

## MILTON AND THE BURDEN OF FREEDOM

Throughout his writings, Milton, deeply engaged in political and theological controversy, sought to clear a space for human freedom in a world ruled by an omniscient and omnipotent deity. *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, as well as other works by Milton in verse and prose, explore the problematical aspects of a universe ruled by an Old Testament God of wrath, demanding obedience, who allows his creatures the freedom to be 'authors' of their own fate. *Milton and the Burden of Freedom* examines the contradictions inherent in Milton's religious, political and ethical beliefs as expressed in his poems, prose writings and the treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*. Milton, whose writings are rooted in the Reformed tradition while challenging Calvinist orthodoxy, is both radical and conservative. Warren Chernaik traces the evolution of Milton's attitude towards freedom, servitude and virtue during a century of political upheaval and disappointed hopes.

WARREN CHERNAIK is Emeritus Professor of English, University of London. He was the founding Director of the Institute of English Studies (IES), University of London, and is now a Senior Research Fellow of IES. He is the author of *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (2011), *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays* (2007), a study of *The Merchant of Venice* (2005), *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (1995), *The Poet's Time: Politics and Religion in the Work of Andrew Marvell* (1983) and essays on such authors as Marvell, Milton, Shakespeare, Jonson, Herbert, Traherne, Rochester, Pepys and Behn, as well as co-editing books on topics as diverse as detective fiction, changes in copyright law and Andrew Marvell.

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*In memory of Stella Purce Revard*

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