, article after article, to include the obligatory paragraph as an overture toward an annoying controversy that would eventually collapse, if not from airtight arguments by the other side, at least from its own inertia. But what about Hunter's vision of the liberated *Paradise Lost* and the attendant scholarship regarding the epic's theology that explicitly jettisons the perhaps stifling influence of *DDC* upon such theological analysis of the epic or, for that matter, of *Paradise Regained*? Such scholarship, I believe, is still lacking; indeed, even recent works that have argued for a more orthodox Milton have done so by either downplaying the heterodoxy of *DDC*'s Christology (Hillier) or by arguing that Milton's highly orthodox presentations of certain doctrines in his poetry are somehow compatible with the content of *DDC* (Smith; Urban, "John Milton").

But theological scholarship that jettisons *DDC* would be, I believe, in keeping with the wishes of C. A. Patrides, Hunter's partner in authoring *Bright Essence*, whose approach to presenting an orthodox Milton was not the earlier Hunter's practice of trying to bring *DDC* into the fold of orthodoxy, but rather to pronounce *DDC* as a strange aberration in the Miltonic canon. Patrides considered *DDC* something unworthy of Milton,¹⁸ "a singularly gross expedition into theology" (*Paradise Lost* 168), a treatise whose theological oddities—including, in Patrides's words, "tritheism" ("Milton and Arianism" 70)—upholding "not one but three gods" (*Paradise Lost* 168)—were corrected in *Paradise Lost*, a poem whose "perpetual fertility" is "diametrically opposed" to "the depressing aridity of the treatise" ("Milton and the Arian Controversy" 246). In reading Patrides's writings on Milton's theology, one sees that Patrides spends minimal time on *DDC*, focusing instead on *Paradise Lost*.¹⁹ Patrides died in 1986, five years before Hunter first put

forth his thesis, but I sense that he would have sympathized with Hunter's skepticism regarding Milton's authorship of *DDC*, even as Patrides's consistent denigration of *DDC* anticipates the later Hunter's attitude toward it. In any event, Patrides's clear preference to investigate Milton's theology apart from *DDC* has been afforded new credence, if not from Hunter's, Sellin's, Lieb's, and now Falcone's skepticism regarding the treatise's authorship, then from the committee's consistent cautioning—in 1997, 1998, and indeed 2007—against using *DDC* to explicate Milton's final writings, a caution repeated by Campbell and Corns in 2008 and most recently by Kerr.

Scholarly Applications Afforded by the Reemergence of the *DDC* Controversy: Confessions of a Fence-Sitter and a Tentative Declaration of Independence

So what does this all mean to my own work as a Milton scholar who emphasizes matters of theological concern? For myself, I believe the recent contributions of Falcone and Kerr, especially as understood within the broader history of the *DDC* authorship controversy, open up space to discuss Milton's later poems on their own theological terms, apart from the perpetual theological shadow *DDC* has cast on these poems. Speaking on a more personal scholarly level, I believe the recent reviving of this controversy has afforded an opportunity to revisit the various issues at stake with the controversy itself in a way that can offer clarity to my previously more confused posture toward *DDC* and my scholarly obligations to it. My own negligible contributions to the *DDC* controversy and its aftermath have been eclectic in their assertions, and they reflect what has been my overall uncertainties and lingering uneasiness regarding the provenance question and its larger ramifications toward Milton scholarship. Intrigued by Hunter from my first exposure to him, I was ultimately unpersuaded by his thesis, finding more compelling Lewalski's 1998 article and its various parallels between *DDC* and Milton's other works. My 2005 essay that noted the parallel between Milton's explicit identification with the parable of the householder (Matthew 13:52) in both the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and

the opening chapter of *DDC* argued that this parallel was another piece of evidence for Milton's authorship of the treatise ("Out of His Treasure"). But having been increasingly persuaded by Lieb's 2002 insistence regarding *DDC* as a composite work in which Milton's exact presence could never be finally determined, and still intrigued by the debate regarding authorship and its ramifications for the different interested parties, I advocated in 2007 for a Gerald Graff-influenced pedagogical model that encouraged instructors to "teach the conflict" regarding *DDC* ("*On Christian Doctrine*"). It seemed like a great idea at the time—but then, of course, the essentially simultaneous appearance of *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* meant that there was, at least as far as the dominant Milton industry was concerned, now no more conflict about which to teach.²⁰ Oh, well—good thing I can laugh at myself. Nonetheless, still influenced by Lieb's article and Sullivan's review, I continued to quietly harbor my doubts about the extent of Miltonic provenance, doubts that were reinvigorated upon reading Falcone's early 2018 article. Consequently, when I revised my 2005 essay for inclusion in my late 2018 book *Milton and the Parables of Jesus*, I suggested in an endnote that my findings could be used, if not to attest to Milton's overall authorship of *DDC*, to "more cautiously assert that at least the parts of *DDC* that cite the parable of the householder are likely to be authentically Miltonic" (287n23).

But three years earlier I published an essay, to which Falcone references in his 2018 piece, that now gives me pause regarding its use of *DDC*. In that article, I demonstrate on the one hand that Milton's poetic presentations of the redemptive effects of the son's perfect obedience are fully orthodox and in keeping with Reformed writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²¹ On the other hand, I argue that these orthodox presentations are paradoxically in keeping with Milton's Arianism as evidenced in book I, chapter 5 *DDC* ("John Milton"). It is an intriguing argument, even persuasive if one accepts that Milton did in fact write that Arian chapter. And given that by 2015 the authorship controversy had effectively been dismissed for nearly a decade, I decided not to push the issue. Besides—and more importantly from a

practical standpoint—Miltonic provenance, even if I did not find it completely convincing, fit my argument. I did not know for sure that Milton wrote that chapter of *DDC*, but apart from compelling evidence to the contrary, why would I not use it—that “invaluable quarry” of theological resources—to my scholarly benefit? That sounds cynical, but I really do not mean it that way. My point is that the resource of *DDC* is available, it is attributed to Milton, it helped my scholarship, and so I used it. I think that such a pragmatic utilization of *DDC* is a typical and understandable practice within Milton studies, but I wonder if it comes at the cost of a too-easy acceptance of the current received wisdom concerning a proper use of *DDC*, a use that exceeds the recommendations of the very scholars who are credited with liberating Milton studies from Hunter’s “trouble-making” theory, a use that, ironically enough, stifles a fuller appreciation and analysis of the theological possibilities of Milton’s later poetry by the implicit or even explicit expectation that readers and scholars understand that poetry within the confines of *DDC*’s theological rubrics.

And now, having not only read Falcone’s and Kerr’s recent essays but also having revisited the wider controversy in some detail, I wonder: Could I not in my 2015 article have offered an alternative argument, one that postulates that the orthodoxy of Milton’s presentation of Christ’s obedience and atonement—both early and late in his career—suggests that Milton’s overall Christology was in fact broadly orthodox and that we do well to distance from *DDC* his presentations of the Son in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*? I also ask myself: If I had argued such in my essay, would it have been difficult to find a journal that would have published it, given that such an essay would have likely come across as sadly out of touch with the present state of Milton scholarship? This second question is a moot point, but the previous question makes me think of the scholarly possibilities that both Falcone’s and Kerr’s essays as well as the larger history of the *DDC* controversy open up: namely, the opportunity to investigate Milton’s theology independent from *DDC*. At issue here is not the matter of conclusively disproving Milton’s authorship of the treatise. I do not think that will ever happen, barring an entirely convincing new scholarly revelation. Nor am I

saying that it is somehow dishonest for scholars to make use of *DDC* in their larger discussions of Milton's writings. Rather, what is at issue is the recognition that *DDC* can rightly be understood as being sufficiently removed from Milton's later poems as to investigate theological matters in the poems themselves without deference to the treatise.

A specific example of such an investigation concerns my own desire to investigate the Christology of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* apart from the hegemonic influence of the famous/infamous book I, chapter 5 ("[On the Son of God]") of *DDC* and its presentation of a created Son of God (see Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana* 127-229), a presentation of which, in recent years, I have grown increasingly suspicious. I will not go into specific detail here, but, like Patrides, I find this chapter reeking of "depressing aridity," with the pedantic author's redundant, literalistic, and hopelessly unimaginative insistence that any son must be younger than his father being a far cry from *Paradise Lost*'s splendid use of poetic imagery to describe and narrate the workings of the godhead. More objectively, I find remarkable that the chapter's author can address and seek to refute various proof texts traditionally used to affirm Jesus' deity even as he neglects any discussion of John 8:58, in which Jesus proclaims, "Before Abraham was, I am," a verse in which Jesus echoes the LORD's proclamation to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:14), a verse commonly used in sixteenth and seventeenth century writings as a proof-text regarding the Son's eternal deity,²² a verse particularly pertinent to Milton's poetic presentations of the Son given the use of the phrase "I am" in *Paradise Lost* 6.682 and 8.316 as well as in *Paradise Regained* 1.263. I think it necessary to examine these poetic presentations and much else in both works on their own terms, apart from the assumptions embedded in these poems' presumed connections to *DDC*'s Arian presentation of the Son of God.

So I will conclude my present essay with a disclaimer of my own—with apologies to Stanley Fish and his aforementioned statement from 2001, which I will paraphrase for my own purposes—a tentative declaration of independence from *DDC*, as it were, as I work on my current essay on the Christology of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*: I make

no final statement regarding Milton's authorship of *DDC* or any given section of *DDC*, but when I read *DDC* I.5, I sense that it was written—if not by someone other than Milton—by a Milton who was not codifying his final conclusions about the Son of God, by a Milton whose pedantic presentation of the Son's relation to the Father runs counter to the writings of one who demonstrates unmatched abilities to articulate theological concepts in artistic language, by a Milton whose seemingly exhaustive engagement with Scripture fails to address an obvious proof-text regarding the Son of God that is of paramount importance to his poetic presentations of the Son, by a Milton who is ultimately far removed from his final great poems, by a Milton to whose treatise I will not defer while I analyze these great poems, by a Milton to whose treatise I will not try to reconcile his poetic presentations of the Son. I realize that what I am writing runs counter to a dominant tradition of theological interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, running through Maurice Kelley, Barbara Lewalski, Michael Bauman, John Rumrich, Stephen Fallon, John Rogers, and others, arguably the default position of Milton scholarship since Kelley's *This Great Argument*. And I am aware that the fact that I have come to this conclusion will not settle the matter, but it does settle it for the purposes of my current work on the Son in Milton's late poetry.

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NOTES

¹I would like to thank Calvin University for a course release through the Calvin Research Fellowship, which helped enable me to revise this essay. I also thank Susan Felch and the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship for allowing me to participate in the 2020 Writers Co-op, during which part of this essay was written. Thanks also to the anonymous readers for *Connotations* and their helpful suggestions for improving this essay.

I dedicate this essay to the memories of William B. Hunter, Barbara K. Lewalski, Paul R. Sellin, and John T. Shawcross, major participants in the *DDC* authorship debate who offered me great encouragement years ago.

²I first addressed this matter in Urban, "On Christian Doctrine" 239.

³See Bauman's *Milton's Arianism* (1987) and Isitt's *All the Names in Heaven* (2002). The late Bauman's Christianity is evident through his many Christian publications, while Isitt was a longtime professor at the theologically orthodox College of the Ozarks. I reached out to Isitt via email, and he gave me permission to mention here his own trinitarian beliefs.

⁴Even before his challenges regarding *DDC*'s provenance, Hunter may have been reconsidering his attempts to bring *DDC* into the fold of orthodoxy, something suggested in a 1989 introduction where he admits that he had "[p]erhaps [...] overstated my case" on the topic (*The Descent* 11).

⁵See reviews by Hale; Von Maltzahn; and Cinquemani.

⁶By contrast, in a 2001 essay, John T. Shawcross asserted in his opening sentence his firm belief that "Milton wrote *De doctrina christiana*" (161), going on to investigate the complexities of the notion of "authorship," and comparing *DDC* to four works of Milton—*Art of Logic*, *A Brief History of Moscovia*, *History of Britain*, and *Acedence Commenc't Grammar*—in which Milton drew from various sources in ways "not adequately acknowledged by today's standards" (163).

⁷In 2002 Rumrich also wrote "Stylometry and the Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*." Because of the similarities between this essay and his 2003 piece, I focus my discussion on the latter. Rumrich's 2003 essay was presumably written before Lieb's 2002 essay was available.

⁸Rumrich cites Campbell, "De Doctrina Christiana"; and Kelley, "On the State." In fact, Sellin, in an essay published in 2000, also had suggested that *DDC* was unfinished (Sellin, "If Not Milton" 253).

⁹Rumrich bases this perhaps impolitic statement on Campbell's 1980 article "The Son of God in *De doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*," which argues for an orthodox interpretation of the Son's work in creation as presented in book 7 of Milton's epic. One could counter that Rumrich has much invested in the presentation of a theologically heterodox Milton in *Paradise Lost* illuminated by *DDC*. See, for example, the collection *Milton and Heresy* and its introduction, as well as Rumrich's use of *DDC* in "Milton's Arianism," "Uninventing Milton," "Milton's God and the Matter of Chaos," "Milton's Poetics of Generation," and *Milton Unbound*.

¹⁰Notably, in 2004 Michael Bryson, an explicit champion of the heretical Milton, offered no disclaimer at all, writing only that "William B. Hunter's decade-long crusade to take *De Doctrina Christiana* out of the Milton canon appears to be motivated by a powerful desire to reconcile Milton with 'the great traditions of Christianity, being no longer associated with a merely eccentric fringe'" (18-19; quoting Hunter, *Visitation* 8)

¹¹In a subsequent book (2008), Campbell and Corns repeat their conviction that *DDC*'s manuscript shows itself to be "a work in progress [...] still some way from being ready for the press" (*John Milton* 272).

¹²Campbell and Corns emphasize that Milton's "opinions on many theological issues changed in the course of his life. *De Doctrina* affords a view of his theological thinking in the 1650s" (*John Milton* 273).

¹³See, for example, Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution*, "Milton and the Heretical Priesthood of Christ," "The Political Theology of Milton's Heaven," and "Newton's Arian Epistemology and the Cosmogony of *Paradise Lost*."

¹⁴Curiously, the book received few scholarly reviews; I have located only four. The other two I do not discuss here, by Arnold and Kühnová, applaud the authors' seemingly definitive work but do not subject the book to scrutiny.

¹⁵Although Sullivan's *RES* review is dated March 2009, it appeared on *RES*'s website via "Advance Access" on September 6, 2008.

¹⁶The timing of this session is noteworthy, with Wilson referencing Falcone's 2018 article early in his presentation and Kerr's response to Falcone appearing shortly after the conference.

¹⁷Significantly, in a 2001 article postulating that Milton's enemy Alexander Morus might have been the author of *DDC*, Sellin notes that, according to a stylometric analysis Tweedie did for him, Morus's work of exegetical divinity *Ad quaedam loca Novi Foederis Notae* was reported to be "stylistically more like parts of [Milton's] First Defence and the 'Miltonic' parts of the *DDC* than other control texts examined to date" ("Some Musings" 66; quoting an e-mail from Tweedie).

¹⁸Rumrich sees a connection between C. S. Lewis and Patrides: "Lewis dismissed Milton's heretical opinions as 'private theological whimsies' that he 'laid aside' in composing epic testimony to Christianity's 'great central tradition'" ("Provenance" 219; quoting Lewis 92). Rumrich goes on to write that "Patrides followed Lewis's lead, claiming that Milton was an inept theologian and wisely left *De doctrina Christiana* unfinished" (219).

¹⁹See, in addition to Patrides's already cited essays, "Milton and the Protestant Tradition of the Atonement" and especially his book *Milton and the Christian Tradition*.

²⁰A very recent example of how settled the matter of *DDC*'s provenance has become in Milton studies as a whole is evident in John Hale's statement, "we find Milton's authorship quite secure unless and until one undertakes to suspect everything" (*Milton's Scriptural Theology* 1). Hale's 2019 words, which reflect no awareness of Falcone's challenge in *Connotations* published the previous year, also demonstrate the degree of dismissiveness the larger field of Milton scholarship has shown toward those few scholars who continue to harbor doubts about Milton's authorship.

²¹In this essay, I specifically discuss not only Milton's late portrayals of the Son's obedience in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, but also his celebration of the infant Christ's obedience in the early poem "Upon the Circumcision."

²²See for example, Calvin vol. 1, 2.14.2 [p. 483]; Wollebius 25; and Ursinus 348. Significantly, in a recent study on the theology of *DDC*, John Hale infers that Milton "bypasses" and "downplays" scriptural evidence for the Trinity (*Milton's Scriptural*

Theology 103), suggesting that in *DDC* "Milton does not find potential for Trinitarian orthodoxy because he chooses not to" (25).

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