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Timor Dei and *Timor Idololatricus* from Reformed Theology to Milton

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the unexplored concept of *timor idolatricus* (idolatrous fear) together with the more familiar notion of *timor Dei* (fear of God) in Reformed theology and the works of John Milton (1608–74). After reviewing treatments of *timor Dei* from Augustine to Calvin, this study turns to *timor Dei* and *timor idolatricus* in Milton, with the origins of the latter located in the Reformed compendia of Amandus Polanus (1561–1610) and his student Wollebius (1589–1629). Opposed to *timor Dei*, *timor idolatricus* signifies the dread afforded to idols. For Milton, as for Polanus, this notion can be applied to Catholic forms of idolatry, but its principal sense is fear of the pagan gods. In offering a demonic reflection of *timor Dei*, the concept of *timor idolatricus* points to the commonality of religious dread in pagan and Christian worship, while also reminding the Reformed of the fear due to God.

Ante omnia igitur opus est dei timore converti ad cognoscendam eius voluntatem, quid nobis appetendum fugiendumque praecipiat. Timor autem iste cogitationem de nostra mortalitate et de futura morte necesse est incutiat et quasi clavatis carnibus omnes superbiae motus ligno crucis affigat.

It is therefore necessary above all else to be moved by the fear of God towards learning his will: what it is that he instructs us to seek or avoid. This fear will necessarily inspire reflection about our mortality and future death, and by nailing our flesh to the wood of the cross as it were crucify all our presumptuous impulses.[1]

Fear of God (*timor Dei*), according to Augustine, turns one toward the divine will by quelling one's impulses of pride (*superbiae motus*) with thoughts of mortality. In the scheme articulated in Book 2 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, from which the passage above derives, *timor Dei* constitutes the crucial first stage of the ascent to wisdom (*sapientia*), in line with the familiar biblical dictum: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*initium sapientiae timor Domini*).[2] Elsewhere Augustine writes that "a most

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[1]Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62–63 (2.7.9).
[2]Ps. 111:10 / Prov. 1:7, 9:10, quoted at Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 66–67 (2.7.11). See Brian Dobell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion: The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 206–7.

salutary terror" (*saluberrimo terrore*) is a fundamental factor in conversion: "Surely it rarely, or really never, occurs that anyone approaches wanting to become a Christian who has not been struck by some fear of God."[3] Augustine takes care to distinguish this chaste fear (*timor castus*), which draws us toward God, from servile fear (*timor servilis*), or a base fear of retribution: "There is servile fear, and there is chaste fear; there is the fear that you may suffer punishment, there is another fear that you may lose justice."[4] There is little if anything meritorious about *timor servilis* – "What great thing is it to fear punishment?," asks Augustine[5] – but *timor Dei*, properly conceived, acts as a catalyst of conversion and as an impetus for the ascent toward holy *sapientia*.

The Augustinian theology of fear would prove influential among scholastic theologians like Peter Lombard (1096–1160) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), who adopted the distinction between *timor servilis* and *timor castus* or *filialis* ("filial") while further identifying a fear of worldly things (*timor mundanus*), which precedes even the servile fear of punishment, as well as an imperfect form of filial fear (*timor initialis*).[6] Unlike Augustine, Aquinas recognized the benefit of *timor servilis*, in that it orients one, if only superficially, toward God, beginning the progress that ultimately leads to true *timor filialis*.[7] This was a point that became contested by the early Reformers. The famous Leipzig disputation held by Johannes Eck (1486–1543) and Martin Luther (1483–1546) in July 1519 treated *timor Dei* in relation to the subject of penitence. While Eck argued for the Thomistic view that fear of punishment constitutes a necessary first step toward filial fear, Luther countered that his opponent had "confused" (*confundat*) the two types of fear: for Luther *timor filialis*, bestowed by the grace of God, is indeed "the beginning of wisdom" (*principium sapientiae*), but *timor servilis*, whose object is mere punishment, is "rather the beginning of folly" (*potius principium insipientiae*).[8] Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), in the 1543 edition of his *Loci Theologici*, likewise interprets *timor servilis* in wholly negative terms, as "dread without faith" (*pavor sine fide*):

> Timor servilis est pavor sine fide et reipsa fugit Deum, sed timor filialis est pavor, ad quem accedit fides, quae inter pavores erigit et consolatur animum, et accedit ad Deum, petit et accipit remissionem.[9]

> Servile fear is a dread without faith and in itself flees God, but filial fear is a dread to which faith is added, which amid these terrors raises up and comforts the soul, and approaches God, asks and receives forgiveness.

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[3]"Rarissime quippe accidit, immo vero numquam, ut quisquam veniat volens fieri Christianus, qui non sit aliquo Dei timore perculsus." Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, ed. William Yorke Fausset (London: Methuen & Co., 1915), 26 (5.9). Translations in this article are my own except where otherwise indicated.

[4]"est timor servilis, et est timor castus; est timor ne patiaris poenam, est alius timor ne amittas iustitiam." Augustine, Augustine, *Opera Omnia. Tomus Decimus Quintus. Operum Pars III. Opera Exegetica. In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, ed. D. A. B. Caillau and D. M. N. S. Guillon (Paris: Parent-Desbarres, 1838), 475 (43.7).

[5]"Quid magnum est timere poenam?" Ibid.

[6]See Robert Miner, "Thomas Aquinas's Hopeful Transformation of Peter Lombard's Four Fears," *Speculum* 92, no. 4 (2017): 963–75.

[7]See Ibid., 968–9.

[8]See Pietro Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son: The Pastoral Uses of a Biblical Narrative (c. 1200–1550)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 377–9.

[9]Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Theologici Recens Recogniti* (Wittenberg: Peter Seitz, 1543), sig. n4r. On Melanchthon's earlier perspective on *timor Dei* see Herman Speelman, *Melanchthon and Calvin on Confession and Communion: Early Modern Protestant Penitential and Eucharistic Piety* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 133–41, and "Melanchthon's Innovative Contribution on Penance in 1527: A Corrective Addendum to Luther?," *Westminster Theological Journal* 81 (2019): 49–70.

Near the beginning of the *Institutio* John Calvin (1509–64) similarly contrasts the "voluntary fear which flows from reverence of the divine majesty" with the *timor servilis* of the impious, the "servile and forced fear which the judgment of God wrenches out of them."[10] While the *timor filialis* due to God arises from the *sensus divinitatis* implanted in all human beings, Calvin recognizes in *timor servilis* a reflection of the Epicurean notion that religion begins in fear: "To impiety, and to this alone, does that dictum of Statius properly correspond, that fear first made gods in the world."[11]

The words cited by Calvin are spoken in the epic *Thebaid* of Statius, the first-century Roman poet, by Capaneus, a notorious blasphemer against the gods whom Dante (1265–1321) in his *Commedia* condemned to the seventh circle of Hell.[12] Calvin does not, however, directly address the kind of religious fear that is associated with the veneration of the pagan gods and other idols. The remainder of this article will bring attention to the later development of a concept of *timor idololatricus* (idolatrous fear) in Reformed theological thought and explore its implications in the works of John Milton.

Michael Lieb has rightly stressed the importance of *timor Dei* in Milton's theological thought.[13] This topic is treated directly in Milton's theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*,[14] in which *timor Dei* is considered an integral part of the worship (*cultus*) of the deity: "Fear of God is that by which we revere God as supreme father of all and judge and supremely fear offending him."[15] Even the semantics of the verb *reveremur* suggest the close association between worship of God and divine terror: the word

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[10]"voluntario … timore, qui ex divinae maiestatis reverentia fluat" and "servili & coacto quem illis Dei iudicium extorquet." John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis* (Geneva: Robert Estienne, 1559), 5. On Calvin's conception of *timor Dei* see Heiko A. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*: The Conversion of John Calvin," in *Reformiertes Erbe*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman et. al.,, 2 vols. (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1992–1993), II.279–95, at 290–3 and Cornelis P. Venema, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ: The "Twofold Grace of God" and the Interpretation of Calvin's Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 113–8.

[11]"Siquidem convenienter in impietatem, atque in hanc solam, competit illud Statii, Timorem primum, fecisse in orbe deos." Calvin, *Institutio*, 5. Calvin's citation of Statius in relation to impiety is drawn on in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae, Disputationibus Quinquaginta Duabus Comprehensa* (Leiden: Elzevir, 1625), an influential textbook of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy written by four professors at the University of Leiden (Johannes Polyander, Andreas Rivetus, Antonius Walaeus, and Anthonius Thysius); see Riemer A. Faber, "Scholastic Continuities in the Reproduction of Classical Sources in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*," *Church History and Religious Culture* 92, no. 4 (2012): 561–79, at 567–70, and on other aspects of the *Synopsis* see the other articles in the same issue.

[12]Statius, *Thebaid, Volume I: Books 1–7*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 198 (3.661). On Dante and Statius see inter alia C. S. Lewis, "Dante's Statius," *Medium Aevum* 25, no. 3 (1956): 133–9 and George F. Butler, "Statius and Dante's Giants: The *Thebaid* and the *Commedia*," *Forum Italicum* 39, no. 1 (2005): 5–17.

[13]Michael Lieb, "'Our Living Dread': The God of *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 3–25, republished in *Theological Milton: Deity, Discourse and Heresy in the Miltonic Canon* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 184–209.

[14]On *De Doctrina* see esp. Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941); Lieb, *Theological Milton*, passim; and John K. Hale, *Milton's Scriptural Theology: Confronting De Doctrina Christiana* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019). In recent decades there has been some debate over the authorship of the treatise, beginning with a paper delivered at the Fourth International Milton Symposium in August 1991 at the University of British Columbia which was later published as William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 32, no. 1 (1992): 129–42; papers by the respondents on the panel, Barbara Lewalski and John Shawcross, were published, together with a short reply from Hunter, in the same issue in "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 32, no. 1 (1992): 143–66. Much else has been written on the topic since, but most important is the collaborative effort of 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), which offers convincing support for the traditional attribution of the treatise to Milton.

[15]"Timor Dei est quo Deum sicut summum patrem omnium et iudicem reveremur, eiusque offensionem summe timemus." John Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton Volume VIII: De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), II.952. Translations of Milton's Latin are adapted from this edition.

means at once revere and reverence, stand in awe of, fear.[16] This is among those many places in the text where Milton has appropriated the words of Johann Wolleb, or Wollebius.[17] Wollebius, a Swiss Calvinist theologian whom Milton accounted, according to his nephew Edward Phillips (1630-c.96), among "the ablest of Divines,"[18] provided what one might even go so far as to call a base text for *De Doctrina* with his *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (1626).[19] Notwithstanding major theological divergences (not least its antitrinitarianism),[20] *De Doctrina* not only assumes much of the structure of Wollebius' *Compendium* but sometimes even adapts its diction, as here with Wollebius' definition of *timor Dei*: "Fear of God is that by which we so revere the Word and Majesty of God that we avoid offense of the so beneficent Father in any way, not so much out of dread of punishment as love of God."[21] John Hale, writing in this journal, has recently called for greater attention to Milton's Latin and its differences with the text of Wollebius,[22] and this passage affords an example of the profit to be gained from such source criticism. Milton's alterations, though slight, are telling. Instead of Wollebius' "beneficent Father" (*benigni Patris*), *De Doctrina* has the more stern "supreme father of all and judge" (*summum patrem omnium et iudicem*). Wollebius writes that "we avoid offense" (*offensam … praecaveamus*) not out of "dread of punishment" (*poenae formidine*) but out of "love of God" (*Dei amore*), while Milton states more starkly: "we supremely fear offending him" (*eiusque offensionem summe timemus*). Finally, unlike Wollebius, Milton deploys a succession of biblical verses as textual support, including those that enjoin believers to "exult with trembling" (*exultate cum tremore*, Ps. 2:11) and "prepare your own salvation with fear and trembling" (*cum timore ac tremore vestrum ipsorum salutem conficite*, Phil. 2:12).[23] The differences are clear. Wollebius takes care to associate *timor Dei* with a benign deity and the love that he evokes; Milton prefers a theology of fear and trembling before his sublime God. His God does not only provoke but *is* dread, as Milton recognizes in the Hebrew divine name *pachad yitschaq* ("the fear of Isaac") when, citing Gen. 31: 53 "Jacob swore by the dread of his father" (*iuravit Iacob per pavorem patris sui*), he adds the gloss "that is, God" (*i.e. Deum*).[24]

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[16]Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), s.v. *revereor*: "to stand in awe or fear of; to regard, respect, honor; to fear, be afraid of; to reverence, revere."

[17]Maurice Kelley, "The Composition of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*—The First Stage," in *Th'Upright Heart and Pure: Essays on John Milton Commemorating the Tercentenary of the Publication of Paradise Lost*, ed. Amadeus P. Fiore (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1967), 39 notes the "close verbal agreement" without further comment.

[18]"The Life of Mr. John Milton, by Edward Phillips, 1694," in *The Early Lives of Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), 49–82, at 61.

[19]On Wollebius' influence on *De Doctrina* see Arthur Sewell, *A Study of Milton's Christian Doctrine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939); T. S. K. Scott-Craig, "Milton's Use of Wolleb and Ames," *Modern Language Notes* 55, no. 6 (1940): 403–7; Maurice Kelley, "Milton's Debt to Wolleb's *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*," *PMLA* 50, no. 1 (1935): 156–65; Kelley, *This Great Argument*, passim; Kelley, "The Composition of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*;" and most recently John K. Hale, "Points of Departure: Studies in Milton's Use of Wollebius," *Reformation* 19, no. 1 (2014): 69–82.

[20]On Milton's antitrinitarianism generally see Michael Bauman, *Milton's Arianism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987); John P. Rumrich, "Milton's Arianism: Why It Matters," in *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 75–92; Lieb, *Theological Milton*, 213–78; and Martin Dzelzainis, "Milton and Antitrinitarianism," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). On the relevant chapter of *De Doctrina* see also Hale, *Milton's Scriptural Theology*, 103–13.

[21]"Timor Dei est quo Dei Verbum & Majestatem sic reveremur, ut offensam tam benigni Patris omnibus modis praecaveamus non tam poenae formidine, quam Dei amore." Ioannes Wollebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (Oxford: H. Hall, 1655), 251.

[22]Hale, "Points of Departure."

[23]Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.952.

[24]Ibid. II.1000; see Lieb, "'Our Living Dread,'" 10–11.

Milton, again following Wollebius, contrasts *timor Dei* as a proper part of Christian *cultus* with "carnal security" (*securitas carnalis*), with *timor servilis*, and with "idolatrous" (*idololatricus*) fear.[25] Milton does not directly define what this *timor idololatricus* is, but it seems to have been a recurring theme in Reformed systematic theologies, apparently originating in the monumental *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* (1609–1610) of the German theologian Amandus Polanus, under whom Wollebius studied, and to whose chair of Old Testament studies he eventually succeeded, at the University of Basel.[26] A prior intimation of this concept may be detected in the earlier *Partitiones Theologiae* (1590), where Polanus opposes *timor Dei* with *timor servilis*, *securitas*, and what he calls δέος ἀδεὲς (fearless fear). This Greek phrase would have been familiar from Erasmus (1466–1536), whose *Adagia* features the proverb ἀδεὲς δέδιας δέος or *metum inanem metuisti* ("you feared an empty fear").[27] Polanus characterizes δέος ἀδεὲς as a kind of misplaced fear, giving the example of Catholics, who fear God when they contravene superstitious regulations rather than when they defend *idololatria* (idolatry):

> Δέος ἀδεὲς est timere ubi non est timor. Psal. 14. Hypocriticus timor, qualis est Papistarum, qui timent iram Dei, cum violant traditiones stultas, cum nolunt vesci carnibus diebus a Pontifice Romano prohibitis, & non timent iram Dei, cum pertinaciter propugnant Idololatriam, & homines pios innocentesque ferro & flammis persequuntur.[28]

> *Fearless fear* is fearing where there is no fear. Psalm 14. A hypocritical fear, it is like that of the Papists, who fear the wrath of God when they violate stupid traditions, when they refuse to eat meat on days prohibited by the Pontiff, and do not fear the wrath of God when they obstinately defend Idolatry and chase pious and innocent men with iron and flames.

In the *Syntagma* this fear becomes defined by idolatry and takes the name *timor idololatricus*. For Polanus this term designates the kind of fear exemplified in the pagan dread of idols, as well as the Catholic veneration of the saints:

> *Timor idololatricus*, est quum timetur ab idolis: qualis erat timor Gentilium, qui a signis caeli, a diis suis metuebat: Atqui dii Gentilium metuendi non sunt, quia non sunt. Gentiles imitantur Papani, timentes *a sanctis*, quos iratos sibi fore arbitrantur, nisi honore eo illos afficiant, quo Papa jubet: qui metuunt indignationem Petri & Pauli, quam incursuros Papa minatur eos, qui edictis ejus contraveniunt.[29]

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[25] Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.954.
[26] Amandus Polanus, *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae*, 2 vols. (Hanau: Claudius Marnius and the heirs of Johannes Aubrius, 1609–1610), II: sigs. NNNNnn4v-OOOoo1r. On Polanus see Robert Letham, "Amandus Polanus: A Neglected Theologian?", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (1990): 463–76 and Byung Soo Han, *Symphonia Catholica: The Merger of Patristic and Contemporary Sources in the Theological Method of Amandus Polanus (1561–1610)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015). Polanus is named twice in Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.714 in the chapter entitled *de Evangelio, et Libertate Christiana* ("on the Gospel and Christian Liberty"); see Hale, *Milton's Scriptural Theology*, 60–61. A dedicatory poem at the beginning of Wollebius' *Compendium* draws a line from Calvin through Polanus to Wollebius himself (Wollebius, *Compendium*, sig. A3r). On Polanus and Wollebius in the context of Reformation Basel see Amy Nelson Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel, 1529–1629* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), passim. The concept of *timor idololatricus* appears also in the systematic theology of the Dutch Reformed theologian Andreas Essenius (1618–77), *Systematis Dogmatici Tomus Tertius, & Ultimus* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jansonius, 1665), 123 and 126, whose inclusion of Catholic veneration of the saints in this category indicates that his source is Polanus, rather than Wollebius.
[27] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus 33: Adages: IIi1 to IIvi100*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 178.
[28] Amandus Polanus, *Partitiones Theologicae* (Basel: Conrad Waldkirch, 1590), 159.
[29] Polanus, *Syntagma*, II: sig. OOOoo1r.

> *Idolatrous fear* is when there is fear on account of idols: such was the fear of the Gentiles, who feared the signs of heaven as of their gods: and the gods of the Gentiles should not be feared, because they do not exist. Papists imitate the Gentiles, being afraid *of the saints*, whom they think are angry at them unless they treat them with the honor that the Pope commands, they who fear the indignation of Peter and Paul, which the Pope threatens that those who contravene his edicts will incur.

Here Polanus may have in mind a figure whom he attacks throughout the *Syntagma*, that most imposing defender of Catholic doctrine, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), whose *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus hujus temporis Haereticos* (1586–1593) features as the seventh and final controversy of its first tome a section entitled *De Ecclesia Triumphante, sive de gloria & cultu Sanctorum* ("On the Church Triumphant, or the glory and veneration of the Saints").[30] Polanus was hardly the first Reformed theologian to brand the *cultus sanctorum* upheld by Bellarmine as a form of *idololatria*: John Rainolds (1549–1607), for instance, had answered Bellarmine with a treatise whose full title begins *De Romanae Ecclesiae Idololatria, in Cultu Sanctorum*.[31] But if I am correct it is in Polanus that the concept of *timor idololatricus* first appears, encompassing the fear of pagan and Catholic idols alike.

Wollebius has a broader understanding of the term *timor idololatricus* than his mentor Polanus, taking it to signify a fear of both idols and things of this world: "Idolatrous fear is that by which man fears for himself not only on account of idols, but on account of humans and the World, more than God."[32] But Milton in *De Doctrina* sets the latter in a separate category, fear "of any things whatsoever except God" (*rerum quarumcunque praeter Deum*).[33] In this respect Milton seems closer to Polanus, who also has a separate category for "fear of humans more than God" (*Timor hominum potius quam Dei*).[34] This would seem to suggest that Milton understands *timor idololatricus* specifically as that fear which relates to idols, an inference that finds support in his choice of 2 Kings 17:33 as a biblical example of this category: "They revered Jehovah, and they worshipped their own gods according to the custom of the nations that they had brought over there."[35]

Milton's fervent opposition to various forms of idolatry – references in his extant commonplace book (*vide de Idolatria* [sic], *vide Idolatria*) indicate that his lost *Index Theologicus* included a section devoted to the topic[36] – has attracted a great deal of scholarly

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[30]Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes Roberti Bellarmini Politiani, Societatis Iesu, de Controversiis Christianae Fidei, adversus hujus temporis Haereticos* (Ingolstadt: David Sartorius, 1586–1593). Though Polanus does not name him here, there are many references to Bellarmine throughout the *Syntagma*.

[31]John Rainolds, *De Romanae Ecclesiae Idololatria* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1596), *STC* 20606.

[32]"Timor idolatricus non solum is est, quo ab idolis, sed quo ab hominibus, & a Mundo magis sibi metuit homo, quam a Deo." Wollebius, *Compendium*, 252.

[33]Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.954.

[34]Polanus, *Syntagma*, II: sig. OOOoo1r. Cf. the medieval scholastic notion of *timor mundanus* mentioned above.

[35]"Iehovam reverebantur, et deos suos colebant ex ritu gentium quas deportaverant inde." Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.954.

[36]John Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton Volume XI: Manuscript Writings*, ed. William Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 218, 291. Gordon Campbell, "Milton's *Index Theologicus* and Bellarmine's *Disputationes De Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*," *Milton Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1977): 12–16 recognized that the organization of Milton's *Index* corresponds with that of Bellarmine's *Disputationes* and on this basis argued that Milton had once intended to write an anti-Bellarmine polemic. More recent scholarship, however, has cast doubt upon this assumption, noting that this type of polemical organization was a common practice in contemporary theological commonplace books; see William Poole, "The Genres of Milton's Commonplace Book," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 367–81, at 368; Jeffrey Alan Miller, "Reconstructing Milton's Lost *Index theologicus*: The Genesis and Usage of an Anti-Bellarmine, Theological Commonplace Book," *Milton Studies* 52 (2011): 187–219; and Milton, *Manuscript Writings*, 83–92.

attention,[37] but it has not been widely recognized that *timor idololatricus* constitutes a distinct category in Milton's thought.[38] Chief among contemporary purveyors of idolatry, in Milton's view, were the Church of Rome and its Laudian emulators in England, and the secondary sense of *timor idololatricus* as Catholic dread of idols in Polanus echoes in the antiprelatical tracts of 1641–1642, as when Milton writes of the Lord's Supper in *Of Reformation*: "that Feast of love and heavenly-admitted fellowship, the Seale of filiall grace became the Subject of horror, and glouting adoration, pageanted about, like a dreadfull Idol."[39] But the primary sense of *timor idololatricus* as dread of pagan gods comes to the fore in *Paradise Lost*. Among the figures that appear in the epic catalogue of Book 1, which lists the "various Idols through the Heathen World" (*PL* 1.375),[40] are "*Moloch*, horrid King besmear'd with blood / Of human sacrifice" (*PL* 1.392-393), "*Chemos*, th' obscene dread of *Moabs* Sons / From *Aroar* to *Nebo*, and the wild / Of Southmost *Abarim*" (*PL* 1.406–408) and the half-fish god Dagon "dreaded through the Coast / Of *Palestine*, in *Gath* and *Ascalon* / And *Accaron* and *Gaza's* frontier bounds" (*PL* 1.464–466).[41] Here Moloch, Chemos, and Dagon are all associated with a kind of theological horror or dread that conforms with the sense of *timor idololatricus* in *De Doctrina*. Dread names their worship and veneration: to be "dreaded," in the sense that Dagon is, is to be revered with fear and awe.

It has long been known that Milton's depictions of Semitic deities in the catalogue are deeply informed by his reading of John Selden's *De Diis Syris*, and the case of Chemos, also called Peor ("*Peor* his other Name," *PL* 1.412), is no exception.[42] The word *obscene*, which refers to the "lustful Orgies" (*PL* 1.415) that the Moabite god is supposed to have encouraged, comes directly from Selden's description of the "obscene practices" (*obscoenos mores*) of his cult[43] – though Selden himself does not credit such reports, as Peter Hume (1640–1707), Milton's early annotator, notes in his comment on Milton's Chemos: "our Learned *Selden* disagrees, and not without sufficient Reason on his side, for Idolatry throughout the Old Testament is every where exprest, by going a Whoring after strange Gods."[44] Hume, quoting the same passage of Statius cited by

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[37]See e.g. David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Lana Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric: Milton's Iconoclasm and the Poetics of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Barbara Lewalski, "Milton and Idolatry," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 43, no. 1 (2003): 213–32; and Daniel Shore, *Milton and the Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 85–104.

[38]I find only passing mentions of *timor idololatricus*, in Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric*, 202 n.21 and Tobias Gregory, "Murmur and Reply: Rereading Milton's Sonnet 19," *Milton Studies* 51 (2010): 21–43 and 254–7, at 256 n.19.

[39]John Milton, *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–1982), I.523.

[40]Citations of *Paradise Lost* (*PL*) are from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[41]On the demonic catalogue see Jason P. Rosenblatt, "'Audacious Neighborhood': Idolatry in *Paradise Lost*, Book I," *Philological Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1975): 553–68; Joseph Lyle, "Architecture and Idolatry in *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 40, no. 1 (2000): 139–55; and David Quint, "Milton's Book of Numbers: Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* and Its Catalogue," *International Journal of the Classical* Tradition 13, no. 4 (2007): 528–49.

[42]See John Selden, *De Diis Syris* (London: William Stansby, 1617), 65–74, STC 22167. On Selden as Hebrew scholar see esp. Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), with reference to his influence on Milton passim.

[43]Selden, *De Diis Syris*, 70 (see also 68, 69).

[44]P[eter]. H[ume]., *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1695), 24; on this point see Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi*, 86–87. Sharon Achinstein. "Did Milton Read Selden?", in *A Concise Companion to the Study of Manuscripts, Printed Books, and the Production of Early Modern Texts*, ed. Edward Jones (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 266–93 has called into question just how closely Milton read his Selden, which this discrepancy could be taken to support, though there are obvious dramatic reasons for Milton to contradict his source here. On the obscenity of Milton's Chemos see also Noam Flinker, "Father-Daughter Incest in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1980):

Calvin, offers an astute observation on the phrase *th' obscene dread* with the gloss "*Dread*, for Deity; *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*."[45] For dread is grammatically in apposition to the god: "*Chemos*, th' obscene dread of *Moabs* Sons." Chemos *is* the obscene dread, just as God is the dread of Isaac (*i.e. Deum*).[46] Milton's phrase, it will be noticed, formally mimics the divine name of dread with its subjective genitive: Chemos is *the dread of Moab's sons,* as God is *the dread of Isaac.* Biblically, Chemos-Peor is most prominent in the episode of Numbers 25 in which the Moabite women seduce the men of Israel into performing idolatrous sacrifices: as Milton recounts in the catalogue, the god "entic'd / *Israel* in *Sittim* on thir march from *Nile* /To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe" (*PL* 1.412–414). Milton earlier summoned up this episode in *Of Reformation* in condemning the "horror" of revelries on the Sabbath as approved by the Laudian establishment: "Thus did the Reprobate hireling Preist *Balaam* seeke to subdue the Israelites to *Moab*, if not by force, then by this divellish *Pollicy*, to draw them from the Sanctuary of God to the luxurious, and ribald feast of *Baal-peor*."[47] Chemos-Peor competes with God as an alternative object of religious fear, though a patently false one. The perverse imitation of God's divine name thus marks both pagan and Judeo-Christian veneration as outwardly similar forms of theological dread, while nevertheless not confusing *timor idololatricus* with righteous fear of God.

Another pagan deity of dread appears in Book 2 of *Paradise Lost*, among the retinue of personified Chaos and his consort Night: "and by them stood / *Orcus* and *Ades*, and the dreaded name / Of *Demogorgon*" (*PL* 2.963–965). In an earlier mention of Demogorgon, in the first of his Cambridge prolusions, Milton purports to have gained his knowledge about this god from "among the most ancient mythographers" (*Apud vetustissimos … Mythologiae scriptores*),[48] but in fact Demogorgon was a name unknown to the ancients. It appears to have emerged from a late antique commentary on the *Thebaid*, in which a mysterious deity summoned by Tiresias, "the supreme one of the triple world, whom it is taboo to know about" (*triplicis mundi summum quem scire nefastum*, Stat. *Theb*. 4.516), is identified by the scholiast as the demiurge or creator god of the Platonic tradition: "he means the demiurge, whose name it is not permitted to know."[49] The Greek δημιουργόν was likely written in Latin script as *demiourgon*,[50] which, corrupted, ultimately yielded the god that would be canonized in medieval and early modern mythography as Demogorgon.[51] As C. S. Lewis remarked: "This is perhaps the only time a scribal blunder

116–22, passim. The P. H. to whom the 1695 commentary on *PL* is ascribed has traditionally been identified as a certain Patrick Hume, but David A. Harper, "The First Annotator of *Paradise Lost* and the Makings of English Literary Criticism," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 59, no. 3 (2019): 507–30 convincingly argues that the author of the commentary is in fact Peter Hume, a nonconformist servant in the Royal Household.

[45]Hume, *Annotations*, 25.

[46]Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.1000.

[47]Milton, *Complete Prose Works*, I.589.

[48]John Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Frank Allen Patterson, 20 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–1940), XII.126; Milton makes another reference to Demogorgon at ibid. XII.134.

[49]"dicit deum δημιουργόν, cuius scire non licet nomen." *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida Commentum: Volumen I*, ed. Robert Dale Sweeney (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997), 293.

[50]Ibid.

[51]On Demogorgon in medieval and early modern mythography see Carlo Landi, *Demogorgone* (Palermo: R. Sandron, 1930); David Quint, "Epic Tradition and *Inferno* IX," *Dante Studies* 93 (1975): 201–7; and Marianne Pade, "The Fragments of Theodontius in Boccaccio's *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri*," in *Avignon and Naples: Italy in France, France in Italy in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Marianne Pade, Hannemarie Ragn Jensen, and Lene Waage Petersen (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1997), 149–82.

underwent an apotheosis."[52] Milton would have been familiar with references to Demogorgon in two of his favorite modern poets, Tasso (1544–95) and Spenser (1552?-99),[53] but Harris Fletcher has argued that his principal mythographical source was Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, which sets Demogorgon at the head of the genealogical tree of the gods.[54] It is therefore significant that Boccaccio (1313–75) locates the origin of Demogorgon's worship in pagan "dread" (*horrore*), which ostensibly motivated a taboo on uttering the name of this deity among the archaic Arcadians, "whether they thought it indecent for so sublime a name to come into the mouths of mortals, or perhaps feared that if named he would bring his wrath upon them."[55] The sublime name (*sublime nomen*) of the ineffable and aniconic Demogorgon can only be compared to that of the one true God, the *deus absconditus* of fuming Sinai, the ἄγνωστος θεός of the Athenian Areopagus.[56] Discussing the etymology of *Demogorgon*, Boccaccio first offers the derivation "god of the earth" (*daemon + gorgon*) before considering the alternative "'terrible god,' since it is said about the true God who dwells in heaven: 'Holy and terrible is his name.'"[57] With his quotation of Psalms 110:9, Boccaccio calls attention to the superficial resemblance between these two deities whose names are "terrible" (*terribilis*), though of course he does not fail to distinguish between them: "But God is terrible for another reason, for he is terrible in judgment on account of the integrity of his justice against those who do evil, while that one is terrible for those that ignorantly believe in him."[58] That Milton represents Demogorgon as a "dreaded name" clearly looks back to the *sublime et terribilis nomen* that he found in Boccaccio, with its evocation of pagan theological dread and its suggestion of a resemblance between Demogorgon and the Christian deity – a point that Peter Hume picks up on, without mentioning Boccaccio, in his comment that the name of Demogorgon "was concealed in imitation of that ineffable appellation of God, seldom pronounced by the Jews."[59] Milton's reference to Demogorgon may be brief, but encapsulated in it is an anthropology of pagan religion as a phenomenon based in ignorant fear.[60]

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[52]C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 40.

[53]See Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata,* 13.10 and Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 1.5.22, 4.2.47, noted by Hume, *Annotations*, 91–92. Cf. also *Faerie Queene* 1.1.43, ed. A. C. Hamilton, revised second edition (Harlow: Longman Annotated English Poets, 2007).

[54]Harris Fletcher, "Milton's Demogorgon: *Prolusion I* and *Paradise Lost*, II, 960-65," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 57, no. 4 (1958): 684–9. For other traces of the influence of the *Genealogia* on Milton see the comments in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), passim, as well as George F. Butler, "Boccaccio and Milton's 'Manlike' Eve: The *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri* and *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2003): 166–71. See also William Poole, "John Milton and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante*," *Milton Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2014): 139–70, who has identified Oxford, Bodleian Library, shelfmark Arch. A f.145 as Milton's copy of Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante*, which is cited in his commonplace book in Milton, *Manuscript Writings*, 211–2. On Milton and mythography generally see John Mulryan, *"Through a Glass Darkly": Milton's Reinvention of the Mythological Tradition* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1996).

[55]"seu existimantes indecens esse tam sublime nomen in buccas venire mortalium, vel forte timentes ne nominatus irritaretur in eos." Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods. Volume I: Books I-V*, trans. Jon Solomon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 34.

[56]See Jon Solomon, "Boccaccio and the Ineffable, Aniconic God Demogorgon," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 19 (2012): 31–62.

[57]"'deus terribilis,' quod de vero Deo qui in celis habitat legitur: 'Sanctum et terribile nomen eius.'" Boccaccio, *Genealogy*, 38.

[58]"Verum iste aliam ob causam terribilis est, nam ille ob integritatem iustitie male agentibus in iudicio est terribilis, iste vero stolide existimantibus." Ibid.

[59]Hume, *Annotations*, 91.

[60]On Boccaccio's historical/anthropological perspective on pagan myth see David Lummus, "Boccaccio's Poetic Anthropology: Allegories of History in the *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*," *Speculum* 87, no. 3 (2012): 724–65, with reference to Demogorgon passim.

Daniel Shore has likened the catalogue of pagan gods in *Paradise Lost* to a *Götzen-kammer* (literally "chamber of idols"), which preserved pre-Reformation images of the saints in some German Protestant churches, contemplation of which makes the Reformed observer – or reader, in Milton's case – joyful for having overcome sinful idol-atries.[61] With regard to Chemos, dread of the Moabites, or outside the catalogue to Demogorgon's dreaded name, the specific transgression exhibited is *timor idololatricus*, understood as a perversion and diabolical imitation of the right practice of *timor Dei*. In *Samson Agonistes* the blind and captive hero rebukes Dalila for not being able to distin-guish between the two:

> To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable
> To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
> But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
> Of their own deity, Gods cannot be:
> Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd […]
> (*SA* 896–900)[62]

Samson dismisses any pious motivation on Dalila's part because Dagon and the other pagan gods are not gods at all and therefore deserve no religious fear ("Less therefore to be […] fear'd"). As the first Semichorus proclaims, the Philistines dread what is only an idol, rather than the true God whose name is Dread itself: "Chaunting thir Idol, and preferring / Before our living Dread who dwells / In *Silo* his bright Sanctuary" (*SA* 1662–1664).[63] The Philistines may be "jocund and sublime" (*SA* 1659), but theirs is a false sense of sublimity, the sensual elevation that comes from intoxication and the orgi-astic exaltation of idols ("Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine," *SA* 1660). The sublime God of the Hebrews, on the other hand, manifests his divine power through the action of his agent Samson, which he promises "with amaze shall strike all who behold" (*SA* 1635).[64] The real "horrour" (*SA* 1540), the "horrid spectacle" (*SA* 1532) that ensues, immanentizes the transcendent sublimity of the one true God whose name is Dread.

In Milton's theological thought *timor idololatricus* is exposed as the historical and psy-chological basis of pagan religion and to an extent of idolatry more generally, including Catholic and Laudian ritual. The Reformed should be able to perceive that this sense of religious awe and dread is misplaced which should belong to God alone, and in this they might feel superior. But there is also a sympathetic recognition that some form of theo-logical dread lies at the heart of all religious worship, Catholic and Reformed, pagan and Christian alike. In this, if in little else, Milton could agree with a Laudian royalist like Alexander Ross (1591–1654), who in his work of comparative religion *Pansebeia* (1653) answers the question "*How doth it appear that Religion is the foundation of Common-wealthes, or humane societies?*" with the reply "Because Religion teacheth the fear of God," and "it was this fear that begot Religion in the world, *Primus in orbe*

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[61]Shore, *Milton and the Art of Rhetoric*, 95, 103–4, who also dubs this an experience of the "idolatrous sublime" (86, 102–3), though the sublime here is mostly understood in a Kantian mode rather than in some sense that Milton might recognize.

[62]Citations of *Samson Agonistes* (*SA*) are from John Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton Volume II: The 1671 Poems*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[63]On God in *SA* see esp. Lieb, "'Our Living Dread.'"

[64]As Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History*, 188 n.61 notes: "What distinguishes the God of Israel from other gods, of course, is precisely the fact that He 'only doeth wondrous things' (Psalms 72:18; cf. Psalms 86:8, 10)."

Deos fecit timor"[65] – quoting the same line of Statius that was cited by Calvin in the *Institutio* and by Peter Hume in his comment on Milton's Chemos. For Milton this understanding of theological dread may be not only negative, indicating the ignorant inferiority of the pagan idolator, but also positive: for while *timor idololatricus* may be a demonic reflection of *timor Dei*, in its very similarity it serves a protreptic function, reminding the Christian of the fear that is due to the sublime deity whose name is Dread.

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[65]Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia, or, A view of all Religions in the World* (London: James Young, 1653), 519, 520. On this work see R. J. W. Mills, "Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia* (1653), Religious Compendia and the Seventeenth-Century Study of Religious Diversity," *The Seventeenth Century* 31 (2016): 285–310 and Anna-Maria Hartmann, *English Mythography in Its European Context, 1500–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 225–38.