

**MILTON ON THE SON OF  
GOD AND THE HOLY  
SPIRIT, FROM HIS TREATISE  
ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

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Milton On the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, from his Treatise on Christian doctrine by John Milton & Alexander Gordon

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**JOHN MILTON & ALEXANDER GORDON**

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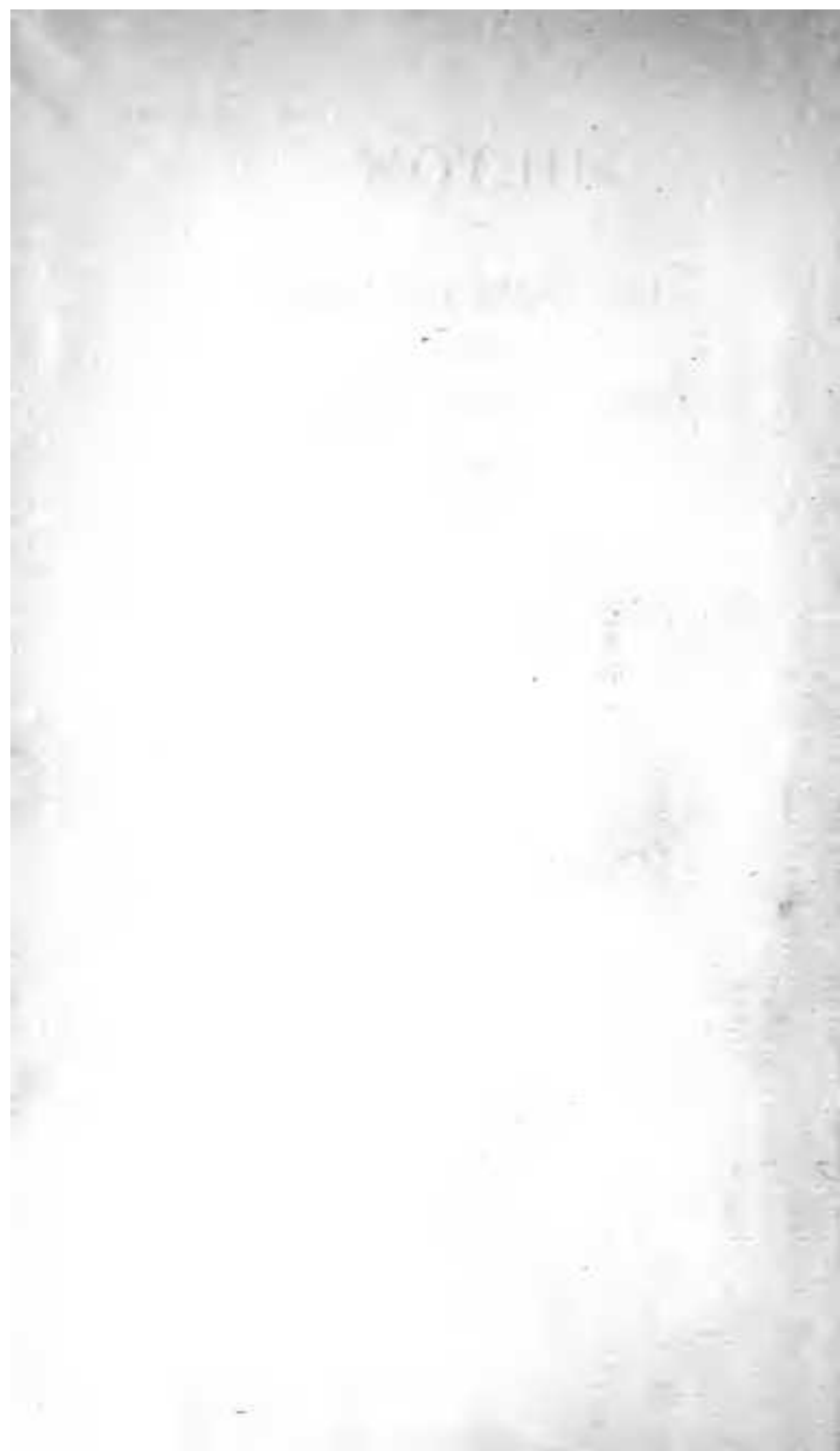


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and  
The Holy Spirit

FROM HIS TREATISE  
On Christian Doctrine

WITH INTRODUCTION BY  
ALEXANDER GORDON, M.A.

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the sixth volume (published 1880) of his *Life of John Milton*, the late Professor Masson writes: 'Two of his manuscripts about which, as we know, he was especially anxious just before his death [which occurred on 8 November, 1674] were the small one containing the fair transcript of his *Latin Letters of State* and the much larger one containing that complete *Treatise of Christian Doctrine* or *Systematic Body of Divinity*, on which he had so long been engaged.' These manuscripts were left by Milton 'to the charge of the young scholar, Daniel Skinner, B.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge, who had for some time been his amanuensis'; apparently 'on the understanding that Skinner would do his best to have the two books printed in Holland.' On 20 November, 1676, Daniel Elzevir writes to Sir Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State, that about a year before he had agreed with Skinner to print both manuscripts, but having found 'things which I judged fitter to be suppressed than published, I resolved to print neither the

one nor the other.' On 19 February, 1677, he writes to Skinner's father, a London merchant, stating that he will send him the manuscripts, to be placed in Williamson's hands. They came to London in a parcel addressed *To Mr. Skinner, mercht*; the parcel was put into a press in the old State Paper Office in Whitehall; and there, in the latter part of 1823, this parcel was discovered by Robert Lemon, the deputy-keeper, among papers of 1677, 1678, and 1683.

By command of George IV, the editing of the treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* was entrusted to his then librarian and historiographer, Charles Robert Sumner, afterwards successively bishop of Llandaff (1826) and Winchester (1827). In 1825 Sumner published simultaneously the Latin treatise, and an English translation (revised by William Sidney Walker, a classic scholar of high rank, and a well-known Shakespearean critic). The Latin original was reprinted at Brunswick in 1827. The English translation was reproduced at Boston, Mass., in 1825 (giving rise to Channing's remarkable *Essay on Milton*); it was also included in the fourth and fifth volumes (1853) of the edition of Milton's Prose Works in Bohn's Standard Library.

Though thus placed 'before the world, it seems to have found few real readers,' writes Masson. Yet he adds that 'it is not to be overlooked or dismissed carelessly. Not only does it throw

light upon *Paradise Lost*, not only does it form an indispensable commentary to some obscure parts of that poem by presenting in explicit and categorical prose what is there imaginatively assumed and even veiled; but it tells us a good deal about Milton and his opinions besides, peculiarly and even oddly characteristic, that we should not have known otherwise, or should have known but vaguely.'

To this neglect of Milton's own exposition of his ultimate views on theology, we must ascribe the attempts which from time to time have been made to identify him with opinions which he decisively rejected.

In 1679, Titus Oates, dedicating to the King his *True Narrative of the Horrid Plot*, etc., asserts that 'Milton was a known frequenter of a Popish Club.' In 1684, Thomas Long, in his *Compendious History of all the Popish and Fanatical Plots*, etc., affirms that 'Milton was by very many suspected to be a Papist, and if Dr. Oates may be believed, was a known frequenter of the Popish Club, though he were Cromwell's Secretary.' Milton's younger brother, Christopher, was deputy-recorder of Ipswich at the time of the poet's death. Later than this, according to his biographer (Mr. J. M. Rigg, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*) 'he was, or professed to be, a Roman Catholic, and accordingly, though no great lawyer, was raised by James II to the Exchequer