

**JOHN MILTON'S  
LAST THOUGHTS  
ON THE TRINITY**

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John Milton's Last Thoughts on the Trinity by John Milton

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EXTRACTED

FROM HIS POSTHUMOUS WORK

ENTITLED

"A TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE  
COMPILED FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ALONE."  
LATELY PUBLISHED BY ROYAL COMMAND.

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1828.

## PREFACE.

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THE literary and religious public were exceedingly gratified to learn, about three years ago, that a work of our great Milton's, on the subject of religion, had been discovered entire in the State-Paper Office; and still more to receive it from the press by command of His present Majesty,—a truly Royal Gift. The Treatise was written in Latin; and by order of the King, not only was the original published, but it was also accompanied by a translation, executed by His Majesty's Librarian, Mr. Prebendary Sumner, now Bishop of Winchester. The Translation makes a large and expensive quarto volume, and is therefore scarcely within the reach of the majority of theological readers: it has therefore been thought desirable to re-translate the general Preface,

which breathes a fine spirit of religious liberty, worthy of the illustrious author, and to republish portions of the chapters on the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. By these it will be seen that Milton is henceforth to be ranked amongst those Christian Scholars, a numerous and honourable class, who have rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, as an unscriptural innovation, and a corruption of the pure doctrine of Christ. It may surely suffice to shield Unitarian Christians from some of the reproaches which are so frequently cast upon them,—that to them belongs a triumvirate of intellect, wisdom, learning and piety, which cannot be paralleled, in the immortal names of LOCKE, NEWTON and MILTON.

## JOHN MILTON,

TO ALL THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST,  
AND TO ALL  
WHO PROFESS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH  
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD,  
PEACE, AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE TRUTH,  
AND ETERNAL SALVATION  
IN GOD THE FATHER, AND IN OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST.

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SINCE the beginning of the last century, when Religion, having been defiled with endless corruptions for more than thirteen hundred years, began to regain somewhat of her original purity, many treatises of a purer theology have appeared, in which almost every point of Christian doctrine hath, one by one, been set forth, sometimes in brief, sometimes in a more enlarged and detailed form. Why, therefore, I have not been deterred from a like attempt,—on the one hand by resting satisfied in what hath hitherto been done, supposing the subject to have been skilfully handled, or on the other, by the failure of those who have gone before me,—it is right that I should in the first place explain.



If I were to say that I had given myself up to the study of the Christian Religion, because nothing else can so thoroughly eject and remove from the minds and lives of men those two most foul curses, slavery and superstition, I might seem to have been moved by a regard to the highest benefits of this life, rather than by a zeal for Religion. But since God hath opened to every man the way to eternal salvation only through his own belief, and since he requires that he who would be saved should stand upon his own faith, I resolved, in matters of Religion, to rest on the faith or judgement of no man; but having drawn my belief from Divine Revelation alone, nothing being neglected which depended on my own industry, I determined to search out and settle each point of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Scriptures of God themselves.

In stating what has been profitable to myself, I have a respect to such as may come after me, whom I would invite to walk in the same path. In my youth I applied myself assiduously to the study of each Testament in its own tongue, at the same time going diligently through some shorter systems of divines; and after their example, I used myself to class under certain heads such passages of Scripture as I might extract, with a view to future examination. I was now prepared with more confidence to read larger theological works, and to

examine the arguments touching certain disputed points of faith. But to say the truth with frankness and with candour, I was often grieved to find the arguments of an opponent either evaded by wretched shifts, or attempted to be answered by specious rather than by solid arguments; by an ostentatious display of sophisms, or by a resort to the empty quibbles of the grammarians; while that which was obstinately proclaimed as truth, appeared to be defended rather with a love for contention, than by power of argument, either by a wresting of the Scriptures, or by hasty conclusions from mistaken inferences. Hence truth was often bitterly opposed as error or heresy; while errors and heresies were regarded as truths, and valued more from custom or from party spirit than the authority of the Scriptures.

Since then to such guides as these, neither my creed nor my hopes of salvation could safely be committed, and it was yet needful that I should possess some methodical tractate or disquisition on the Christian doctrine, which might confirm my faith and assist my memory, nothing seemed safer or more advisable than the compilation of some original treatise, drawn with care and study from the Word of God alone, and executed with all faithfulness, seeing that motive for self-deceit in this matter I could have none. This plan having persevered in for some years most diligently,

I found the strong holds of the Reformed Religion were fortified with ample strength against the Papists, though in many other respects insufficiently provided with bulwarks or defenders. I then readily saw, that the doctrines even of Religion were offered, not to indolent credulity, but to constant diligence and an unwearied searching out of the truth; and that there remained yet much more than I had thought, which required to be rigidly tried by the rule of Scripture, and more accurately reformed. And thus I have been enabled to discern and distinguish in sacred things between such as were matters of belief, and such as were only matters of opinion. It was a great comfort to me, that by God's assistance I had acquired such a firm support to my faith, yea such a treasure, as would no longer leave me in doubt, if required to give a reason for the hope that is in me.

If I open such a treasure to all; if, as I call God to witness, it is with brotherly love to the whole human race, that I desire to spread this (beyond which I have nothing better or more precious) as widely and as freely as I can,—my hope is, that it be received in the same kind spirit, and not with an uncandid and hostile feeling, even though it will be seen that I have brought many points into light which are opposed to certain received opinions.

To such as hate not the truth do I appeal: