

It is, however, a shame that such a well-researched and entertaining work of scholarship should be marred by bad production values. Many of the forty-eight illustrations are so dark and blurred that their relevance to the analyses they are supposed to complement is wholly lost. By contrast, the illustrations in Anna Beer's 2008 biography, *Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer, and Patriot* (Bloomsbury Press) are clear and helpfully illustrative, sometimes in color.

John T. Shawcross. *The Development of Milton's Thought: Law, Government, and Religion*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008. x + 283 pp. \$60.00. Review by JOHN MULRYAN, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY.

The title of this book, *The Development of Milton's Thought*, is an implicit rebuke to those Miltonists who see Milton's thought as consistent, constant, and unchanging. Part of the problem (explored in chapter one, "Milton and Constancy of Thought"), according to Shawcross, is that critics focus on individual works without taking into account the complete oeuvre of Milton. For "not all of what he wrote has been read" (5). In addition, critics tend to reshape Milton's thought until it is congruent with their own thinking, which is of course (in their minds) absolutely correct: "Too often critics espouse their own thinking as Milton's position or find Milton's thinking so opposed to theirs that Milton therefore is wrong" (5). Others conveniently forget that fiction is not fact, and that poetry does not pretend to literal truth. Milton is at one with orthodox Christians in the fundamentals (the "constancy of belief in God's omnipresence and omnipotence"[3]), but at odds with them in doctrinal views of the Trinity: "Milton's theological position [on the Trinity and other subjects] in both *De doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* is unorthodox" (ix).

In chapter two, "Milton and Legal Matters," Shawcross notes that Milton's father and Milton himself were involved in "usurious activities" (34). Usury, however, did not, in Protestant England, bear the stigma associated with the practice in the middle ages; as Shawcross points out, Calvin himself defended usury. Milton also took a healthy interest in intellectual property rights (including of course those of his own texts), and physical property as well. And although there is no hint

of illegality in Milton's handling of financial and legal matters, they do bear the scent of hypocrisy and inconsistency. In chapter three, "Milton the Republican," Shawcross is at pains to point out that our own definition of a republic today differs significantly from Milton's employment of the term. Republicanism did not, in Milton's mind, embrace either the commonality of men or any woman! There is also the issue of his fierce antagonism toward both Jews and Catholics. "Unavoidable is the realization that 'the people' are delimited—republican in sentiment but not democratic, not egalitarian, and not even, really, given equity" (58).

The basic thrust of chapter four, "Milton, the Church, and Theology," is that Milton did not belong to any particular Protestant denomination, i.e. he is not fully Calvinist or Unitarian or Presbyterian, but takes an eclectic attitude toward Protestant doctrine. His resistance to fully adopting the tenets of the religion in which he was baptized, the Church of England, was no doubt tied in with the ruthless enactment of "Popish" practices and literalist excesses by William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, particularly his brutal treatment of honest dissenters from his policies, including "... the notorious imprisonment and mutilation of William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton in June [1637] through the Laudian controls over the church" (74).

In chapter five, "Theological Concerns, Especially the Trinity," Shawcross takes up Milton's anti-trinitarian views. As Shawcross notes, Milton rejects the concept of a triune god because he consistently "rejected traditional beliefs that are not explicitly stated in Scripture" (84). The concept is associated with a biblical text (1 John 5:7), but Erasmus (d. 1536) (among others) regarded that text as spurious. The Trinity did not become part of Christian orthodox thought until the Council of Nicea (AD 325) and the term "trinitas" first appeared in the works of Tertullian (d. 220). In other ways Milton is a traditional Christian: "Belief in the orthodox birth of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary appears often in the poetry" (88).

In chapter six, "Theological Concerns, the Son, and the Divine Presence," Shawcross explains that the Father and the Son are viewed as separate entities in both *Paradise Lost* and the *De Doctrina Christiana*. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of God's will, but not part of the personage of God. In effect, Milton expresses a belief in a

dual rather than a triune God: In the *De Doctrina Christiana* “there is absolute and explicit belief in the Son as the Son of God and thus as part of the Godhead . . . he thus casts God as one being who is two persons” (112). Most Miltonists, who prefer to avoid the subject altogether, would not accept this view of Milton’s God. Shawcross’s view of the antithetical personalities of Milton’s Father and Son is more generally accepted: “The strong, rather unyielding attitude of the Father—a masculinist view stereotypically—is ameliorated by the merciful and loving nature of the Son—a view often associated with woman” (117). Milton follows the orthodox Protestant position in denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and asserting the commemorative nature of the sacrifice. Christ is present in spirit in the Eucharist, but not in body. The nature of that spiritual presence remains (at least in Shawcross’s terms) vague and ill-defined: “The Real Presence of the Christ is denied in the Eucharist, but a Divine Presence of a different sort is there” (130).

In chapter seven, “Conceptual Reflections in Milton’s Poetry and Prose,” Shawcross notes that the original sin is not complete in Milton (or in the Bible) until Adam partakes of the forbidden fruit. Adam’s act, as Milton puts it, is the “compleating of the mortal Sin / Original” (cited 138: *Paradise Lost* 9.1003-1004). Thus Milton rejects the misreading of the Bible that results in “the genderization of humankind into good [man] and evil [woman]” (138). “Eve’s eating of the fruit brings sin, and Adam’s eating of the fruit establishes death” (137). A careful reading of *Paradise Lost* will also disabuse us of the notion that Satan is the hero of the poem: “It is not Milton’s concept of Satan that has changed as we work our way through the poem: it is the reader’s having fallen into his trap of finding in Satan a ‘heroic’ figure that *should* have changed, for in life humankind does seem to find evil, immorality, and fairly exclusive selfness attractive” (150). Milton also makes use of a complex network of alternating allusions to classical myth and biblical lore to convey his meaning in *Paradise Lost*: “The interlocking allusions and echoes lead to readings placing the events and persons of the epic into a continuous panorama of mythic and biblical lore, setting up comparisons and contrasts that in turn amplify and alter our inference of what we state as John Milton’s message and beliefs and artistic achievement in this work”

(144). Shawcross illustrates this point through an extended analysis of key words in the poem: “dubious,” “seem,” “gaze,” and “convey.”

In chapter eight, “The Three Major Poems,” Shawcross reminds us that these poems were probably composed over a considerable period of time, allowing for the maturation of Milton’s thought and demonstrating the consistency of his thought on fundamental ethical and theological principles: “We are perceiving an unchanged mind about Milton’s morality and his God” (167). Like *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s last two poems are also exemplars of Milton’s fidelity to Christian belief: “*Paradise Regain’d* propounds an unchanging theological belief in God and God’s ‘ways’ to humankind. *Samson Agonistes* ventures to assert through the Chorus and their reading of Samson’s action and fate a long-held belief in God’s omnipresence and omniscience” (168).

In chapter nine, “Unchanging Belief and the Changed Mind,” Shawcross speculates on the possible erosion of some of Milton’s religious beliefs. Caught “between the past and the coming age,” “Milton did not fully understand the changes that were occurring in philosophical (including religious) thinking during his lifetime” (175, 174). Thus Milton frequently changed his mind, but never lost his faith in God and the scriptures. Some of his beliefs mellowed and matured, some (like the Trinity) fell by the wayside. Like all human beings, he was a prisoner of his times: caught between the believing and the rational world, he held on to his core beliefs without fully understanding the intellectual forces that would soon sweep them away. Shawcross reminds us that Milton was a complex man with a powerful intellect who simply could not, over a lifetime, remain static in his thinking. This would seem to be a fairly obvious point, but Shawcross demonstrates, again and again, that it is a point that has been missed by most Miltonists.