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James M. Clawson et Hugh F. Wilson

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Résumé de l'article

Depuis la découverte du De Doctrina Christiana près de cent cinquante ans après la mort de John Milton, ce traité latin est couramment attribué à l'écrivain anglais – même si cette attribution n'est pas dénuée de controverse. Pour de nombreux chercheurs, ce débat semblait s'être clos avec la publication en 2007 de Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana, qui avait recours à la stylométrie pour défendre avec assurance l'attribution de ce texte à Milton. Notre article s'éloigne du présent consensus. Les ruptures de style et de contenu entre le traité et les oeuvres canoniques de Milton nous ont incités à revisiter la question de l'attribution. En nous appuyant sur le texte complet du manuscrit, une sélection plus large de textes et des méthodes stylométriques plus récentes, nous démontrons que l'approche antérieure comportait certaines limites. Enfin, en puisant dans une branche négligée de la recherche, nous en venons à voir en Jeremias Felbinger un candidat plus vraisemblable à l'attribution du traité et nous évaluons cette hypothèse à l'aide de plusieurs tests stylométriques.

De Doctrina Christiana and Milton's Canonical Works: Revisiting the Authorship Question

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Since the discovery of De Doctrina Christiana *almost 150 years after John Milton's death, the Latin manuscript has commonly been attributed to the English writer—but not without controversy. For many scholars, the most recent phase of the debate seemed to end with the 2007 publication of* Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana, *which used stylometry to argue confidently for Milton's authorship. This article is presented in dissent. Prompted by disjunctures in style and substance between the treatise and Milton's canonical works, we revisit the authorship question. Using the complete text from the manuscript, a broader selection of candidates, and newer stylometric methods, we show some limitations of the earlier approach. Finally, drawing upon a neglected tradition of scholarship, we suggest that Jeremias Felbinger is a more plausible candidate for authorship, and we evaluate his candidacy through multiple stylometric tests.*

Depuis la découverte du De Doctrina Christiana *près de cent cinquante ans après la mort de John Milton, ce traité latin est couramment attribué à l'écrivain anglais – même si cette attribution n'est pas dénuée de controverse. Pour de nombreux chercheurs, ce débat semblait s'être clos avec la publication en 2007 de* Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana, *qui avait recours à la stylométrie pour défendre avec assurance l'attribution de ce texte à Milton. Notre article s'éloigne du présent consensus. Les ruptures de style et de contenu entre le traité et les œuvres canoniques de Milton nous ont incités à revisiter la question de l'attribution. En nous appuyant sur le texte complet du manuscrit, une sélection plus large de textes et des méthodes stylométriques plus récentes, nous démontrons que l'approche antérieure comportait certaines limites. Enfin, en puisant dans une branche négligée de la recherche, nous en venons à voir en Jeremias Felbinger un candidat plus vraisemblable à l'attribution du traité et nous évaluons cette hypothèse à l'aide de plusieurs tests stylométriques.*

Since the discovery of its manuscript in 1823 and persisting into the twenty-first century, *De Doctrina Christiana* has had a major impact on Milton scholarship. Of the articles indexed by Google Scholar since 2000, nearly a fourth of those in *Milton Quarterly* mention "Christian Doctrine" or "Doctrina Christiana," while more than half published in *Milton Studies* reference the text; and at the International Milton Symposium in Strasbourg in 2019, more than

a few papers relied on *De Doctrina Christiana* to provide a theological gloss to shed new light on some element of Milton's better-known works.

Although some studies have raised the question of authorship, much of the work that uses or refers to *De Doctrina Christiana* does so in a way that presumes its Miltonic attribution. Many—but not all—scholars accepted the posthumous attribution as correct after the publication of *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana in 2007.[1] But since that time, many developments in stylometry have shifted best practices in that field. In spite of these changes, there has yet been no new, sustained stylometric analysis of the text.

Working against assumptions implicit in the status quo, our argument is clear: John Milton is not the likeliest candidate for authorship of the disputed manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana*. Drawing on a neglected tradition of Miltonic scholarship from before 1823 and since, deploying innovations in stylometric best practices, and offering a fuller consideration of candidates, this article challenges incumbent assumptions about the authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*. Newer methodologies reinforce traditional objections that have been neglected, rejected, or lost to time.

Alternating between "traditional" and digital approaches to authorship, our work is organized into six sections. The first serves as a preamble to review or recontextualize the controversy over the manuscript's authorship. The second section revisits previous stylometric analyses to challenge received opinion. The third section contrasts the theology of *De Doctrina Christiana* with the beliefs found in Milton's canonical works: many tenets in the manuscript controvert Milton's attested faith. Bringing to bear new approaches in stylometry, the fourth section combines three litmus tests of authorship to triangulate the manuscript within a corpus of potential authors. The fifth section reconsiders the candidacy of a figure first proposed in the early nineteenth century and offers a possible provenance for the manuscript. Finally, the sixth section applies an alternative method of stylometry to assess the probabilities of Miltonic authorship. By situating *De Doctrina Christiana*'s reception within its theological context, and by updating the digital analysis with improved methods, these complementary sections challenge the common attribution.

1. Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, and Fiona J. Tweedie, *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199296491.001.0001.

I. Remembering the controversy

The current controversy over Milton's alleged authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*, revived by William B. Hunter, seconded by Paul R. Sellin and others, has persisted for over a quarter century.[2] For some readers, Oxford's publication of *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana (2007), by Gordon Campbell, Thomas Corns, John Hale, and Fiona Tweedie, provided an eagerly awaited sense of resolution.[3] For many scholars, the beautifully translated and edited Oxford edition of *De Doctrina Christiana* published by John Hale and J. Donald Cullington seemed to close the case.[4] The anxiety of uncertainty was over, and research could proceed as before. Many scholars

2. William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32.1 (Winter 1992): 129–42, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450944; Hunter, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32.1 (1992): 163–66; Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*: Addenda from the Bishop of Salisbury," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 33.1 (Winter 1993): 191–207, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450851; Hunter, "Animadversions upon the Remonstrants' Defenses against Burgess and Hunter," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 34.1 (Winter 1994): 195–203, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450793; Hunter, "Ramblings in the Elucidation of the Authorship of the *Christian Doctrine*," in *Arenas of Conflict: Milton and the Unfettered Mind*, ed. Kristin Pruitt McColgan and Charles W. Durham (Selingrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1997): 41–50; Hunter, *Visitation Unimplor'd: Milton and the Authorship of* De Doctrina Christiana (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998); Paul R. Sellin, "The Reference to John Milton's *Tetrachordon* in *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 37.1 (Winter 1997): 137–49, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450777; Sellin, "Further Responses," *Milton Quarterly* 33.2 (1999): 38–51, dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.1999.tb00884.x; Sellin, "'If Not Milton, Who Did Write the *DDC*?': The Amyraldian Connection," in *Living Texts: Interpreting Milton*, ed. Kristin A. Pruitt and Charles W. Durham (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2000), 237–63; Sellin, "Some Musings on Alexander Morus and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 35.2 (May 2001): 63–71, dx.doi.org/10.1111/1094-348X.00010. These citations, along with additional select sources omitted here for space, are documented online in a Zotero library: zotero.org/groups/authorship_and_ddc/library.

3. Margaret Arnold, "Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale and Fiona J. Tweedie, *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62.4 (2009): 1388–89; Nicholas McDowell, "Review Article: Authorship and Authority in Recent Milton Criticism," *Seventeenth Century* 24.2 (September 2009): 361–70, dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2009.10555634; John Rogers, "Review of *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) by Gordon Campbell, Thomas Corns, John K. Hale and Fiona Tweedie," *Milton Quarterly* 44.1 (March 2010): 63–66.

4. John K. Hale and Donald J. Cullington, eds., *The Complete Works of John Milton. Volume 8. De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Although John Hale is convinced that

acquiesced, but others were not convinced. In *The Review of English Studies*, Ernest W. Sullivan issued, in essence, a verdict of *non probatum est* (it is not proven). In *Seventeenth-Century News*, John R. Mulryan remarked on what he felt was the sub-Miltonic Latinity of the text.[5]

The pre-history of the controversy sheds light on the present. In 1992, Hunter, an esteemed Miltonist, risked his reputation by broaching a heresy. After decades of accepting the ascription of *De Doctrina Christiana* to Milton, he offered reasons to doubt the attribution. Articulate doubts, from a senior scholar, provoked consternation and dismay. Although Barbara Lewalski, John Shawcross, Maurice Kelley, Christopher Hill, Stephen Dobranski, and John Rumrich were convinced of the attribution, Campbell, Corns, Hale, David Holmes, and Tweedie were initially somewhat more tentative.[6] Alvin Snider

Milton wrote *De Doctrina Christiana*, he is open-minded and willing to consider other possibilities. For interested readers, more essays are referenced in our Zotero bibliography (see note 2).

5. Ernest W. Sullivan, "Review: *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana by Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, Fiona J. Tweedie," *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 60.243 (March 2009): 153–54; John R. Mulryan, "A Review of *De Doctrina Christiana.* Volume VIII of *The Complete Works of John Milton*," *Seventeenth-Century News* 71.3 (2013): 81–84.

6. Barbara Lewalski, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32 (1992): 143–54, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450945; Lewalski, "Milton and *De Doctrina Christiana*: Evidences of Authorship," *Milton Studies* 36 (1998): 203–28; Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 416–17. See also John Shawcross, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32 (1992): 155–62; Shawcross, "Milton and '*Of Christian Doctrine*': Doubts, Definitions, Connotations," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 27.2 (2001): 161–78, dx.doi.org/10.1163/23526963-90000236; Shawcross, *Rethinking Milton Studies: Time Present and Time Past* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 109, 115, 122, 132; Shawcross, *The Uncertain World of Samson Agonistes* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 8. Maurice Kelley's major study is *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's* De Doctrina Christiana *as a Gloss on Paradise Lost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941); see also Maurice Kelley, "The Provenance of John Milton's *Christian Doctrine*: A Reply to William B. Hunter," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 34 (1994): 153–63, dx.doi.org/10.2307/450791; Christopher Hill, "Milton's *Christian Doctrine*: Professor William B. Hunter, Bishop Burgess and John Milton," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 34 (1994): 165–88; John P. Rumrich, "*Milton's Arianism*: Why it Matters," *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, online 2008), 75–92, dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511549335.005; Rumrich, "Of Chaos and Nightingales," in *Living Texts*, ed. Pruitt and Durham, 218–27; Rumrich, "Stylometry and the Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton and the Terms of Liberty*, ed. Graham Perry and Joad Raymond (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 125–36; Rumrich, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*: A View of the Present State of the Controversy," *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*, ed. Mark Kelley, Michael Lieb, and John T. Shawcross (Pittsburgh:

and Phillip Donnelly, like Sellin before them, lost faith in the attribution. Donnelly sadly remarked, "I am sufficiently persuaded by Hunter's argument and expect it ultimately to become a widely accepted account of *De Doctrina* (though its acceptance may require the passing of an entire generation of Milton scholars) [...]."[7] Michael Lieb confessed serious reservations about the attribution, Mary A. Papazian reiterated the doubts that Sellin had raised, Carl Trueman expressed wary neutrality, David V. Urban taught both sides of the debate, James Ogden called for open-mindedness, and Jason A. Kerr conceded uncertainty.[8] Falcone, Sullivan, Mulryan, Hugh Wilson, and James Clawson offered reasons to question the attribution.[9]

Duquesne University Press, 2003), 214–33; Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, David I. Holmes, and Fiona J. Tweedie, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 31.3 (1997): 67–117, dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.1997.tb00495.x. Sullivan notes that their 1997 article is more cautious than the book published ten years later. During the interim, no decisive evidence had emerged, but there was anxiety over whether the attribution was "safe."

7. In 1999, Alvin Snider wrote, "William B. Hunter's investigation of the authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana, Visitation Unimplor'd* has convinced this initially resistant observer of the debate in *SEL* of the doubtfulness of the standard attribution," in Snider, "Recent Studies in the English Renaissance," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 39.1 (Winter 1999): 171–206, 192. For the Donnelly quotation, see Phillip Donnelly, "The *Teloi* of Genres: *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Studies* 39 (2000): 74–100, 75.

8. Michael Lieb, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," *Milton Studies* 41 (2002): 177–230; Mary A. Papazian, "Review of *Milton and the Terms of Liberty* by Graham Parry, Joad Raymond," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 34.4 (Winter 2003): 1138–40; Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Abington: Ashgate, 2007), 5–6n6; David Urban, "*On Christian Doctrine*: Teaching the Conflict and What's at Stake," in *Approaches to Teaching: Milton's Shorter Poetry and Prose*, ed. Peter C. Herman (New York: MLA, 2007), 235–41; James Ogden, "Bishop Burgess and John Milton," *Trivium* 29–30 (1997): 79–98; James Ogden and R. C. Stephens, *John Milton's Literary Reputation: A Study in Editing, Criticism, and Taste* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 137–73; Jason A. Kerr, "Loving Liberty: Milton, Scripture, and Society" (PhD diss., Boston College, 2011); Jason A. Kerr and John K. Hale, "The Origins and Development of Milton's Theology in *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.17–18," *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 181–206, dx.doi.org/10.1353/mlt.2013.0010; Kerr, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton's Theology of Liberation," *Studies in Philology* 111.2 (Spring 2014): 346–74, dx.doi.org/10.1353/sip.2014.0014; Kerr, "Milton and the Anonymous Authority of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 49.1 (March 2015): 23–43.

9. Filippo Falcone, "'The Ways of God to Men': Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Theodicy," *Acme* 62.1 (April 2009): 309–18; Falcone, "More Challenges to Milton's Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Acme* [Milan] 63 (2010): 231–50; Falcone, *Milton's Inward Liberty: A Reading of Christian Liberty from the Prose to* Paradise Lost (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 78n11, 90–91n.37, 110, 20, 150, 153n64, dx.doi.

The current debate is a flare up of a smoldering dispute that began nearly two centuries ago, in 1823, with the archival discovery and royal attribution of *De Doctrina Christiana* to Milton. Although one would hardly know it from reading recent scholarship, the attribution was contested by multiple authors from the beginning. Most of the nineteenth-century dissenters have been overlooked as if there was only one dissenter, the bishop of Salisbury, Thomas Burgess, and he was almost entirely forgotten. The controversy seems to have died down about 1900, around the time universities adopted a "uniform" or "prescribed" canon of literature.[10] Three decades later, the publication of the beautiful Columbia edition of Milton's complete works, eighteen volumes bound in twenty-one, ratified the attribution with the authority of an ivy league university, uncut rag paper, and a quality leather binding. The memory of earlier debates was forgotten.

Preceding this revival of the long-forgotten controversy over the authorship of the treatise, the attribution prompted protracted debates over the provenance, dates of composition, the state of completion, and the theology of *De Doctrina Christiana*. Many nineteenth-century men of letters—Charles Richard Sumner, Henry John Todd, Thomas Keightley, David Masson, Augustus

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org/10.2307/j.ctt1cgf730; Falcone, "Irreconcilable (Dis)continuity: *De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton," *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 27 (2018): 78–105, connotations.de/article/filippo-falcone-de-doctrina-christiana-and-milton/. Jason Kerr replied in "Shifting Perspectives on Law in *De Doctrina Christiana:* A Response to Filippo Falcone," *Connotations* 28 (2019): 129–41, connotations.de/article/jason-kerr-shifting-perspectives-on-law-de-doctrina-christiana-a-response-to-filippo-falcone/, and "la lutta continua." Encouraged by William B. Hunter and Paul R. Sellin, Hugh F. Wilson has offered assorted reasons to doubt the attribution in a series of conference papers: see Wilson, "The Devil in the Details: Beelzebub in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*" (presented at International Milton Congress, Pittsburgh, PA, 12 March 2004); Wilson, "Some of the Neglected 19th Century Skeptics of Milton's Alleged Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*" (presented at Biennial Conference on John Milton, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 14 October 2011); Wilson, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Possibilities of Forgery: Or, The Emperor's New Clothes Re-Examined" (presented at Biennial Conference on John Milton, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 18 October 2013); Wilson, "Dissident Voices: Early-Nineteenth-Century Skeptics of the Attribution of *De Doctrina Christiana* to John Milton" (presented at Convention of the Modern Language Association, Chicago, 12 January 2014); Wilson, "*The History of Britain*: Milton's Casual Disparagement of 'Arian Doctrine' in 1670" (presented at Biennial Conference on John Milton, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 16 October 2015). Questioning the attribution, James M. Clawson and Hugh F. Wilson have collaborated on another series of conference papers, included in the Zotero bibliography referenced in note 2, above.

10. See Gerald Graff, *Professing English: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1987, 2007), 12, 99–100.

H. Strong, Louis Aubrey Wood, and others—assumed a late date.[11] Other commentators, like Rufus Wilmot Griswold, A. D. Barber, H. G. Rosendale, and Joseph Moody McDill, accepted the dubious attribution, but they argued that *De Doctrina Christiana* must have been written early in Milton's life.[12] In contrast, most twentieth-century scholars, like James Holly Hanford, Arthur Sewell, and Kelley, argued for a date roughly contemporaneous with *Paradise Lost*. Although Sewell had argued that *DDC* was never satisfactorily completed, Kelley and Lewalski argue that it was essentially complete; subsequent scholars—Campbell et al., John Shawcross, Jeffrey Alan Miller, Kerr, and John Hale—tend to follow Sewell and argue the work was never quite finished.[13]

11. Charles R. Sumner, ed., *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine Compiled from the Holy Scriptures Alone,* by John Milton (London, printed by Cambridge University Press for Charles Knight, Pall Mall East, 1825), i–xxxvii, ii–iii, x, xxx; Henry John Todd, *Some Account of the Life and Writing of John Milton, Derived Principally from His Majesty's State-Paper Office* (London: Printed for C. and J. Rivington et al., 1826), 291–364, 311, 317; Thomas Keightley, *An Account of the Life, Opinions, and Writings of John Milton* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1855), 67; David Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, 7 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1859–1880), 6:823, 6:831; Augustus Strong, *The Great Poets and Their Theology* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland Press, 1897), 257; Louis Aubrey Wood, *The Form and Origin of Milton's Antitrinitarian Conception* (London, ON: Advertiser Printing Co., 1911), 17, 21.

12. Given the theological irregularities contradicting Milton's canonical works, Rufus Griswold and Alanson D. Barber argued that *DDC* must have been a very early, immature work; in contrast, H. G. Rosendale argued the treatise arose out of revulsion against Parliament's republication of William Ames's *The Marrow of Divinity* (London: Edward Griffin for John Rothwell, 1643) while Joseph M. McDill argued for a date starting no later than 1641 or 1645. Rufus Griswold, *The Prose Works of John Milton: With a Biographical Introduction*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. W. Moore, 1853); A[lanson] D[arius] Barber, "Article IV: The Religious Life and Opinions of John Milton," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 53 and *Biblical Repository* 115 (July 1859): 557–603; Barber, "Art. I. The Religious Life and Opinions of John Milton: Comparison of '*Christian Doctrine*' with Milton's Other Works," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 17.65 (January 1860): 1–42; H. G. Rosendale, "Milton: His Religion and Polemics, Ecclesiastical as well as Theological," *Milton Memorial Lectures* (London: Royal Society of Literature, 1908), 109–90, 109–20; Joseph Moody McDill, "Appendix B: The History and the Date of *De Doctrina*," *Milton and the Pattern of Calvinism* (Nashville: Private Edition, Distributed by The Joint University Libraries, 1941), 383–408. This debate is not over. Recently, Sharon Achinstein has also suggested the possibility of an early date; see Achinstein, "*De Doctrina Christiana*: Milton's Last Divorce Tract?" *Milton Quarterly* 51.3 (October 2018): 153–62, 159–60, dx.doi.org/10.1111/milt.12224.

13. James Jolly Hanford, "The Date of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Studies in Philology* 17.3 (July 1920): 309–19; Arthur Sewell, *A Study in Milton's* Christian Doctrine (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 203; Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument*, 3–24, especially 21; Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton*, 416–17; Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 66–68; Barbara Lewalski, John Shawcross, and

Major scholars have continued a tradition of disagreeing whether the treatise was Arian, Antitrinitarian, or subordinationist. Among others, Sumner, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Todd, Keightley, Masson, Wood, Kelley, Hanford, Michael E. Bauman, Rumrich, and Martin Dzelzainis argued that Milton was an Arian or Antitrinitarian.[14] Burgess, Griswold, Joseph William Morris, Alanson Darius Barber, Mandell Creighton, Roland Mushat Frye, C. A. Patrides, and William Riley Parker disputed claims that *Paradise Lost* was an unorthodox, Arian poem. Hunter, J. H. Adamson, Nathaniel H. Henry, Shawcross, and Lieb denied that Milton was Arian; several scholars argued that Milton was a pre-Nicene, subordinationist Trinitarian.[15] These scholars argued that the

William B. Hunter, "The Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32.1 (Winter 1992): 43–166, 160–61; Jeffrey A. Miller, "Milton, Zanchius and the Rhetoric of Belated Reading," *Milton Quarterly* 47.4 (December 2013): 199–219, 201, dx.doi.org/10.1111/milt.12054; Miller, "Which Milton Heard Which Parts of *De Doctrina Christiana*" (presented at 129th Annual Modern Language Association Convention, Chicago, January 2014); Jason A. Kerr and John K. Hale, "The Origins and Development of Milton's Theology in *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.17–18," *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 181–206, 205, dx.doi.org/10.1353/mlt.2013.0010; Kerr, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton's Theology of Liberation," *Studies in Philology* 111.2 (Spring 2014): 346–74, dx.doi.org/10.1353/sip.2014.0014.

14. Charles R. Sumner, "Preliminary Observations," *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1825): i–xxxvii, xxxiv–xxxv; [Macaulay], "Milton," Review of *De Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi,* by John Milton, trans. Charles R. Sumner, *Edinburgh Review* 42.84 (August 1825): 304–46, 305; Todd, *Some Account,* 310–11, 320ff.; Keightley, 158, 168–69, 417; David Masson, *The Life and Times of John Milton* (London: Macmillan, 1880), 6:xix, 6:823, 6:831; David Masson, "Life of Milton," *The Poetical Works of Milton and Marvell, with a Memoir of Each*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co., 1878), 1:lxxiii; Louis Aubrey Wood, *The Form and Origin of Milton's Antitrinitarian Conception* (London, ON: Advertiser Printing Co., 1911), 12–13, 24–25, 66; Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument*, 3–7, 11–14, 2–30, *passim*; James Holly Hanford, *John Milton, Englishman* (New York: Crown, 1949), 255; Michael Bauman, "Heresy in Paradise and the Ghost of Readers Past," *College Language Association Journal* 30 (1986): 59–68; Michael Bauman, *Milton's Arianism* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1987); John P. Rumrich, "*Milton's Arianism*: Why it Matters"; Dzelzainis, "Milton and Antitrinitarianism," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 171–85; Larry Isitt, "Milton's Arian Epic: Nicaea, Reformation Confessions of Faith, and Naming Deity in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost,*" *Milton, Rights & Liberties*, ed. Christophe Tournu and Neil Forsyth (Berne: Peter Lang, 2007), 263–75. Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns argue that Milton was Antitrinitarian, but not "Arian," in *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 273.

15. Thomas Burgess, *Protestant Union: A Treatise of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and What Best Means May Be Used Against the Spread of Popery; To which is Prefixed a Preface on Milton's Unimpeachable Sincerity* (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1826), ix–xlv; Burgess, *Milton Not the Author of the Lately Discover'd Arian Work, De Doctrina Christiana: Three Discourses Delivered at the Anniversary*

views in *De Doctrina Christiana* (assumed to be Milton's) were a sub-variant of orthodoxy; their opponents argued that *De Doctrina Christiana* espoused undeniable heresies. Kelley, Mary Ann Radzinowicz, Rumrich, Larry Isitt, and Stephen Fallon disagreed with Marjorie Hope Nicholson, C. S. Lewis, William Hunter, John Shawcross, and Russell M. Hillier—whatever they thought of the previously unpublished manuscript treatise and whatever they conjectured were Milton's inmost private thoughts—over whether *Paradise Lost* itself was, or was not, essentially orthodox.[16]

Meetings of the Royal Society of Literature in the Years 1826, 1827 and 1828, to which is added, Milton Contrasted with Milton, and with the Scriptures (London: Thomas Brettell, 1829), 10, 15–16, 21, 53–54, 101–22, 142–46, 152, 164, 168, 171, 175–76, 199–204; Rufus W. Griswold, *The Prose Works of John Milton, with a Biographical Introduction*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1845), 1:xi; Joseph William Morris, *John Milton: A Vindication, specially from the Charge of Arianism* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co, 1862); Alanson D. Barber, "The Religious Life and Opinions of John Milton," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 16.63 (July 1859): 557–603; Barber, "The Religious Life and Opinions of John Milton," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 17.65 (January 1860): 1–42; Barber, "General Literature. [Review] *The Great Poets and Their Theology*. By Augustis Hopkins Strong," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 10.39 (July 1899): 575–79; Louise Creighton, ed., *The Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton, D.D., Bishop of London,* 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906), 2:495; Roland Mushat Frye, *God, Man, and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in* Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, *and the Great Theologians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 75–76, dx.doi. org/10.1515/9781400877614; C. A. Patrides, *The Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 15–25; William R. Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 2:1057–58; William B. Hunter, Jack Adamson, and C. A. Patrides, eds., *Bright Essence: Studies in Milton's Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1973); Nathaniel H. Henry, *The True Wayfaring Christian: Studies in Milton's Puritanism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 49, 58–59, 62–66, 75–76, 88–91; Michael Lieb, "Milton and 'Arianism,'" *Religion & Literature* 32.2 (Summer 2000): 197–220; John T. Shawcross, "Milton and *Of Christian Doctrine*: Doubts, Definitions, Connotations," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 27.2 (2001): 161–78, dx.doi.org/10.1163/23526963-90000236; Shawcross, *Rethinking Milton Studies: Time Present and Time Past* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 50–51, 105–08, 175.

16. Maurice Kelley, Rumrich, Isitt, Hunter, Shawcross, and others have written on this topic extensively. Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Toward* Samson Agonistes: *The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 313–49; Stephen M. Fallon, "Milton, Newton, and the Implications of Arianism," *Milton in the Long Restoration,* ed. Blair Hoxby and Ann Baynes Coiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 319–34, dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198769774.003.0018; C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to* Paradise Lost (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942, 1961), 84–93, 86–87; Marjorie Nicolson, *A Reader's Guide to John Milton* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1963), 228–29; Russell M. Hillier, "Milton's 'Genial Angel': The Identity and Salvific Office of the Son in Adam's Narrative of Creation and Recreation," *Studies in Philology* 107.3 (Summer 2010): 366–400; Hillier, *Milton's Messiah: The Son of God in the Works of John Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3, 7, 9–36, dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199591886.001.0001.

Although the initial controversy over the authorship of *DDC* actually began shortly after the discovery and attribution of the treatise, much of the dispute has been relegated to oblivion. The most recent phase of this controversy was catalyzed by Hunter's rediscovery of the arguably suppressed protests of Bishop Burgess, president of the Royal Society of Literature.[17] Scholars interested in the initial reception of *De Doctrina Christiana* appear to have relied too heavily on the valuable but incomplete research of Francis E. Mineka and the scattered breadcrumbs left in footnotes by Kelley.[18] Burgess had suffered the condescension of anonymous reviewers and the disappearance of his published objections; his arguments were ignored and then suppressed rather than answered. The bishop of Salisbury was too prominent to have "disappeared" entirely, but he was treated with a measure of disdain in the *DNB*, briefly mentioned and then dismissed by Kelley without even the courtesy of a citation. When Hunter rediscovered the pertinent writing of Burgess, both he and the bishop were mocked by the formidable Hill, who suggested that Burgess was deservedly forgotten. Rumrich remarked, "Burgess's objection went unseconded until Hunter's revival of it."[19] Similarly, the authors of *Milton and the Manuscript* claim the bishop was "the only dissenter" to Milton's authorship and decided that neither Burgess nor his arguments were worthy of extended comment.[20]

All of these claims of singularity are mistaken: Burgess was not fairly treated and he was not the "only" dissenter; there were many others. In *Milton and the Manuscript*, Bishop Burgess is mentioned on page 1 to be dismissed

17. Hunter, *Visitation Unimplor'd*, and Lieb, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship"; Lieb suggests Milton's name on the manuscript may have been "forged" (174), and he remarks, "I find Hunter's conspiracy theory [about the disappearance of the protests of Bishop Burgess] entirely credible" (190). Wilson, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Possibilities of Forgery."

18. Francis E. Mineka, "The Critical Reception of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Studies in English* 23 (1943): 115–47; Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806–1838* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument*, 3–24.

19. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*: Addendum from the Bishop of Salisbury," 191–207; Thomas Toit, "Thomas Burgess," *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1886), 7:313–14; Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument*, 4, 249; Maurice Kelley, "The Provenance of John Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," 153–63; Christopher Hill, "Milton's *Christian Doctrine*: Professor William B. Hunter, Bishop Burgess and John Milton," 165–88; Rumrich, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 219.

20. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 1.

with a reference to the *ODNB* and forgotten. Only one of his pertinent books is listed in the fourth section of the bibliographies and even this mention is omitted from the index. His arguments are not seriously considered. Another dissenter, Hunter's ally Sellin of UCLA, was also listed in the bibliography and then omitted from the index.[21]

Scholars generally assumed that Burgess was the only doubter of the attribution, but there were other skeptics. Burgess and, more recently, Hunter were not alone. One might add the names of a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, William Wyndham Grenville, and a future archbishop of Canterbury, William Howley.[22] After them, one might note Joseph Ivimey and Joseph William Morris. A list of more recent doubters might include the names of Hunter, Sellin, Wilson, Falcone, Sullivan, Mulryan, Papazian, Snider, Donnelly, and several others we have found. But previous dissenters have been routinely ignored and marginalized. Too many scholars assume, without investigating the matter in sufficient depth, that this issue has been definitely resolved. A careful re-examination of the stylometric analysis rebuts that comfortable assumption.

II. Reconsidering stylometry

When *Milton and the Manuscript* was published by Oxford University Press in 2007, the casual reader might be excused for believing the debate over. Co-authored by Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie, this major work of scholarship offered sustained analysis of the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana* from many angles. In the fourth chapter, applying stylometric analysis, the authors champion the method for its introduction of "objectivity into an area where subjective response and disputed questions of interpretation may otherwise prevail."[23] This description inadvertently implies more certainty than their evidence provides.

Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie's analysis compares style in the disputed manuscript with that of Milton's canonical works, and they argue

21. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 1, 168.

22. Grenville and Howley discussed the manuscript in correspondence with Burgess. See John Scandrett Harford, *The Life of Thomas Burgess, D.D., Late Lord Bishop of Salisbury* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1840), 348–52.

23. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 69.

that the results show considerable similarity. Using suitable methodology—choosing a corpus of texts from British and Continental authors, selecting a large sample of *De Doctrina Christiana*, minimally processing it by standardizing ampersands to "et," reformatting hyphens, and removing quotations[24]—they prepared their analyses thoroughly, even if some decisions later drew objections.[25] Additionally, their methods for assessing style relied on state-of-the-art techniques for discerning style: they allowed frequency to choose the word lists they would consider, and they used multivariate methods to consider many such words at once.[26]

This methodology yields good, useful results, beginning especially with their Figure 4.2,[27] which implements a technique called principal components analysis. Briefly, it shows frequency measurements of fifty words projected onto a chart with two dimensions, expressed along horizontal and vertical axes. In this figure, Milton's three *Defenses* cluster horizontally left of centre, and mostly above the middle line. Meanwhile, the ten partitions of their selected chapters of *DDC* hover below the middle vertically, and in two clusters horizontally.

After following good methods to arrive at good results, the first limitation comes with interpreting this chart. In spite of their claims of stylometry's striving toward objectivity, any conclusion from this kind of principal components analysis always necessitates an element of subjectivity.[28] This chart, for instance,

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24. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 71.

25. Stephen Dobranski and John Rumrich argue that the quotations are too important to the text to remove them without significantly altering the text's style. Whether one should remove quotations during text pre-processing is a reasonable debate. Patrick Juola, for instance, argues for the removal of quotations when possible. See Dobranski and Rumrich, "Introduction: Heretical Milton," in *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen J. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–18, 10–11; Juola, "Authorship Attribution," *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval* 1.3 (2006): 233–334, 247–48, doi.org/10.1561/1500000005.

26. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 69.

27. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 74. Without their corpus of texts, this chart cannot be replicated here.

28. Tweedie's dissertation is more measured on this point, acknowledging the subjective effort of interpreting a principal components analysis, compared to a hierarchical clustering analysis. The 1998 paper authored by Tweedie, David Holmes, and Corns also withholds this "objective" flag until discussing cluster analysis, which allows for one "to obtain an objective view." In this regard, the book chapter seems to have made the unfortunate decision of keeping the language from previous studies while cutting some of the analyses that merited it. Fiona Tweedie, "A Statistical Investigation into the

shows some noteworthy distinctions between Milton's canonical works and *De Doctrina Christiana*, and no other analysis in their study compares texts by Milton with control texts in a similar way; nevertheless, their "interim conclusions" claimed that "stylometric analysis so far established that some parts of *De Doctrina Christiana* approximate very closely to Milton's practice in his Latin *Defences*."[29] This conclusion goes too far. Although their Figure 4.2 does not disprove claims of Milton's authorship, it is also insufficient to prove them. The meaning of "very closely" is imprecise in this context: about half of the samples from the disputed manuscript are closer in style to a work by William Ames than they are to any of Milton's three texts considered. In fact, while an author's texts generally cluster near their other works, the chart also highlights some limitations of relying on this one method too heavily: Salmasius's *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I* is shown to be closer to parts of *Defensio Secunda* than is Milton's own *Defensio Prima*.

Context makes the biggest difference in a chart like this, and previous studies show problematic decisions of context. Stylometry is always constrained by the choice of texts presented in a lineup. In earlier work, scholars sought for a heterodox author among the orthodox, selecting control texts from theologically orthodox writers: William Ames, Johannes Wolleb, Richard Baxter, George Bate, John Earle, John Gauden, William Prynne, Claude Salmasius, Tom May—and John Milton. Considering the beliefs shown in the manuscript, unorthodox writers should be far more plausible candidates for its authorship than theological conservatives. Surprisingly, no notably heterodox author was considered. Likewise, Salmasius and Wolleb were the only non-English authors to be included. Continental writers and unorthodox English writers should figure more prominently in a well-tempered corpus.

Considering previous limitations, we prepared a different corpus for our analysis, choosing texts by several Continental theologians and unorthodox English writers, as shown in Table 1. Since the principal components of an analysis are amalgams of the features found in the texts used, selecting a different corpus will yield a different chart, with different principal components

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Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Attributed to John Milton" (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 1997), 108; Tweedie, Holmes, and Corns, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Attributed to John Milton: A Statistical Investigation," 13.2 (June 1998): 77–87, 81, doi.org/10.1093/llc/13.2.77.

29. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 80.

and different text groupings. Our Figure 1, for instance, was made using similar methods as those used to create Figure 4.2 of Campbell et al. In both cases, *De Doctrina Christiana* is first prepared by removing quotations, converting ampersands, and reformatting hyphens, before then being divided into ten equal-sized partitions of the epistle and chapters 1–11, 22–27; in both cases, texts are assayed for word frequencies using the same selection of fifty frequent words established by earlier studies by Tweedie et al.; while the earlier method used 5,000-word samples, resulting in ten samples from *DDC*, different decisions regarding quotation removal have left us with a shorter document, so we prepared samples of around 4,000 words in order to maintain the same number of samples.[30] For our Figure 1, we have also overlaid the twenty words that contribute most strongly to a text's positioning along the first two principal components, combining some of the useful elements of the scaled loadings charts shown in the 1998 study;[31] we present only the top twenty words to avoid sacrificing the chart's legibility. Our word measurements are taken first using the "Stylo" package for R, which provides a table of frequencies for each text in the corpus; further analysis and visualization use R, ggplot2, and other packages.[32]

30. For Latin prose, it has been shown that samples of as few as 2,500 words are as effective as larger sample sizes. Maciej Eder, "Does Size Matter? Authorship Attribution, Small Samples, Big Problem," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 30.2 (November 2013): 167–82, 171, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqt066.

31. Tweedie, Holmes, and Corns, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 81.

32. Maciej Eder, Jan Rybicki, and Mike Kestemont, "Stylometry with R: A Package for Computational Text Analysis," *R Journal* 8.1 (2016; package version 0.7.4, 2020): 107–21, dx.doi.org/10.32614/RJ-2016-007; R Core Team, *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing* (Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing, 2020; version 4.0.3), R-project.org; Hadley Wickham, *ggplot2: Elegant Graphics for Data Analysis* (Springer-Verlag, 2016; package version 3.3.3, 2020); Thomas Lin Pederson, *Ggforce: Accelerating "Ggplot2"* (version 0.3.2, 2020), cran.r-project.org/package=ggforce. Additionally, the functions used to display and annotate "stylo" objects with "ggplot2" for this article have been collected as a package available on GitHub: James M. Clawson, *Stylo2gg* (version 0.7.2, 2021), github.com/jmclawson/stylo2gg.

Table 1. Our initial corpus includes text from seventeen documents by eight authors, plus selections of *De Doctrina Christiana*.

| text	length	symbol
De Doctrina Christiana - epistle and chapters 1–11, 22–27	41,283	DC
Biddle		
Duae Catecheses	26,894	B
Farrington		
Vita Biddle	9,525	Far
Felbinger		
Demonstrationes Christianae	64,848	F.Dem
Doctrina de Deo et Christo et Spiritu Sancto	5,482	F.Doc
Epistola	13,962	F.Epi
Politicae Christianae	14,168	F.Pol
Gott		
Novae Solymae	87,918	G
Milton		
Defensio Prima	52,473	M.1
Defensio Secunda	22,955	M.2
Epistolarum	10,516	M.Epi
Poemata Latina	11,615	M.Poems
Pro Se Defensio	26,201	M.S
More		
Fides Publica, Contra Calumnias	10,055	Mor
Schlichting		
Apologia	16,811	S.Ap
Confessio Fide Christianae (1642 edition)	5,326	S.C1
Confessio Fide Christianae (1651 edition)	21,588	S.C2
Wolleb		
Compendium Theologiae Christianae	70,561	W
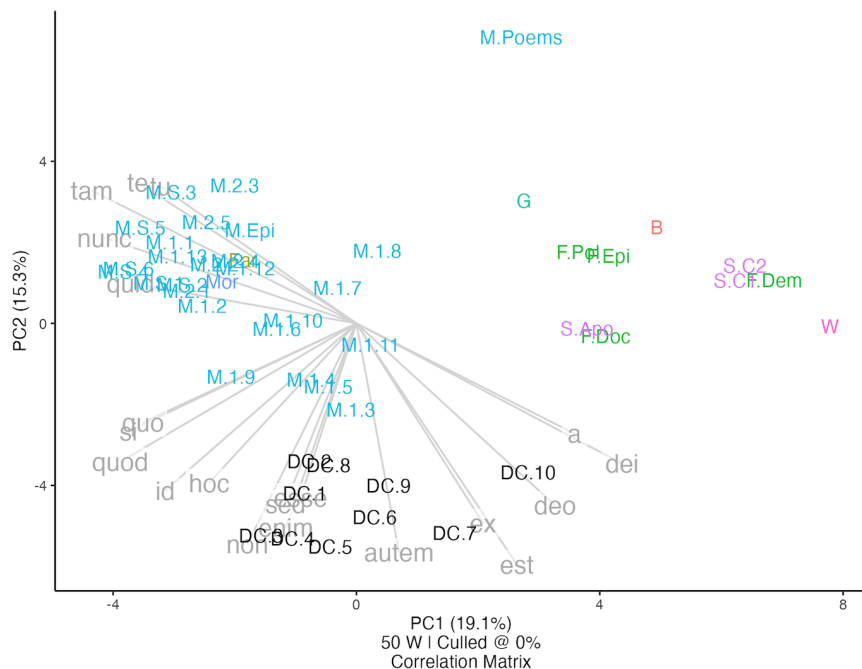
Figure 1. Twenty-loading overlay and principal components analysis of fifty words in samples from *De Doctrina Christiana* (here labelled DC.1 through DC.10), Milton's Defences (here labelled M.1, M.2, and M.S for *Defensio Prima*, *Defensio Secunda*, and *Pro Se Defensio*), and a revised test corpus. This figure, modelled after analyses shown in the 1998 paper by Tweedie et al. and the 2007 chapter in *Milton and the Manuscript*, demonstrates that choosing a different set of texts shows greater stylistic distance between samples from Milton's canonical works and the disputed treatise.

From this new selection of texts comes a new chart, made using the old word list from previous studies. Set beside the chart in *Milton and the Manuscript*, the differences here are minor: where all of Milton's works previously clustered to the left of zero on the x-axis, here *Defensio Prima* is shown centred around the zero point, with some of this text's samples to the right; the partitions of *De Doctrina Christiana* are separated vertically from Milton's canonical works, many of which seem closer in style to More's *Fides Publica* and Farrington's biography of John Biddle. The ten partitions of *De Doctrina Christiana* seem to

form two groups, with most partitions clustered between negative 1 and positive 1 on the horizontal axis, and the seventh and tenth partitions settling between 2.5 to 3 horizontally; all parts of the manuscript fall below negative 2 on the vertical axis. While a few parts of Milton's *Defensio Prima* rise above zero on the x-axis, the greatest portion of samples from his canonical prose works are centred between negative 4 and 0 horizontally, and all of these canonical works sit above negative 2 vertically—markedly distinct from the *DDC* selections.

A figure like this makes it possible to glean a number of important points from the data. Texts with similar patterns of word frequency are placed near each other, so the visualization makes clear which parts of the corpus use words in comparable ways. Overlaying the twenty most influential words out of fifty makes it easier to understand how texts get placed. Higher usages of words like "tu," "te," and "tam" pull texts farther to the top left, while increased frequencies of words like "dei" and "deo" pull texts down and to the right. The overlay also hints at relationships of the words to each other. Those that form a small angle between their vectors, such as "tu" and "te," are positively correlated. Conversely, when two words nearly form a straight line, as with "te" and "dei," they show a strong negative correlation, and they are unlikely to be used together with much frequency within these texts. Finally, any two words that create something like a right angle, as can be seen with "non" and "dei," show almost no relationship in their usage patterns. That Milton's polemics would draw heavily on words like "te" and "tam," while a religious text such as *DDC* would favour "dei" and "deo," is unsurprising: the texts are placed along this spectrum in ways we might expect. But it is worth noting that the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana* differs from Milton's canonical works in its uncharacteristic use of non-topical function words like "est," "ex," and "autem," and in its higher use of words showing no correlation to the polemic/religious spectrum, such as "non," "enim," "sed," and "esse."

These findings do not support the conclusions of earlier studies. Previous stylometric research concluded that Milton was the likeliest author, but that conclusion only applies to the analysis as it was then considered. Previous studies prepared more limited samples of texts for comparison, they chose limited selections of the disputed work, and they relied on methods that are now recognized as having limited application to Latin stylometry. With the benefits of hindsight and other findings that have been published since then, our fourth section, below, builds on foundations laid by the earlier working group

in the 1990s. As a preliminary, we first shift from digital analysis to traditional philology by reviewing the initial history and the theological improbability of the still-contested attribution. *De Doctrina Christiana* contradicts the theology of Milton.

III. Re-examining Milton's theology

The attribution of the heterodox theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* to the author of *Paradise Lost* undermined Milton's reputation. In the periodicals of the day, a chorus of anonymous reviewers claimed the attribution was "undoubtedly" Milton's, and imposing authorities supported the ascription. The prime minister introduced the discovery in Parliament, and he announced that the king had chosen a translator and authorized publication. Tories, and those who despised the austere Puritan poet, were secretly delighted to lament the deplorable unorthodoxy of their political opponent.[33]

On the basis of a dubious attribution affirmed by Daniel Skinner, Robert Lemon, Sumner, Todd, Sir Robert Peel, and King George IV, the attributed text was published in Latin and English. In other words, according to a seventeenth-century opportunist, a nineteenth-century fabricator, two royal chaplains, an eminent politician who misconstrued the title of the manuscript, and a king not known for literary expertise, Milton was alleged to have composed a document that they knew would portray the widely admired Christian poet as an outrageous cryptic heretic.[34] In feigned reverence for the mane of their most prominent literary enemy, these pious Tories were knowingly going to publish

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33. Tories defended Anglican hierarchy and royal authority, but Milton supported the abolition of bishoprics, defended the execution of the king and the abolition of the monarchy, satirized the hagiographic *Eikon Basilike*, mocked the "Royal Martyr," and advocated toleration of dissenters.

34. For an evaluation of Daniel Skinner, see Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, *passim*, where Skinner is suspected of a variety of improprieties. To placate annoyed authorities, Skinner offered to burn the treatise that he had claimed was Milton's "dearest possession." Michael Lieb was fairly blunt: "What we know about Skinner is that he was an opportunist and an individual not to be trusted" ("Milton and 'Arianism,'" 208). For an evaluation of Robert Lemon as a fabricator, see the remarks of Gordon Campbell and Gabriel Moshenska: Campbell, "The Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 26.4 (December 1992): 129–30, dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.1992.tb00803.x; Gabriel Moshenka, "The Duke of Sussex's Library and the First Debates on the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 47.1 (2013): 1–12.

this (scandalous) document as an act of respect and affection. Believe it if you will.[35]

Many of those who felt obliged to accept the supposedly authoritative attribution, many of those who had long celebrated Milton as England's great Protestant poet, were stunned, appalled, or even horrified. If this was really Milton's work, he was guilty of too many heresies to list: the treatise cast doubt on the Trinity, denied the full divinity of Christ, denied the efficacy of grace, and defended the death of the soul as well as the body. If this was his work, *Paradise Lost* might contain hidden heresies; it might be theologically unsound, unfit reading for believers. Some sober readers doubted the attribution,[36] but anyone who took a stand risked the disfavour of the authorities and the derision of the largely anonymous critics who contributed to the periodicals of the day.

Nonetheless, some readers who noticed important theological discrepancies between Milton's canonical works and *De Doctrina Christiana* found it implausible that the same man composed both. Risking ostracism and royal displeasure, Burgess spoke up, and he spoke for others. As time passed, more dissenters emerged. Some forthrightly argued that Milton did not write the treatise at all; others argued that he wrote it early in his immaturity, that it was irrelevant to the mature theology of *Paradise Lost*, that private speculations were not expressed in the public epic, or that any alleged heresies, like subordinationism, were really sub-variants of orthodoxy, not heresies at all.

Although Milton was accused of being a secret Antitrinitarian, a semi-Socinian or an Arian, an Arminian, and a mortalist, evidence from the uncontested canonical works discredits these allegations.[37] From the

35. "Faithfull are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Proverbs 27:6.

36. Avenues to the easy publication of dissent were likely to be guarded by cautious editors mindful of the Six Acts of 1819 imposed upon the press after the Peterloo Massacre.

37. Before the ascription of *De Doctrina*, Milton was generally regarded as an orthodox Christian; after the attribution, Milton's reputation as a Christian poet was diminished. In some quarters he was loved or loathed more than ever. Conservative critics admired Milton as a gifted poet and despised him as a contemptible or pitiable heretic. Among many middle-class and working-class readers and admirers, Milton's reputation was damaged; he was discredited as a genuinely Christian poet. The radicals Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley read Milton as a proto-Jacobin; the Unitarians, like Theophilus Lindsey, William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Turner, felt they could claim Milton as one of their own. Channing, "Art.1. A Treatise on *Christian Doctrine* … By John Milton …," *The Christian Examiner and Theological Review* 3 (1826): 29–77; Emerson, "Milton," *North American Review* 47 (July 1838): 56–73; Turner, "Introductory Sketch of the Early History of Unitarians in England," *The Lives of*

uncontested works, there is no compelling evidence that John Milton was ever any of these things. The following pages examine each of these charges in turn.

1. On Socinianism

Prompted by a passage in *Paradise Lost*, in 1704 John Dennis suggested that Milton was "a little tainted by Socinianism"; much later, Rev. Calton and Joseph Warton made a similar charge about a passage in *Paradise Regained*.[38] In contrast, other early critics, Joseph Trapp, Thomas Newton, Samuel Johnson, and Charles Symmons, defended Milton's orthodoxy.[39] Although *De Doctrina Christiana* is an eccentric, eclectic treatise, much of its reasoning aligns with standard Socinian arguments. Although several modern scholars have claimed that Milton's theology was influenced by Socinianism, the bulk of their evidence, aside from Milton's irenic defense of toleration, was derived from the suspect treatise.

Nathaniel Henry and J. P. Pittion both argued that the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* had Socinian sympathies. Henry argued for the "Socinian

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Eminent Unitarians (London: Unitarian Association, 1840), 1–22, 15–16. After *DDC* was attributed to Milton, Turner claimed that Lindsey's early suspicions about Milton's having Arian sentiments, first published in 1776, were vindicated. (Lindsey was a staunch Unitarian, but his honesty was paramount. In 1783, he had recanted his early interpretation of Milton as an Arian. Lindsey's suspicions are in his *A Sequel to the Apology on Resigning the Vicarage of Catterrick, Yorkshire* [London: J. Johnson, 1776], 406–09. His recantation appears in *An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship from the Reformation to Our Own Times* [London: J. Johnson, 1783], xxi–xxii.) If Milton's presumed allegiance to the major doctrines of *De Doctrina Christiana* is discredited, Milton's supposed authorship of the entire tract becomes implausible. Multiple conversions would have to be interpolated to square the circle.

38. John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (London: Printed for Geo. Strahan and Bernard Lintot, 1704), 36. Rev. Calton, seconded by Warton, is mentioned in *The Poetical Works of John Milton, with Notes of Various Authors*, ed. Henry John Todd, 7 vols. (London: Printed for J. Johnson et alia, 1809), 5:27.

39. Joseph Trapp, "Praefatio," *Joannis Miltoni Paradissus Amissus Latine Redditus, interprete Josepho Trapp*, 2 vols. (Londini: Typis J. Purser, 1741–44), no pagination, 1:[2]; Thomas Newton, "The Life of Milton," in *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books* (Edinburgh: A. Donalson 1767), xviii–lxxv, lxvi; Samuel Johnson, "Milton," in *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905 / Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlags, 1968), 1:84–200, 1:155; Charles Symmons, *The Life of John Milton*, 3rd edition (London: Printed G. and W.B. Whitaker, 1822), 443n70. Contrary to the "taint" of Socinianism suspected by John Dennis, Samuel Johnson wrote that Milton was "untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion" (1:155).

origin" of the author's "conception of the soul and of the intermediate state" between death and final judgment.[40] Pittion harboured a "suspicion of Socinianism in Milton" and he felt vindicated when he discovered that the author of *De Doctrina Christiana*, whom he assumed was Milton, attacked the anti-Socinian *Disputationes* of Joshua La Place (1596–1655), an orthodox Protestant theologian who taught at Saumur.[41] According to Pittion, "the views expressed in chapter v [of *DDC*] are identical to those found in Socinian writings." In his view, "it is not only Milton's interpretation which is identical to that found in Socinian writings, nor the method chosen; the detailed arguments which he uses in the course of his refutation of La Place also bear the mark of a Socinian source."[42]

Although he was well aware of Socinians, and explicitly defends them from persecution, Milton disagreed with several of their major tenets. While Lieb admits the possible influence of "certain aspects" of Socinian thought on Milton, he advises caution because he senses "strong countertrends in Milton's writing."[43] As Filippo Falcone observed, "[g]iven *De Doctrina*'s emphasis on matters of theology proper and its vehemence in disparaging Trinitarianism, a

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40. Nathaniel Henry, "Milton & Hobbes: Mortalism and the Intermediate State," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951): 234–49.

41. J.-P. Pittion, "Milton, La Place and Socinianism," *Review of English Studies* 23.90 (May 1972): 138–46, 143, 139, dx.doi.org/10.1093/res/XXIII.90.138; Josué de La Place, *Disputationes de Argumentis quibus Efficitur, Christus Prius Fuisse quam in Utero Beatae Virginis Secondum Carnem Conciperetur* (Saumar 1649); La Place, *Disputationes de testimoniis et Argumentis e Veteri Testamenta* (Saumur 1651); La Place, *Disputationum pro divina Domi nostri Jesu Christi Essentia pars Tertia et Ultima* (Saumur 1657). Pittion argues that the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* only responded to the 1651 volume, and that the especially controversial fifth chapter of *DDC* was essentially written in 1651–56. This dating creates problems for the standard chronology.

42. Pittion explains that La Place composed "a systematic and coherent refutation of Socinian doctrine" that was routinely assigned to students at "the 'Protestant Academy' of Saumur." Pittion argues that the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* "consciously uses Socinian arguments to defend well-defined Socinian positions." Pittion quotes Johannes Volkel and Faustus Socinius himself to show the Socinian lineage of the argumentation in *DDC* (Pittion 142–43, 139, 144).

43. Michael Lieb, "Milton and the Socinian Heresy," *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*, ed. Kelley, Lieb, and Shawcross, 234–83, 253–54. See also Lieb, "Milton and 'Arianism,'" 197–220; Lieb, "De Doctrina Christiana and the Question of Authorship," 177–230. Socinians denied the pre-existence of Christ before the Incarnation, original sin, and the need for an Atonement. In their view, the Gospel superseded the entire Mosaic Law. Like Leo Tolstoy much later, some Socinians felt that the Gospel mandated pacifism, the renunciation of private property, and the abolition of serfdom or slavery. Others, like Jeremias Felbinger, were more socially conservative.

radical gap exists between *De Doctrina* and Milton's endorsement of Trinitarian Saumur."[44] Geoffrey Nuttall notices that, in 1659, about the same time "Milton" was *supposedly* working on *De Doctrina Christiana* and refuting La Place, a moderate French Calvinist professor who had criticized Socinian doctrines, John Milton invited Jean de Labadie, a charismatic converted Catholic, sometimes called "the second Calvin," to become the minister of the French Huguenot church in Westminster.[45] This invitation conflicts with the common idea that Milton had no standing in any church and with the idea that Milton had anti-Calvinist, Arminian, Socinian, or Arian sentiments.

2. On Arianism

Before 1823, Thomas Newton, Samuel Johnson, and Charles Symmons had regarded Milton as an orthodox Protestant, and the idea that Milton was ever an Arian was the opinion of a tiny, often anonymous minority: Charles Leslie (1698), John Dennis (1704), a few timid anonymous attackers in *The Gentleman's Magazine* during the late 1730s, and a certain obscure Rev. Calton.[46] Rumrich

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44. Falcone, "Irreconcilable (Dis)Continuity: De Doctrina Christiana and Milton," *Connotations* 27 (2018): 78–105, 98, connotations.de/article/filippo-falcone-de-doctrina-christiana-and-milton. According to Philip Benedict, "Reformed scholars, too, most notably at the Huguenot Academy of Saumur, championed the utility of critical biblical scholarship, even while striving to defend the basic points of Reformed theology against Remonstrants, anti-Trinitarians, and Catholics alike," in Benedict, "Theological Disputes in the Age of Orthodoxy," *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 297–352, 331.

45. Geoffrey Nuttall, "Milton's Churchmanship in 1659: His Letter to Jean de Labadie," *Milton Quarterly* 35.4 (December 2001): 227–31, dx.doi.org/10.1111/1094-348X.00021. For more detail, see Milton, "Epistola Familiaris 28 (to Jean de Labadie, 27 April 1659)," *John Milton: Epistolarum Familiarum Liber Unus and Uncollected Letters*, ed. and trans. Estelle Haan (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2019), 352–62, dx.doi.org/10.11116/9789461662958.

46. Charles Leslie, "The Preface," *The History of Sin and Heresie Attempted* (London: Printed for H. Hindmarsh, 1698), four pages without pagination; Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism*, 36; [Daniel Defoe], *The Political History of the Devil* (London, 1726); *Gentleman's Magazine*, (1738–39), cited by Shawcross in *Milton 1732–1801: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 93–103. Charles Sumner remarked, "Warton however has acknowledged the justice of Mr. Calton's remark on a memorable passage in *Paradise Regained* (I.161–167.), that not a word is there said of the Son of God, but what a Socinian, or at least an Arian, would allow" (Sumner, "Preliminary Observations," xxxiv).

admits that the "Arianism of the epic" has largely "escaped notice."[47] Daniel Defoe is often included in the lists of Milton's accusers, but that is a mistake.[48]

Arians are Antitrinitarians, but before 1823 only a tiny number of critics had ever alleged that Milton was an Arian; no one included Milton in standard lists of "Antitrinitarians." After the attribution and publication of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Sumner, Masson, Hanford, Kelley, Rumrich, and Lewalski, among others, described Milton as an Arian. Most of those who rejected the attribution and some of those who accepted it—Patrides, Adamson, Hunter, Lieb, and Shawcross—disputed the use of the epithet "Arian" as misleading, anachronistic, inappropriate, and seriously ill-informed.[49]

Early and late, again and again, Milton criticized Arians. In *Of Reformation* (1641), Milton criticized a Roman emperor for being "a flat Arian"; in *Animadversions* (1641), he noted that church fathers worried that "Arians would infect the people with their hymns"; in *Eikonoklastes* (1650) he spoke of "the infections of Arian and Pelagian Heresies."[50] In 1670, after he is presumed to have written *De Doctrina Christiana*, an arguably Arian treatise, Milton explicitly criticized Arians again in *The History of Britain*. There, he wrote disparagingly of "the *Arrian* Doctrine which then divided Christendom, wrought in this Iland no small disturbance: a Land, saith *Gildas*, greedy of every thing new, stedfast in nothing."[51] Milton initiated his history in the 1640s but it was finished much later; John Toland and others note that Milton revised it before publication in

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47. Rumrich, "*Milton's Arianism*: Why it Matters," 79.

48. [Daniel Defoe], *The Political History of the Devil*. There is a superb modern edition of Defoe's initially anonymous work, *The Political History of the Devil*, ed. Irving N. Rothman and R. Michael Bowerman (New York: AMS Press, 2003). For key excerpts, see pages 53–57, 381–84. Milton's name appears in the index more than fifty times. At the International Milton Conference in Strasbourg, Hugh F. Wilson argued that far from endorsing the charge of Arianism, Daniel Defoe satirized Charles Leslie and his accusation. Wilson, "'The Devil in Masquerade': The Criticism of the Theology of *Paradise Lost* in *The Political History of the Devil*: Defoe's Hoax" (presented at Twelfth International Milton Symposium, Strasbourg, France, 20 June 2019).

49. John Shawcross accepts the attribution, but he rejects the charge of Arianism. See *Rethinking Milton Studies: Time Present and Time Past* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 50–51, 103–21, 175 *passim*. Michael Lieb notes that "Milton adopts a stance directly in opposition to Arianism" ("Milton and 'Arianism,'" 203).

50. See the Yale edition of Milton's prose, 1:557, 1:685, 3:507.

51. Yale edition, 5:115. Wilson, "*The History of Britain*: Milton's Casual Disparagement of 'Arian Doctrine.'"

1670. Milton disparaged Arians after (or while) supposedly composing an arguably Arian treatise. This anomaly is a bit awkward for exponents of Milton's authorship.

After Hunter, Shawcross, and others disputed the propriety of the Arian label, some defenders of Milton's authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana* reverted to the vaguer term, "Antitrinitarian." Like the charge of Arianism, this claim relies heavily on the contested attribution. In *Of Reformation*, Milton exalted the Trinity, criticized Arians, and praised Athanasius, the main proponent of Trinitarian ideas. In 1641, Milton speaks of the "faithfull and invincible Athanasius."[52] As late as 1658, while Milton was supposedly composing *De Doctrina Christiana*, he praised the archenemy of Arians, Athanasius, the main antagonist of Antitrinitarian ideas, as one of a number of "most holy fathers."[53]

The author of *De Doctrina Christiana*, which was supposedly composed in 1655–60 or 1655–74, denies the full divinity of Christ and disparages invoking the Holy Ghost; rather than consider the latter as the third personage in the Trinity, the author of *De Doctrina* regards the Holy Ghost as a manifestation of the power of God or as a mere figure of speech. *De Doctrina Christiana* denounces invocations of the Holy Spirit in prayer, but in *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674) Milton invokes the Holy Ghost, in ignorance, or defiance, of the treatise. Shortly before his death, Milton had even republished his explicitly Trinitarian "nativity ode" without significant amendment or comment. This anti-Arian poem was placed as the very first in Milton's 1673 collection, one of his last publications before his death. It seems unlikely that the same man who (at about the same time) wrote the Antitrinitarian treatise also composed the epic and celebrated the Trinity.

3. On Arminianism

The author of *De Doctrina Christiana* was an Arminian; although Todd, Masson, Radzinowicz, Danielson, Lewalski, Rumrich, Fallon, and many others claim that Milton was an Arminian, other reputable scholars argue that Milton was a "moderate Calvinist."[54] The idea that Milton was an Arminian became

52. *Of Reformation*, Yale edition, 1:555.

53. *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, Columbia edition, 7:252–53. A revised edition appeared in 1658.

54. Jonathan Richardson, Father and Son, *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost, with a Life of the Author and a Discourse on the Poem* by Jonathan, Sr. (London: John, James and Paul Knapton, 1734), 104; Bishop Thomas Newton, William Warburton, *Notes on Paradise Lost*, by Newton,

fashionable after Calvinism had declined in popularity and after *De Doctrina Christiana* was attributed to Milton; this relatively modern interpretation is largely predicated on Milton's supposed authorship of the Arminian treatise supplemented by disputed readings of passages from *Areopagitica* or *Paradise Lost*.[55] Milton referred to the "acute and distinct Arminius" as having been

Bentley, Hume, Addison, Warburton, Thyer, Pearce (London: Printed for the Proprietors, 1795), 66; Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart., *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, New Edition (London: William Tegg & Co., 1853), 70, 510; John Hunter of Uxbridge, *The Third, Fourth and Fifth Book of Milton's Paradise Lost* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1872), 17; Joseph Moody McDill, *Milton and the Pattern of Calvinism* (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1938 / Nashville: Joint University Libraries, Private Edition, 1942; reprinted by Folcroft, 1969); James D. Boulger, *The Calvinist Temper in English Poetry* (Hague: Mouton, 1980), 239–60, dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110808728; Grant Horner, "The Heresy of John Milton, Calvinist: Reforming the Puritan Poet with Historical Theology" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, April 2017); Hugh F. Wilson, "The Transmogrification of John Milton" (presented at the 2017 Conference on John Milton, Birmingham, AL, 14 October 2017); Wilson and Clawson, "Another Candidate." Elsewhere, Debora Shuger seems to imply that Milton was a "moderate Calvinist," a "hypothetical universalist" who allowed the possibility of sufficient grace for salvation even to the non-elect, in Shuger, "Milton Uber Alles: The School Divinity of *Paradise Lost* 3.183–202," *Studies in Philology* 107.3 (Summer 2010): 401–15.

55. The other *loci classici* for this debate are passages in *Areopagitica* and book 3 of *Paradise Lost*. In fairness, we have included an ample selection of those scholars who believe Milton was an Arminian. Todd, *Some Account,* 311; Masson, *The Life of John Milton* (1859–1880), 6:xviii, 6:823; Kelley, *This Great Argument*, 14–20, 42–43, 68–69, 72, 82, 100, 204; Gary D. Hamilton, "Milton's Defensive God: A Reappraisal," *Studies in Philology* 69.1 (January 1972): 87–100; John Broadbent, *John Milton: Introductions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 60; Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1977), 131, 152, 190, 251, 311, 315–16, 347, 395, 413; Radzinowicz, 339–47; Dennis Danielson, "Milton's Arminianism and *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 12 (1978): 47–73; Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 2009), 59–60, 75–82, dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511735646; Gale Ernest Carruthers, "John Milton's Arminianism and *Paradise Lost*" (PhD diss., University of California, Northridge, 1982); William B. Hunter, *The Descent of Urania: Studies in Milton, 1946–1988* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 84; Stephen Fallon, "Milton's Arminianism and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 41.2 (Summer 1999): 103–27; Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Shifting Contexts: Reinterpreting Samson Agonistes* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 62; Benjamin Myers, *Milton's Theology of Freedom* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 164, *passim*, dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110919370; Noam Reissner, *John Milton's Paradise Lost* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 47; Stephen Dobranski, "Milton's Social Life," in *Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–24, 20; Catherine Gimelli Martin, *Milton among the Puritans: The Case for Historical Revisionism* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 97; Annabel Patterson, *John Milton* (New York: Longman, 2014), 205, 209, dx.doi.

"perverted."[56] He criticized Arminians and Pelagians throughout his life.[57] Milton never called himself an Arminian, and as far as is known, none of his contemporaries regarded him as such.

4. On mortalism

Finally, although the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* was an exponent of mortalism—the doctrine that the whole person, both body and soul, dies at death[58]—there is no evidence that John Milton agreed; instead, there is evidence to the contrary. Norman T. Burns concedes that Milton's "soul-sleeping ideas, clearly stated only in his unpublished *Christian Doctrine*, lay hidden for almost two centuries."[59] Although Burns tries to claim that "the immortalism of Milton's poetry is no certain evidence of his beliefs," he concedes that "mortalism plays an insignificant role in Milton's poetry and is not even hinted at before the publication of *Paradise Lost*."[60] Without the assumed attribution of *De Doctrina Christiana*, this dubiously imputed doctrine disappears.

Campbell, Shawcross, Anne Coldiron, and Raymond Waddington all voice serious doubts about Milton's supposed mortalism. Campbell observes that in *Paradise Lost*, "Milton's characters discuss the death of man and the death of Christ, and in both cases they contradict the opinions forwarded in *De Doctrina Christiana*."[61] Shawcross remarks, "if 'Lycidas' and 'Epitaphium Damonis' can fully carry the weight of theological interpretation, Milton would

org/10.4324/9781315846217; John Rumrich, "Radical Heterodoxy and Heresy," *A New Companion to Milton* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), 141–56, dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118827833.ch9; Warren Chernaik, *Milton and the Burden of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 142.

56. Milton, *Areopagitica*, 2:313.

57. Many Puritans regarded Arminianism as a revived form of the Pelagian heresy. Milton criticized Pelagians in 1641, 1650, and 1670. See "*Of Reformation*" (1641), 1:533; "Animadversions Upon the Remonstrants Defence Against Smectymnuus" (1641), 1:685; *Eikonoklastes* (1650), 3:507; *The History of Britain* (1670), 5:122, 5:135, 5:137, 5:140.

58. *De Doctrina Christiana*, book 1, chapter 13.

59. Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 148, dx.doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674731622.

60. Burns, 169.

61. Gordon Campbell, "The Mortalist Heresy in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 13 (1979): 33–36, dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.1979.tb00085.x.

seem to have believed that the soul did not die with the body at death."[62] In her discussion of sonnet 14, Coldiron notes that Milton's poem contradicts *De Doctrina Christiana*: the soaring apotheosis of the sonnet, the vision of an ascent to heaven, is "in conflict with the mortalist doctrine Milton was supposedly writing at roughly the same time." Furthermore, the sonnet seems to direct itself "against each tenet of the Mortalist position." Although she tried to reconcile the poem with the orphaned manuscript, Coldiron finds it "hopelessly irreconcilable with the rest of *De Doctrina Christiana*'s mortalist positions." Without committing herself either way, Coldiron raises the uncertain issue of Milton's authorship of the treatise.[63]

Waddington, writing a review of Hill's *Milton and the English Revolution* years before the authorship controversy re-surfaced, is sarcastic: Waddington mimics and mocks Hill's insinuation that he knows what Milton means, and that "'once we have the clue' to Milton's mortalism we 'should not attach too much importance' to nonmortalist sentiments in *Lycidas, Epitaphium Damonis, The Judgment of Martin Bucer*, and Sonnet 14 (317). And so on, for the best part of 500 pages."[64] Without the ascription of the orphaned manuscript to Milton, there is no reason to suspect that Milton composed the mortalist chapter in *De Doctrina Christiana*. The evidence of Milton's poetry makes the charge improbable.

IV. Refining stylometry in stages

Having pointed out the deficiencies in previous stylometry and having noted the contradictions between *De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton's public theology, in the following section we offer an alternative stylometric analysis.

For our own analyses, we standardized by using exhaustive samples of available texts. Rather than select samples from seventeen chapters of *De Doctrina Christiana* and singular samples from control texts, we worked with

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62. John Shawcross, "The Religious Precept," in *John Milton: The Self in the World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993), 247–59, 256.

63. Anne Coldiron, "Milton *in parvo*: Mortalism and Genre Transformation in Sonnet 14," *Milton Quarterly* 28.1 (March 1994): 1–10, 4–5, dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.1994.tb00459.x.

64. Waddington, "Milton Turned Upside Down," *The Journal of Modern History* 51.1 (March 1979): 108–12, 111, dx.doi.org/10.1086/241856.

full texts of each; in the case of the disputed manuscript, from which quotations were removed, our decision to include all fifty chapters of the treatise increased the text size to 79,759 words, nearly doubling the selection available in our previous analysis. Each text was divided as completely as possible into 4,000-word samples; in an attempt to equalize the number of total samples for each test, the part-of-speech bigram analysis, below, used larger sample sizes to account for most words being included in two bigrams.

In the time since the prior research group did most of its work, standard practices in stylometry have evolved. None of these changes diverges widely from the general method used before, especially in the case of rigorous and careful work done on *De Doctrina Christiana*, but they do collectively reshape the results in meaningful ways.

One major difference has been the systematic call to use multiple unrelated tests to verify authorship, as Patrick Juola advocates. Previous work by Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie relies on a single feature set, word frequencies, but Juola's protocol affords greater certainty.[65] Performing multiple evaluations surpasses the reliability of any single evaluation, so our evidence is drawn from three different tests.

1. Most frequent words

Most frequent word analysis—considering frequencies of the most frequent words in text samples—was used in earlier studies of *De Doctrina Christiana*, and it has remained a standard method in stylometry. This method of analysis has been successful in recognizing authorial style in many studies, so it serves as our first analysis of three. Our process differs from earlier work because we use an automated method to choose a much more substantive wordlist; moreover, this kind of analysis provides only one of our three tests.

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65. Patrick Juola, "The Rowling Case: A Proposed Standard Analytic Protocol for Authorship Questions," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 30.1 (October 2015): 100–13, 107, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqv040.
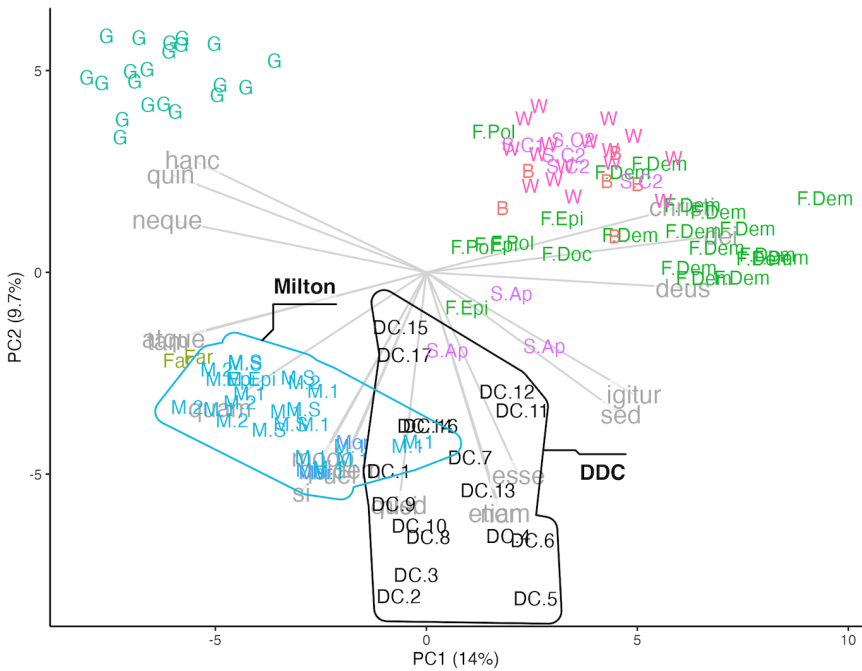
Figure 2. Most frequent word analysis of 4,000-word samples showing Milton's style as distinct. Words were chosen by 75 percent culling. Scaled vectors for the top twenty loadings are projected over the results.

Figure 2 shows significant differences from the charts created in earlier work. While previous studies built a word list of fifty words found in most of the selected samples, our chart is made from 146 words, chosen from among those available in 75 percent of all samples. Our number of samples is greater and the wordlist much larger than in previous studies. The resulting principal components chart shows more distance between *De Doctrina Christiana*, here split between negative and positive values in the first principal component— shown as straddling to the left and right of the centre line on the chart—and Milton's canonical works, which have consistently negative values. The disputed manuscript tends to have higher frequencies of words like "non" and "etiam" (these two words overlap in Figure 2) and "esse" than is typical in Milton's prose works, which are in their own turn stronger in measures of words like "quam." Partitions 1, 14, and 16 of *De Doctrina Christiana* fall near Milton's

Defensio Primo, but 11, 12, 15, and 17 are closer to Jonas Schlichting's *Apologia*; remaining partitions are not noticeably close to any author. Because we consider all of *DDC*, rather than a subset of chapters, we are also able to show a stronger divide among text partitions in the first principal component, with almost half being higher than 1 on the x-axis, and the rest falling below zero.

2. Parts of speech

The second analysis compares the frequencies of part-of-speech bigrams.[66] Using syntactic markers for stylometry is not unprecedented. A 1996 paper by Harald Baayen, Hans van Halteren, and Tweedie shows that "more robust results may be expected with syntax-based methods than with word-based methods"; it concludes that using "function words for classification purposes is an economical way of tapping into the use of syntax."[67] Citing this work, Tweedie's 1997 dissertation acknowledges the importance and superiority of syntax over vocabulary when assessing authorship,[68] but she, too, chooses to measure syntax by considering function words as found in a most frequent word analysis. For that decision, the language of *DDC* presents a problem. The study by Baayen et al. considered only English texts, and the conclusion that function words could stand in for syntax reasonably applies only to languages that operate like English. As later research suggests,[69] Tweedie's choice is less methodologically reliable with regard to highly inflected languages like Latin.[70]

66. Whereas the most frequent word analysis discussed above considers individual words, this part-of-speech analysis looks at speech tags in pairs, or bigrams.

67. Harald Baayen, Hans van Halteren, and Fiona Tweedie, "Outside the Cave of Shadows: Using Syntactic Annotation to Enhance Authorship Attribution," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 11.3 (September 1996): 121–32, 129, dx.doi.org/10.1093/llc/11.3.121.

68. Tweedie, "A Statistical Investigation," 35.

69. Mike Kestemont, "Function Words in Authorship Attribution: From Black Magic to Theory?" in *Proceedings of the 3rd Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Literature* (2014; rpt. Association for Computational Linguistics, 2014), 59–66, 63–64, dx.doi.org/10.3115/v1/W14-0908.

70. Even today, much of the work on stylometry is done on English-language texts using methods that have proven to be well suited to that language. In her 1997 dissertation, Tweedie pointed out that "Latin has remained relatively untouched" by stylometry ("A Statistical Investigation," 63); Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie acknowledge this shortcoming again ten years later, writing that "texts in neo-Latin have received little interrogation from stylometry" (*Milton and the Manuscript*, 69). In her earlier work, Tweedie shows that she understands the danger of repurposing methods that are proven for other languages, pointing out Latin's lack of an article as a hindrance for borrowing stylometric methods

Latin stylometry will be more accurate if it measures syntax by some criterion other than word frequency.

Since function words are insufficient to show syntax, we used an automatic parser, Helmut Schmid's TreeTagger, to tag parts of speech on our entire corpus.[71] Tweedie's dissertation initially shows optimism toward the possibility of using such automatic parsers, but it then dismisses these tools as not yet "perfected."[72] Baayen et al. are hesitant about automatic parsers, too, but they nevertheless advocate follow-up research to assess the potential of using them.[73] Scholarship in the intervening years has shown the viability of these tools,[74] but no such follow-up work studying *De Doctrina Christiana* seems to have been undertaken. The chart that follows in Figure 3 shows our analysis of part-of-speech bigrams.

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used with Greek texts ("A Statistical Investigation," 63), but best practices for Latin had not yet been established. For this reason, previous studies tend to adopt best practices from English.

71. Schmid, TreeTagger: A Part-of-Speech Tagger for Many Languages, 1995, cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger/.

72. Tweedie, "A Statistical Investigation," 35–36.

73. Baayen, Halteren, and Tweedie, 130n9.

74. Shlomo Argamon-Engelson, Moshe Koppel, and Galit Avneri, among others, have demonstrated the effectiveness of using a part-of-speech tagger for attribution. Research also shows the accuracy of these automated tools in tagging grammatical markers. In a recent study by Steffen Eger, Tim vor der Brück, and Alexander Mehler, TreeTagger attained 92 percent accuracy in tagging Latin parts of speech, consistently agreeing with five other taggers more than 90 percent of the time. Although parsers developed more recently than Schmid's have somewhat better accuracy, later work by Eger, Rüdiger Gleim, and Mehler shows these methods to be substantially slower. For its comparable accuracy, greater speed, and longer history of scholarship, we trust TreeTagger's parsing sufficiently to use it for one of our three analyses. Testing these results against those made using a different tagger is left to future study. See Argamon-Engelson, Koppel, and Avneri, "Style-Based Text Categorization: What Newspaper Am I Reading?" in *Proc. of the AAAI Workshop on Text Categorization* (1998), 1–4; Eger, Brück, and Mehler, "Lexicon-Assisted Tagging and Lemmatization in Latin: A Comparison of Six Taggers and Two Lemmatization Methods," in *Proceedings of the 9th SIGHUM Workshop on Language Technology for Cultural Heritage, Social Sciences, and Humanities* (Association for Computational Linguistics; The Asian Federation of Natural Language Processing, 2015), 105–13, 109–10; Eger, Gleim, Mehler, "Lemmatization and Morphological Tagging in German and Latin: A Comparison and a Survey of the State-of-the-Art," in *Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation* (2016), 1507–13, 1509, aclweb.org/anthology/L16-1239.

Figure 3. Part-of-speech bigram analysis. Vectors for the top twenty loadings, scaled, are projected over the results.

Made up from 346 part-of-speech bigrams found in 75 percent of all samples, excluding bigrams with punctuation tags, Figure 3 shows an overlap of Milton's corpus and *DDC* only in selected partitions. Milton's works cluster left of centre, mostly below zero on the y-axis. Their placement here seems to be strengthened by having much lower frequencies of grammatical constructions such as "nominative noun + genitive noun" (shown here as "Nnom_Ngen") and higher frequencies of a few different adverbial constructions, such as "adverb + subjunctive verb" (here "ADV_VSUB") and "pronoun + adverb" (here "PRON_ ADV"). The samples from *De Doctrina Christiana*, meanwhile, seem to show a range of styles, spreading from negative values on the x- and y-axes to positive values in later sections; this transition seems to reflect less frequent use of Milton's typical adverbial constructions while also showing higher frequencies of constructions like "nominative noun + coordinating conjunction" (here

"Nnom_CC"). Partitions 1 through 5 of *DDC* fall close to Milton's first *Defense*, but they also overlap with Jeremias Felbinger's *Epistola*; remaining partitions fall closest to Felbinger's *Epistola* and his *Politicae Christianae.*

3. Character 4-grams

To capture texts' syntactic markers without relying on a parser, our third analysis considers each work in terms of character quadrigrams, or overlapping groups of four letters. In this analysis, each text is broken up into many quadrigrams before these features are counted. The epistle's opening phrase, "Cum ab ineunte superiore saeculo," for instance, becomes a series of many overlapping four-character groupings, including spaces: "cum_", "um_a", "m_ab", "_ab_" "ab_i", "b_in", "_ine", "ineu", et cetera. The list of possible quadrigrams is then limited to those appearing in every text before being counted for frequency in each sample. Although this approach might seem counterintuitive, studies have shown measuring character n-grams to be a highly effective method for authorship attribution, even more effective than measuring most frequent words. This performance gain is even stronger with texts written in a highly inflected language like Latin.[75] As Mike Kestemont shows, this approach allows for the measuring of syntactic "functors," since it simultaneously captures both smaller function words and functional affixes.[76] Results of our character 4-gram analyses are shown below, in Figure 4.

75. Juola, "Authorship Attribution," 296–97; Jan Rybicki and Maciej Eder, "Deeper Delta across Genres and Languages: Do We Really Need the Most Frequent Words?" *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 26.3 (July 2011): 315–21, 320, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqr031. These findings apply unevenly across Latin and Neo-Latin traditions: medieval Latin's spelling inconsistencies leave it resistant to measuring frequencies of character n-grams. See Mike Kestemont, Sara Moens, and Jeroen Deploige, "Collaborative Authorship in the Twelfth Century: A Stylometric Study of Hildegard of Bingen and Guibert of Gembloux," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 30.2 (October 2013): 199–224, 207, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqt063. Unlike medieval texts, those in the Renaissance show greater orthographic regularization of the language, leaving it better suited to the technique.

76. Kestemont, "Function Words in Authorship Attribution," 64.

Figure 4. Character quadrigram analysis of 4,000-word samples. Vectors for "et," "-que," and the top ten loadings are scaled and projected over the results.

Informed by 511 character quadrigrams found in every 4,000-word sample, Figure 4 shows clear results. Milton's works again have negative values in both principal components, shown on the graph by their placement to the bottom left; they seem pushed in this direction by higher frequencies of words, including the clusters "quam," "quid," and "isse," and those ending "-uam" (shown here as "uam_"); lower frequencies of words ending in "-nis" (shown here as "nis_"); and lower frequencies of shorter words like "est" (shown here twice as "est_" and "_est"). Additionally, frequencies for the quadrigrams of "et" and the suffix "-que" (supplementing the top twenty quadrigrams and shown here as "_et_" and "que_") show a slight negative correlation between the two options, with the disputed text making greater use of the former and Milton's canonical works preferring the latter.[77]

77. Although she considered pairs of function word "doubletons" in her dissertation, Tweedie expressly rejected consideration of authors' preference for "-que" versus "et" for the difficulty in recognizing the

Samples from *De Doctrina Christiana* tend to have higher values in the first principal component, shown on the graph by being to the right of Milton's works; partitions 1 and 8 have negative values on this component, with y-axis values that are comparable to those of Milton's first defense. Partitions 4, 5, and 6 cluster unusually to the bottom, far from other sections of *DDC*; these sections, which mostly derive from the manuscript's quotation-heavy chapter 5, might be evidencing some stylistic distortion from the effects of removing those quotations. Partitions 2, 9, and 13 fall closest to samples from Schlichting's *Apologia*. Finally, partitions 14, 15, 16, and 17 settle amid samples by Felbinger's *Epistola* and his *Demonstrationes Christianae,* positioned here because of these texts' higher than typical usage of words ending in "-nis" (shown here as "nis_").

Discussion

In the context of a multiple-elimination suite of tests like that proposed by Juola, analysis depending on the frequencies of Latin words would become a helpful support beam, but it would not bear the full weight of any decision. By contrast, these three independent tests are mutually supportive. Each analysis shows that the later portions of *De Doctrina Christiana*—especially those chapters omitted from previous consideration—are less similar to Milton's works than are earlier portions. None of these analyses confirms that Milton is the likeliest author of the manuscript; in some, especially the analysis of character quadrigrams, Felbinger and Jonas Schlichting seem more likely.

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difference between an enclitic "-que" for *and*, and any other "-que" naturally occurring at the end of a word ("A Statistical Investigation," 112). These two n-grams show negative correlation, with "-que" registering below zero on the first principal component and with "et" scoring above zero. Our corpus includes eighty-nine unique words ending in "-que"; of these, the majority use "-que" conjunctively: *atque, neque, quoque, itaque, denique, usque, que, adeoque, ubique, idque, aeque, eiusque, quisque, undique, utcunque, quaeque, eamque, uterque, utique, cuiusque, absque, cumque, quaecunque, eoque, quique, tamque, eaque, seque, utriusque, deque, quicunque, utrumque, cuique, plerumque, quemque, quocunque, utraque, plerique, ideoque, utrisque, utramque, eosque, isque, iisque, estque, eumque, quacunque, utrobique, quodque, utrinque, eique, eque, quamque, teque, quinque, unicuique, utque, simulque, idemque, quandoque, utrique, plerisque, utroque, hucusque, unusquisque, aliaque, ipsumque, meque, plerunque, eademque, inque, magisque, ubicunque, eorumque, ipseque, quibusque, quoscunque, cunque, iamque, ipsamque, ipsique, oblique, perque, quamcunque, quodcunque, unumquodque, inique, omnique, sibique.*

V. Rediscovering a possible author

On its face, the attribution of *De Doctrina Christiana* to Milton is both traditional and implausible because so many commonplaces are stressed; so many incongruities have to be explained away. So far, the first predicate has been able to suppress recognition of the second. In an attempt to shift the burden of proof for the attribution, partisans ask: If Milton did not compose *De Doctrina Christiana*, who did?

In 1829, Burgess published *Milton Not the Author of the Lately Discovered Arian Work*, De Doctrina Christiana,[78] a suppressed text documenting his speeches before annual meetings of the Royal Society for Literature. Burgess persuaded King George IV to fund the organization, and the bishop served as the society's first president. In one of his annual lectures, Burgess shrewdly hints at the possibility that Felbinger might have composed *De Doctrina Christiana*.[79] More recently, Gabriel Moshenska has discovered a letter in which Burgess explicitly suggests the authorship of Felbinger, or someone like him.[80] Who Felbinger was and how a manuscript of his might have made its way to London is worthy of consideration.

1. Jeremias Felbinger

Jeremias Felbinger (1616– ca. 1690) was a German scholar, a Lutheran who served in the Swedish army, converted to Socinianism, and taught in Poland. Outspoken to the point of imprudence and prone to argue with his non-conformist colleagues, he has been described as a Socinian, an Arian, and an Antitrinitarian. Felbinger was an independent thinker eager to share his ideas, and like the author of the epistle prefacing *De Doctrina Christiana*, he tried to proselytize all of Christendom.[81] Relying on earlier scholars, Earl Morse

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78. Thomas Burgess, *Milton Not the Author of the Lately Discovered Arian Work,* De Doctrina Christiana (London: Thomas Brettell, 1829).

79. Burgess; see the "[First] Discourse" of 1826 (30, 32) and the "[Second] Discourse" of 1827 (57).

80. Moshenska, 2. John Biddle is another possible candidate for authorship. According to H. John McLachlan, he mastered Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Herbert McLachlan, "John Biddle (1616–62), 'Father of English Unitarianism,'" in *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 163–217, 176.

81. Felbinger, *Ad Christianos. Unum altissimum Deum, Patrem Domini ac Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, secundum Sacras Scrìpturas Veteris & Novi Testamenti recte agnoscentes, Jeremiae Felbingeri Epistola:*

Wilbur encapsulates him thus: Felbinger "adopted the Socinian faith, became an ardent opponent of Trinitarian views, and suffered much for his boldness in attacking them"; he "published several religious works, and translated into German a Socinianizing version of the New Testament" by the Arminian theologian Etienne Courcelles; and he became "an eclectic in theology, inclined to Arianism, and therefore was denied a pension by the Socinians, and dragged out a miserable life by teaching and correcting proof."[82] Sometime after the expulsion of Protestant dissidents from Poland about 1660, Felbinger moved to Holland where he seems to have resided until his death.

The author of *De Doctrina* defends Socinian ideas, and Felbinger was a convert to Socinianism. The author of the anonymous treatise was an Arminian who had mastered Greek, just like Felbinger, who had translated Etienne Courcelles's edition of the Greek New Testament into German.[83] *De Doctrina Christiana* contains a possible allusion to Felbinger's translation that is at least as credible as the supposed allusion to *Tetrachordon* championed by Sharon Achinstein and John Hale and challenged by Sellin, Donald Cullington, and Hale.[84] Felbinger, like the author of *De Doctrina Christiana*, was an Antitrinitarian, but Milton, in his canonical works, exalted the Trinity.

In qua Socini & ejus disciplorum errores graviores, suis ipsorum verbis notati, succincte refutantur (Amstelodami, Apud Jocodoum Pluymer, M.D., 1672).

82. Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism, Socinianism and Its Antecedents* (Boston: Beacon, 1943), 573.

83. *Das Neue Testament Treulich aus dem Griechischen ins Deutsche übersetzet*, trans. Jeremias Felbinger (Amsterdam: Christoff Cunraden, 1660). Remonstrants, like Felbinger and the anonymous author of *De Doctrina Christiana*, were Arminians.

84. Hale appears to have changed his position on the supposed allusion to *Tetrachordon*. In her article on *De Doctrina,* Sharon Achinstein criticizes Cullington and Hale's 2012 Oxford edition of *DDC*, finding their claim that the passage in question refers to elsewhere in the treatise itself implausible; see Achinstein, "*De Doctrina Christiana*: Milton's Last Divorce Tract?," *Milton Quarterly* 51.3 (2018): 153–62, 159. Writing with Campbell et al. in 1997, Hale was part of a group praising Sellin's article that challenged the certainty of the allusion to *Tetrachordon*. See Paul R. Sellin, "The Reference to John Milton's *Tetrachordon*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 37.1 (1997): 137–49; see also Campbell, Corns, Hale, Holmes, and Tweedie, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 119–21. In a recent book, Hale claims that there is an allusion to *Tetrachordon* in *De Doctrina Christiana*, but Sellin's detailed counterargument, presented in 1997, is more convincing than a casual assertion; see John Hale, *Milton's Scriptural Theology: Confronting De Doctrina Christiana* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), especially page 2.

Felbinger believed that God the Father was paramount over the Son and the Holy Ghost; he repeatedly disparages the arguments for "the mystery" of the Trinity.

The author of *De Doctrina Christiana* was influenced by materialist ideas; he defends creation *ex deo*, but Milton never does. In some respects, the ideas of the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* resemble the pantheistic materialism of Spinoza. Although Milton might have known of Spinoza through mutual correspondents like Henry Oldenburg, Felbinger seems to have known Spinoza directly: several biographers of Spinoza have suggested that Felbinger taught Spinoza Latin.[85] The famous pupil may have influenced his tutor.

If *De Doctrina Christiana* was primarily composed by Felbinger or some other figure known for heterodox doctrines, then the treatise no longer introduces a quandary in Milton's canon. Nonetheless, Milton would still remain substantially the same figure described by Rumrich in *A Companion to Milton*. As Thomas Corns has remarked, a "Miltonic provenance for *De Doctrina Christiana* is surely not essential for the demonstration of Milton's abiding radicalism."[86]

2. Possible connections: Jeremias Felbinger, John Biddle, and John Milton

Despite the bald assertion that Milton had the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana* among his possessions on his imagined "desk," and despite Hunter's pressured concession to that effect, the support for this claim ultimately relies on the unreliable, disreputable, less-than-honest Skinner.[87]

If Felbinger composed the anonymous treatise attributed to Milton, Biddle could have been the unwitting intermediary. Felbinger and Biddle were in communication; both men were noted for translating Socinian works into their own vernacular. Biddle knew how to get his work into print from prison, and he was determined to publish Antitrinitarian literature. Biddle may have been

85. Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1899), 10n2; Abraham Wolf, *Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man & his Well-being* (London: Russell & Russell, 1910), xxx; Nathan Rotenstreich and Norma Schneider, eds., *Spinoza: His Thought and Work* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, Publications in the Humanities, 1983), 27; Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 364n52.

86. Rumrich, "Radical Heterodoxy and Heresy," 141–56; Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton: The Prose Works* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 141.

87. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 5; Hunter, *Visitation Unimplor'd*, 3.

Felbinger's ad hoc translator or publisher in England, and some of the latter's papers may have been in Biddle's possession. Herbert McLachlan suggests that Biddle, not William Dugard, was the moving spirit behind the publication of the Racovian Catechism that Milton is said to have approved. In turn, McLachlan notes that Joshua Toulmin and Thomas Rees believed that Biddle was behind the English translation as well. In many respects, the translation was a loose paraphrase with interpolations. Biddle, in particular, was known for revising his translations to accord with his own somewhat eccentric theology.[88]

John Biddle had a following: he had a congregation of supporters in London who may have helped him disseminate translations of Socinian literature in English.[89] In addition, members of the Socinian movement made a habit of collaborating on documents like the various editions of the Racovian Catechism.[90] Several of Biddle's contemporaries shared his Antitrinitarian convictions—Paul Best, Nathaniel Stuckey, John Fry, John Farrington, John Knowles, Stephen Nye, and Thomas Firmin—and some of these men might have tried to collaborate on the creation of a common document. That might explain annotations by various amanuenses, what John Hale called "the cobbled-together and all-hands-to-the-pump effort by scribes."[91]

There is a possibility that Biddle's papers may have found their way to John Milton—through government confiscation. Arrests of suspected intellectuals routinely involved examinations or confiscation of their personal papers. As a chronic consequence of his outspoken unorthodoxy, Biddle was arrested

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88. McLachlan, 193–95. On 10 February 1652, John Biddle was released from prison, and that same day a group of ministers complained to the House of Commons that a Latin edition of the Racovian Catechism had begun to circulate. Parliament ordered the print run searched out, found, and burned, but within months of the burning of the Latin edition, an English translation appeared. Biddle was busy translating Socinian works into English. Joshua Toulmin, Thomas Rees, and Herbert McLachlan plausibly attribute the anonymous translation of the Racovian Catechism to John Biddle, but the anonymous tract might be a product of Biddle's circle.

89. McLachlan notes that "Biddle had decided […] to translate several Socinian works into English and circulate them as widely as possible," and conjectures that Biddle was probably behind the publication of the English translation of the Racovian Catechism (McLachlan, 190–91).

90. Similarly, the American Declaration of Independence and the famous Port Huron Statement of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) calling for "participatory democracy," one of the mantras of the sixties, were committee documents.

91. John K. Hale, "Lumpers, Splitters, and Wedges: A Review of William B. Hunter, *Visitation Unimplor'd* […]," *Milton Quarterly* 33.1 (March 1999): 27–30, 27.

repeatedly, his papers were examined, and some of his theologically suspect papers were probably confiscated. When papers, perhaps especially those in foreign languages, were confiscated, John Milton was occasionally ordered (and perhaps expected) to examine them. As Dobranski observes, Milton, as Secretary for Foreign Tongues, and as a licenser, was sometimes instructed "to investigate the papers of suspicious people."[92] This anonymous Latin treatise with suspect theology might have fallen under his purview, and the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana* may have been among his papers when he died.

Nonetheless, contrary to the authors of *Milton and the Manuscript* and Hunter's pressured concession, there is no conclusive proof that *De Doctrina Christiana* was ever in Milton's possession. The main source of the claim that Milton had this particular manuscript is the utterly unreliable opportunist Skinner. Even if the manuscript had been in Milton's possession, that would not prove that Milton composed it. Just as some professors keep copies of student essays, sometimes government officers—like Samuel Pepys, the admiralty official; John Thurloe, Cromwell's spymaster; Lemon, the deputy keeper; and Sumner, the royal chaplain—took official state papers home and kept them among their own writings.[93] During the winter of 1824, Sumner may even have carried the famous manuscript abroad with him when he visited Nice on the Riviera.

Finally, aside from the possibility of a collaborative document misattributed by an honest mistake, the possibility that the text of *De Doctrina Christiana* was a conscious fraud remains; Burgess raised this issue long ago. The elaborate and slanderous fraud attempted by William Lauder, and

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92. Stephen B. Dobranski, *The Cambridge Introduction to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22. See also Dobranski, "The Mystery of Milton as Licenser," in *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125–53. Dobranski's semi-Foucaldian argumentation against autonomous authorship is not persuasive, but he offers interesting facts about Milton's role within the government. Also see Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton*, 244.

93. As a government official, Samuel Pepys generated a voluminous correspondence. He kept many of his state papers as personal property and passed them to his heir. Thomas Birch, ed., "Preface," *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (London: Printed for the Executor of Fletcher Giles, 1742), 1:v. Robert Lemon had private quarters in the same building in which the state papers were housed: see "Obituary: Robert Lemon, F.S.A.," *The Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 4 (September 1835): 326–28. See George Henry Sumner, M. A., *The Life of Charles Richard Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Winchester and Prelate of the Most Noble Order of the Garter During His Forty Years Episcopate* (London: John Murray, 1876), 96.

encouraged by Samuel Johnson, is a case in point.[94] The original manuscript could have been tampered with by Daniel Skinner in the seventeenth century or by John Payne Collier, Lemon, or William Sydney Walker in the nineteenth. Campbell noted the possible involvement of Collier, the infamous scholar-forger; although Arthur and Janet Ing Freeman, Collier's biographers, deny that their subject would have done it, they admit that Collier had been accused and sanctioned for fabrications before 1823.[95] In addition, Campbell suggests that Lemon might have tampered with the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana*.[96] Gabriel Moshenska adds that Lemon was not above fabricating official Masonic documents to advance his career.[97] As Lieb has noted, Walker altered Sumner's translation of *De Doctrina Christiana* to sound more "Miltonic," apparently without Sumner's consent.[98] Lieb also notes that the main evidence for Milton's authorship was the presence of Milton's name on the manuscript (in questionable Latin), and his initials. Several readers, like Ivimey, were disturbed that the manuscript published under Milton's "*superscription*"

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94. In the mid-eighteenth century, William Lauder took excerpts from a Latin translation of *Paradise Lost*, interpolated them into the rare works of obscure Neo-Latin poets, and then claimed to have discovered proof that the too-much-admired John Milton was an unoriginal, hypocritical plagiarist. The involvement of Samuel Johnson, author of a grudgingly hostile biography of Milton, with Lauder's charges is disturbing.

95. Campbell, "The Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 130; Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman, *John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 2:1040–41; see also "The Scrape," in Freeman and Freeman, 1:90–100. The Freemans admit he fabricated a speech in Parliament. Collier respectfully confessed his "error," and then Parliament debated the appropriate punishment. As a consequence, John Payne Collier was arrested, and temporarily imprisoned (1:93).

96. Campbell, "The Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 129–30. In this same article, Campbell expresses some suspicion but follows up with what seems to be a non sequitur: "My suspicion is that in 1823 Lemon discovered an anonymous manuscript that he believed to be Milton's. He was an ambitious and unscrupulous man, and therefore bolstered his claim by entering Milton's name on the manuscript. If he did not have the expertise to forge the name himself, he might have turned to his equally unscrupulous friend John Payne Collier. But the possibility that Lemon or Collier tampered with the manuscript does not discredit Lemon's attribution. The argument about authorship must rest on internal evidence" (130). The last sentence is plausible, but the penultimate sentence is not.

97. Moshenska, 5–6.

98. Lieb, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," 188–89. William Sidney Walker, *The Poetical Remains of William Sidney Walker*, ed. John Moultrie (London: John W. Parker and Sons, 1852).

contradicted Milton's professed theology.[99] Hunter has shown that Milton's name was added to the manuscript posthumously. Lieb and Campbell went so far as to suggest that Milton's name may have been "forged."[100] Whether or not the ascription of the manuscript to Milton was made with malicious intent or in innocent ignorance, the immediate results were the same. Milton's integrity was impugned, his reputation as the great Christian poet was damaged.

VI. Resampling the text

Given these concerns for the manuscript's integrity and unproven provenance, we chose our final stylometric method for its sensitivity to textual instability. "Rolling stylometry" breaks the text up into many overlapping samples to measure authorial signals as the document changes over time. Introduced in 2014 as a way to sequentially analyze texts,[101] the rolling classify feature of the R package "Stylo" as applied to our text defines many windows of 5,000 words, with each window overlapping the previous window by 4,500 words.[102] When using this feature, Stylo compares each 5,000-word sample to a slate of texts in a training corpus. First, depending on the test used, Stylo will either derive an average stylistic profile for each author class in the training corpus (in the case of "Support Vector Machines" and "Nearest Shrunken Centroid" classification), or derive a stylistic profile for each individual text in the training corpus (in the case of the "Delta" classification). Second, Stylo divides the test document into overlapping samples, and measures the stylistic features of each sample. Finally, it compares the features found in each sample to those measured in the training profiles, measuring a list of distances to signify stylistic difference; the training profile with the lowest distance is named as the likeliest match for that section of the text.

99. Joseph Ivimey, *John Milton: His Life and Times, Religious and Political Opinions* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1833), 285.

100. Lieb, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," 173–74; Campbell, "The Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 129–30.

101. Jan Rybicki, David Hoover, and Mike Kestemont, "Collaborative Authorship: Conrad, Ford and Rolling Delta," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 29.3 (April 2014): 422–31, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqu016.

102. Maciej Eder, "Rolling Stylometry," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 31.3 (April 2015): 457–69, 458–60, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqv010.

We used the "Nearest Shrunken Centroid" (NSC) test because it has been shown to be the most reliable.[103] Since the selection of texts for comparison is paramount in any attribution study, we took pains to regularize our training corpus for size and selection. First, we selected a corpus of likely authors that eliminated verse works, any works shorter than 5,000 words, and any unrepresentative works, thereby dropping Farrington, along with Milton's poems. Second, we excluded Schlichting's earlier edition of *Confessio Fide Christianae*, since its similarity to the much expanded later edition might skew the tests' measurement of his style; together, these first two steps lowered the number of texts in our corpus from seventeen to fourteen. Third, since this corpus included an imbalance in texts by each author, we limited each author to no more than three texts, thereby dropping Milton's *Epistolarum* and Felbinger's shortest work, *Doctrina de Deo et Christu et Spiritu Sancto*. Fourth, using AntFileSplitter,[104] we divided every remaining text into 5,000-word samples, dropping any remaining words; this step yielded eighty-two samples, ranging from one sample in the shortest texts to seventeen samples in the longest. Fifth, to regularize text size to avoid long texts weighing overly on the results, we chose no more than three representational samples from each text, including the first sample, the final full sample, and a sample chosen as near as possible to the centre of each text, thus accounting for the possibility of any text exhibiting stylistic change over time; this step yielded a corpus of twelve texts spread over thirty-two files, with nine samples by Milton, seven samples by Felbinger, six by Schlichting, one by More, and three each from Biddle, Gott, and Wolleb. Finally, because the NSC test requires multiple training documents per author, we dropped the single sample from More. Results will always be limited by the selection of candidates, but we have tried to choose carefully. We measured features three different ways, matching these to the three feature sets used earlier in the article.

In the figures resulting from these analyses, length along the x-axis indicates the progress of *De Doctrina Christiana* from beginning to end, dashed vertical lines indicate chapter divisions, and the width of the darker bar shows

103. Matthew L. Jockers and Daniela M. Witten, "A Comparative Study of Machine Learning Methods for Authorship Attribution," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 25.2 (April 2010): 215–23, 220, doi. org/10.1093/llc/fqq001.

104. Laurence Anthony, *AntFileSplitter* (version 1.0.0, 2017), laurenceanthony.net/software/antfilesplitter/.

the relative size of each of the 134 overlapping windows of 5,000 words. The chart can be read by paying attention to the colours below and above the central line for each of the passages from beginning to end. Below the central line, bars indicate the likeliest author of that particular section, with longer bars indicating greater probability; bars above the central line indicate the second-likeliest candidate of that particular section, with probability again indicated by size of the bars. Where no bar appears above the central line, the model shows very high confidence in the first candidate.
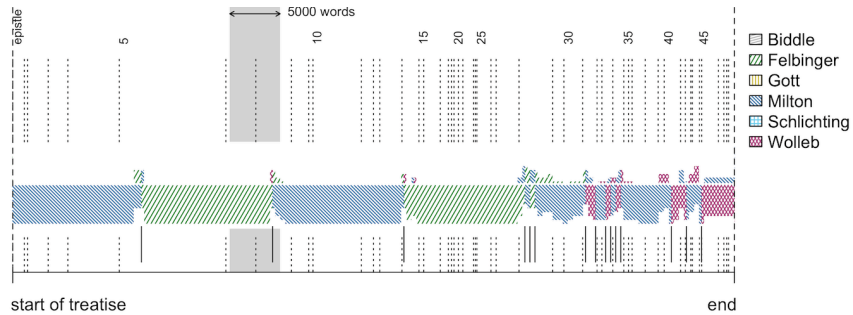
1. NSC with most frequent words

Figure 5. Rolling stylometry of 324 most frequent words found in 75 percent of the samples using NSC Classification.

Figure 5 shows the results of measuring 324 most frequent words in the texts, using Nearest Shrunken Centroid (NSC) classification. As the figure shows, this method divides the first half of the manuscript into sections better matching the style of Milton and others closer to that of Felbinger. Milton's signal is strongest from the epistle into the start of chapter 5, and it returns halfway through chapter 7, sustaining through chapter 13; after this point, beginning around chapter 28, it returns intermittently until the end. The early Miltonic signal is expected: many previous studies have argued for the epistle's similarities to Milton's style. Chapter 5's stylistic similarity to Felbinger's writing seems noteworthy considering Pittion's recognition of Socinian beliefs in that chapter. Likewise, the Miltonic signal through chapter 10 may be worthy of attention, considering speculations by Hunter and others that the chapter may have been inserted

into the manuscript.[105] The style of the final five chapters seems most closely to match Wolleb. For this most frequent word analysis, which measures some of the same characteristics considered in *Milton and the Manuscript*, Milton was named the most likely candidate for 55.2 percent of the 134 samples, while Felbinger was the top candidate for 38.1 percent, and Wolleb for 6.7 percent.
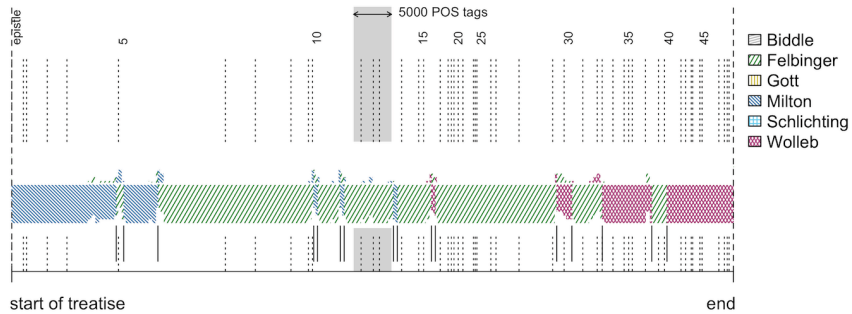
2. NSC with parts of speech

Figure 6. Rolling stylometry of 474 most frequent POS bigrams found in 75 percent of the samples using NSC Classification.

Analysis of part-of-speech bigrams finds some of the same trends in the text, with a few notable distinctions. As Figure 6 shows, Milton's style is once again closest to the style of the manuscript in the epistle and early chapters, but this signal does not significantly return after receding in chapter 5. Milton's style registers as the most likely candidate only briefly at the beginning of chapter 10, midway through that same chapter, and then part of the way into chapter 13. For the lion's share of the treatise, Felbinger's style registers most strongly, with Wolleb's style occasionally interrupting from chapter 29 until taking over completely for the last ten chapters. For this analysis of grammar and sentence structure, features which were not considered in previous studies of the treatise, Milton's style registered as the most likely candidate for 19.3 percent of the samples; Felbinger was the top candidate for 63.5 percent, and Wolleb for 17.1 percent.

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105. Campbell et al. mention a paper by Hunter in private circulation, in *Milton and the Manuscript*, 78.

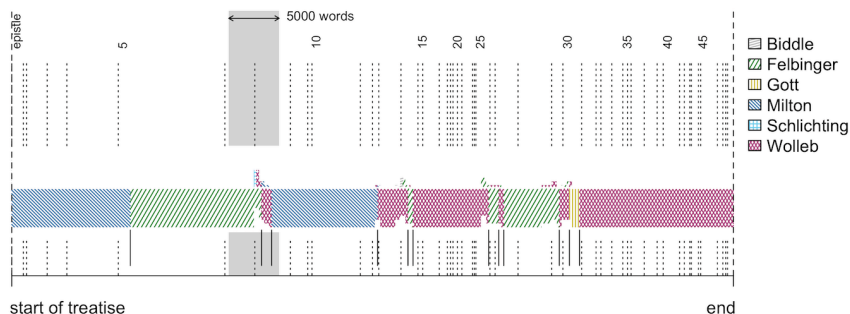## 3. NSC with most frequent characters

Figure 7. Rolling stylometry of 884 most frequent character quadrigrams found in 100 percent of the samples using NSC classification.

Using rolling stylometry when measuring character quadrigrams yields results in support of both previous tests. Except in the epistle through chapter 4 and again in chapters 7 through 12, Figure 7 shows a weak Miltonic signal in the text. Chapters 5–6 and 26–28 seem to feature a style most closely resembling that of Felbinger, and the rest of the treatise seems closer to the style of Wolleb. For this analysis of most frequent character quadrigrams, attuned to measure grammatical functors embedded within word parts, Wolleb was the likeliest candidate for 38.8 percent of the samples, Milton and Felbinger each matched as top candidates for 29.9 percent of the samples, and Gott rounded out for 1.5 percent.

Discussion

Rolling stylometry with NSC classification only partially confirms findings of previous research that portions of *De Doctrina Christiana* "approximate very closely to Milton's practice in his Latin *Defences*."[106] Of note, the epistle and the first four chapters bear markers of Milton's signature style in their choice of function words, shown by most frequent words; in their use of grammatical constructions, shown by part-of-speech bigrams; and in their constitution of word parts, shown by character quadrigrams. These same analyses show consistently strong indications of style reminiscent of Felbinger in chapters

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106. Campbell et al., *Milton and the Manuscript*, 80.

5–6, and strong indicators of style similar to that of Wolleb for the end of the treatise. Where tests differ, the waters become murkier, with two thirds of the tests naming Milton as the likeliest candidate for chapters 10 through 12, and two thirds pointing to Felbinger for chapters 16 through 28. Results from these NSC classifications also confirm preliminary principal components analysis in our study, which shows later sections of the manuscript exhibiting stylistic markers dissimilar to those found in works by Milton.

It is unknown whether *De Doctrina Christiana* presents a text of patchwork provenances compiled by some unknown person, as suggested by previous research; the stark differences between the earlier chapters and the later do not discount such a hypothesis. But as Felbinger's style is the only one registering across the length of the treatise, bridging the chasm between the first half and the second, the law of parsimony would advise us to place the Socinian high on the list of candidates for authorship of the anonymous work.

Conclusions

Honest research, even research predicated on a questionable or mistaken premise, can often yield valuable insights that facilitate successive approximations of an elusive truth. Milton is one of the most demanding and rewarding of authors, and all manner of scholarship continues to enrich our appreciation of his work. On the question of the authenticity of *De Doctrina Christiana*, our research has led us to question incumbent opinion.

Sometimes traditional philology and innovative stylometry concur and converge. In this case, philological evidence suggests that Jeremias Felbinger, or someone like him, is a much more plausible candidate for the authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana* than is John Milton. Several distinct modes of stylometric analysis suggest that Felbinger's characteristic style is often closer to the style of most of the anonymous treatise than is the style of John Milton. Stylometry offers methods to unearth the parentage of works orphaned in anonymity; it offers a potentially Solomonic way to analyze collaborations or to disambiguate snarled canons attributed to multiple authors. Traditional philological research can provide a useful frame of reference and stylometry can test conjectures; each academic discipline can serve as a check on the other.

Accumulated anomalies prompt the need for a paradigm shift. In another context, John Shawcross and David Loewenstein have already suggested "rethinking" Milton studies; in light of new insights made possible by digital methods, much of the Milton scholarship of the last century may need to be "re-thought," reappraised, and revised.