

Christian Liberty and *Paradise Lost*

If Milton's prose reflects his attempt to see Christian liberty realized in the outward realm, *Paradise Lost* is a return to its constitutive elements as a fully accomplished inward reality. It is the poetical creation of the new man.¹

Whereas at a first glance the poem appears to expand on the ramifications of the fall and its relation to man's faculties and liberty in a way that closely parallels Augustinianism and Thomist Scholasticism, a broader analysis shows a shift from Scholastic to Scriptural and Reformed categories in book 12 which goes alongside a shift in Milton's focus from externals to internals. But first things first:

... Justly thou abhorr'st
That son, who on the quiet state of men
Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue
Rational liberty; yet know withal,
Since thy original lapse, true liberty
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells

1. Continuity with the prose can be appreciated in the poem, where Milton proves to align himself with Calvin's tri-fold division of the Mosaic law as civil/political, ceremonial and moral (see *PL* 12.230–5; 297–99): while the first “is but the arme of the moral lawe” (*CPW* 2.322), Christ is both the substance to which the shadows of the ceremonial law pointed, and the passive fulfillment of the moral law in man. The outward principle of works of law is thus supplanted by the inward Spirit-driven principle of faith working through love (*PL* 12.487–89). For the poem to bring up the most distinctive category of the “moral law” is to set it *lexically* in the company of the mainstream theologies, not least William Ames' (Ames, *Marrow*, 111, 139, 269, 287, 291, 318), as opposed to *De Doctrina*, where explicit references to the “moral law” are nowhere to be found. In fact, the Latin treatise consistently regards the law as a unity and, as such, as abolished in its entirety with the advent of Christ.

Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:
Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man till then free . . . (12.79–90)

“That son” refers here to Nimrod. While Genesis is quite cryptic about this figure, Milton appears to draw from the Augustinian tradition, which finds in Josephus its fountainhead. According to this tradition, Nimrod embodies the principle of prideful ambition and rebellious opposition to God.² It is quite unsurprising that Milton chooses this Satanic mimesis to epitomize the slavery of sin and, by contrast, shed light on the twofold nature of liberty.

Liberty is both inward and outward, the full unfolding of the latter resting on the foundation of the former. Outward liberty had attracted Milton's every effort for little less than two decades. To see liberty reflected in the laws and institutions of his country he had given up poetry. True liberty was yet to be sought within.

In the lines above, inward liberty is defined as “rational liberty” or the complement of “right reason,” its inseparable twin. Reason stands at the threshold and reaches inward as well as outward. Its role is to govern man and yield obedience to God. Nevertheless, man's first disobedience has divorced reason from liberty by affecting pervasively, if not absolutely, both reason and will. Postlapsarian Adam himself exemplifies this truth as he fails to will, let alone do, what he should:

. . . But from mee what can proceed,
But all corrupt, both Mind and Will deprav'd,
Not to do onely, but to will the same
With mee? (10.824–7)³

This reality has been variously reflected in human experience ever since Adam's original lapse. If the fall has “obscured” reason, thus preventing it from properly informing the will, the choice of not obeying the truthful dictates of reason originates in the will. The twofold detrimental dynamic has opened the door to “inordinate desires” and “upstart passions” which have darkened the mind and taken over the control of

2. See Hardin, “Milton's Nimrod.”

3. Cf. 30–31.

man from reason. He who was “till then free” has thus been reduced to inward slavery.

The early modern *theory of the passions* appears to generally inform the passage. Man’s mental steadfastness before the fall was defined in terms that closely parallel Augustine by J. F. Senault: “In this happy estate the soul commanded with mildness, the body obeyed with delight, and whatsoever object presented itself, these two parties did alwaies agree.”⁴ The positive balance was yet disrupted by sinful affections. In reviewing the soul’s condition in light of Adam’s fall, Edward Reynolds envisioned the eclipse of reason as the essential result of the introduction of unruly passions and affections. Deriving his authority from Augustine, Reynolds depicted Adam as free from all distempers and inward turmoil, with his passions as naturally subordinated to reason. The fallen condition was, on the contrary, characterized by the impairment of right reason resulting in the inability to discern things “according to their naked and naturall truth, but according as it finds them beare in the Fancie those impressions of Pleasure, which are most agreeable to corrupted nature.”⁵ Both Milton and Reynolds envision fancy as a new channel replacing reason and paving the way for the unrestrained display of sinful affections. All in all, Milton would have commended John Donne’s figurative portrayal of will’s capitulation under reason’s captivity:

I, like an usurpt town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
But is captiv’d, and proves weake or untrue⁶

The slavery of sin thus depicted called for the dispensation of the law as a teacher. Although the law proceeded from God and would produce partial outward restraint of evil and thus relative freedom,⁷ the slavery

4. Senault, *The Use of Passions*, 54–59.

5. Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions*, 65. The position outlined by Reynolds is essentially the one adopted by Richard Hooker and endorsed by the majority of seventeenth-century divines, both Anglican and Puritan.

6. Donne, “Batter My Heart” in Serpieri and Bigliuzzi, eds., *Poesie*, 600.

7. Pervasive though the subjugation of enthralled man to the rule of men is, human self-exposure to tyranny would vary in degree. The law, as noticed, would still be able to inform collective liberties in terms of expediency, in terms, that is, of those limitations which mitigate sinful affections and thus enhance outward liberties. Some nations, however, would decline from reason to the extent that restraint of their outward liberty would only occur as a rightful remedy: Yet sometimes nations will decline

of sin would be to the observance of the law what the law of gravity is to flight. The law would relentlessly exact its demands without according man the ability to break free from sin. A slave to sin, man would come to conceive of the law as tyranny, his desperate condition being thereby laid bare and his impotence further amplified:

... Doubt not but that sin
Will reign among them, as of thee begot;
And therefore was law given them to evince
Their natural pravity, by stirring up
Sin against law to fight (12.285–89)

Not only is loss of inward liberty behind the magnification of the law as tyranny, but, echoing *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the loss of inward liberty, occasioned by the slavery of sin and amplified by the rule of the law, is also invariably behind man's subjection to outward tyranny or the rule of men. While man is no longer able to discern and thereby withstand outward oppression, his condition of slavery proves ultimately sanctioned by God himself as he allows for "violent lords" to carry out his judgment. The judgment itself is dictated by individual defiance of liberty for sinful affections. It is necessitated by what is tantamount to the choice of self over God. Even so, those who carry out the judgment by restraining outward freedom bear full responsibility for their tyranny:

... since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God in judgment just
Subjects him from without to violent lords;
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom: tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse. (12.90–96)

Far from merely involving the civil and political realms, tyranny would come to define the religious as well. To this effect, in the unfolding of his theology of history in book 12, the poet purposely accounts for the period which would succeed the descent of the Spirit and the dispensation of the New Testament through the apostles, the time, that is, when

so low / From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong, / But justice, and some fatal curse
annexed / Deprives them of their outward liberty, / Their inward lost . . . (12.97–101).

Their ministry performed, and race well run,
 Their doctrine and their story written left,
 They die; but in their room, as they forewarn,
 Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
 Who all the sacred mysteries of Heav'n
 To their own vile advantages shall turn
 Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
 With superstitions and traditions taint,
 Left only in those written records pure,
 Though not but by the Spirit understood.
 Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
 Places and titles, and with these to join
 Secular power, though feigning still to act
 By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
 The Spirit of God, promised alike and giv'n
 To all believers; and from that pretense,
 Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
 On every conscience; laws which none shall find
 Left them enrolled, or what the Spirit within
 Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then
 But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
 His consort Liberty . . . (12.505–26)

Michael here foretells what the New Testament would also overshadow,⁸ that is, the coming of false shepherds who would seek personal glory and power. To this very end, they would mar that truth which alone is found in the New Testament with self-crafted superstitions and traditions and hold to truth as their sole prerogative. Truth, however, while accessible, cannot be claimed as a human possession, but is for the Spirit to disclose. Not content, the false shepherds would further pursue secular power through the appropriation of titles and names while screening themselves behind the charter of spiritual authority and, by making distinctive claims to the Spirit of God, they would avail themselves of superior, if self-arrogated, authority to force man-made laws on consciences.

The echo of *Areopagitica* and *A Treatise of Civil Power* is apparent here. Two sources of spiritual laws are contrasted as well as the respective ways in which they have been communicated and by which they are appropriated. On one hand, the source is God. He has communicated his spiritual laws through Scripture (laws left “enrolled”) and through the Spirit’s inward autograph. The written record and the law the Spirit

8. See John 10:1–10.

engraves on the heart of those who believe are thus both upheld and complementary. The second source is men. Their laws are not to be found either in Scripture or within. The laws of God are appropriated by grace. The laws of men are imposed by force. God frees consciences. Men control them. Liberty is wedded to that Spirit who manifests his life in man on the basis of the true freedom God has provided by his grace. Slavery is to deny the "Spirit of Grace" for selfish advancement. The history of mankind proves defined by this denial and, therefore, by the fall:

Since thy [Adam's] original lapse, true liberty
Is lost . . .

The *enjambement* works here to the effect of emphasizing both the distinctiveness of this kind of liberty and the loss thereof. It doesn't matter what degree of relative liberty laws can produce through restraint of sin. That liberty, let alone any form of human rule, is not true liberty, Milton seems to be saying. In fact, the very liberties procured by laws as well as freedom from the tyranny of men are closely dependent on true liberty. Yet true liberty is lost.

Where can it be found? If loss of true liberty has come as a result of the captivity of right reason produced by the introduction of sinful affections within man, inward liberty can only be born anew through freedom from the slavery of sin. Book 12 now abandons all terminology relating to man's inner faculties to turn to Johannine and Pauline discourse. Here the governmental function of regenerated reason is derivative, as it is indicated to stem from pre-existing unconditional liberty. The words of Jesus in John's Gospel match Milton's in pointing to sin as the enslaving factor, while drawing to the Son as the key to true liberty:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the
servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever:
but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free,
ye shall be free indeed.⁹

Whereas the rehabilitation of the inner faculties of man yields the restoration of true freedom in Augustine, the principle of the *knowledge of God* introduces us to a reversed perspective in Milton. Inward liberty must first be established for the inner faculties to be restored to the fullness of their function. In other words, right reason can only be born of

9. John 8:34–36.

freedom. Or else, reason only truly frees if it is free. In the evangelical words, freedom is a synonym for sonship and no sonship can subsist where there is sin. To think that man's pre-emptively restored abilities may effect the eradication of sin is tantamount to tying man's freedom to his performance, thus turning Christian liberty into a dynamic process. Yet the Son resolves to make man free apart from his works by doing away with sin and its ramifications in his own flesh:

. . . to the cross he nails thy enemies,
The law that is against thee, and the sins
Of all mankind, with him there crucified,
Never to hurt them more who rightly trust
In this his satisfaction . . . (12.415–9)

Sin and the law being thus nailed to the cross, inward liberty no longer coincides with a free ability and its positive enactment for those “who rightly trust / In this his satisfaction,” but with an unchanging position with respect to God. Sin can no longer harm and law no longer constrain, but the mind and conscience thus cleared from what obscured reason and conscience are free under the rule of grace:

Some blood more precious must be paid for man,
Just for the unjust, that in such righteousness
To them by faith imputed, they may find
Justification towards God, and peace
Of conscience, which the law by ceremonies
Cannot appease, nor the moral part
Perform, and not performing cannot live.
So law appears imperfect, and but giv'n
With purpose to resign man in full time
Up to a better cov'nant, disciplined
From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
From imposition of strict laws to free
Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
To filial, works of law to works of faith. (12.293–306)

Unlike the Medieval tradition, yet much like Paul and the Reformed strain, Milton here indicates that “justification towards God, and peace

/ Of conscience" are found in the Son's imputed righteousness. A shift is marked from liberty based on performance to inward liberty based on grace, from true liberty, that is, based on what man is and does to true liberty based on what the Son is and would do. In articulate theological language, the General Baptist *An Orthodox Creed* argues to the same effect that God,

out of his free grace and love to fallen man, in order to his recovery out of this sinful and deplorable state, hath freely offered him a second, or a new covenant of grace, which new covenant of grace is Jesus Christ [my italics], in remission of sins, through faith in his blood . . . for by faith we receive that righteousness that the law, or the first covenant, required of the first Adam; which righteousness Christ hath fulfilled in our nature which he took of the virgin Mary, by his active obedience, and is, by God's free donation, made over to us by imputation; for he hath made him to us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification . . . Christ hath not only fulfilled the sanction of the law . . . but hath also voluntarily suffered the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that we might receive the blessing of Abraham, and the promise of the spirit thro' faith in his blood.¹⁰

Christ is here said to be the new covenant of grace inasmuch as he embodies grace and provides the ground upon which the new covenant can be established through both his active and passive righteousness. The lexis of *imputation* in *Paradise Lost*¹¹ and the confession contrasts Grotius' concept of rectoral or governmental atonement, while it plainly reflects the Reformed and Pauline theology of substitutionary atonement.¹² Milton further argues that to place one's faith in the Son's righteousness is tantamount to turning from slavery to the ritualism of shadows and one's impotence to fulfill the moral law to the substance of grace and the filial status in the Spirit. A matching synthesis of the dispensational shift from law to grace is manifestly found in Ames' *Marrow of Theology*:

The testament is new with relation to what existed from the time of Moses and in relation to the promise made to the fathers

10. Lumpkin, ed., *The Baptist Confessions*, art. XVI, 307.

11. E.g., 3.290–91; 12.409.

12. Cf. 2 Cor 5:21. See Campbell, *John Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana*, 112–13. See also Poole, "Theology," 478–79; Falcone, "More Challenges," 234–36.

. . . Its difference in quality is in clarity and freedom . . . Clarity occurs, first in the more distinct expression than heretofore of the doctrine of grace and salvation through Christ and through faith in him . . . Second, it is expressed not in types and shadows, but in a most manifest fashion . . . Freedom comes, first, in doing away with government by law, or the intermixture of government of works, which held the ancient people in a certain bondage. The spirit of adoption, though never fully denied to believers, is also most properly said to be communicated under the New Testament . . .¹³

In his own right, Fox points to the new Spirit-empowered filial state ushered in by the covenant of grace. In resorting to the biblical type of “Rest,” however, he sheds further light on the constitution of the son’s new inward microcosm of liberty:

Christ arose from the dead on the First-day of the week; and they that believe on him are entered into Christ, their Rest; the Christians meet together to worship God on the First-day of the week; and on the First-day of the week it was that God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” The Jews’ rest was on the seventh-day of the week, which was given to them as a sign of the eternal rest of the Lord, sanctifying them, after they came out of the land of Egypt; for before that time the Lord had not given to man and woman his outward Sabbath-day to keep, neither in the old world, nor after in Abraham’s time, nor in Isaac’s, nor in Jacob’s time; until the Jews came out of Egypt to Mount Sinai in the wilderness. Then the Lord gave the law and his Sabbath, as a sign in the old covenant, of Christ the Eternal Rest in the new covenant; and they that believe do enter into Christ, their Rest.¹⁴

Like Milton, Ames and the General Baptist creedal formulation, here Fox contrasts the old covenant with the new, the outward rest of the Sabbath with the inward. The law could only afford the outward as a sign of true inward rest; Christ is the eternal inward rest and he who believes on him enters “into Christ,” his rest. Once again, a position is entailed with Christ as both the way and the final Canaan of liberty. As it is for Milton, in both Fox and the Baptist confession the passage from the old covenant to the new marks a passage from signs to their signified, from

13. Ames, *Marrow*, 205–6.

14. Fox, *A Journal of the Life*, 307.

outward to inward, from liberty through dynamic achievements to positional rest, through faith in the Son.

This shift entails a new kind of inward liberty, which differs from prelapsarian freedom. If prelapsarian Adam and Eve were free insofar as their free intellect and will complied with God's good will, in the words of Thomas Pierce¹⁵ "*Alia etiam Arbitrii libertas est in Statu hominis Regenerati, Conversique. Nam ex Statu depravationis in Statum Gratiae [Quenam in tercio hominis Statu] conversus, ab errore in Veritatem, ab incredulitate ad Fidem, à tenebris ad Lucem, à peccatis ad Deum.*" Most notably, grace is a state resulting from having been transferred from darkness to light, from sin to God. In turn, this new position determines a condition whereby "*Novam arbitrii libertatem, non ab ipso sane Peccato, sed a Peccati Servitute, evestigio consequitor. Nova luce accensus, novis viribus munitus per Spiritum Sanctum.*"¹⁶ In other words, freedom from the slavery of sin results in a new freedom of the will, which amounts to, as it were, Christian liberty's first efficiency.

Fulfilled in man's place and its wages paid, the law loses its prerogative to condemn, constrain and stir man's enslaving affections. It no longer serves the child as an external set of rules and prescriptions, but its moral essence can be discerned and observed by the free and adult subject through works of faith. The latter supplant works of law as deeds which are built upon man's reliance (faith) on his pre-established inward liberty by the new light of the indwelling Spirit. Indeed all factors which held reason captive appear to dissipate as man is pronounced free at the beginning of his walk and given over to "the Spirit of truth":

The promise of his Father, who shall dwell
His Spirit within them and the Law of Faith,
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write
To guide them in all truth . . . (12.487–90)

15. A Calvinist to the end of 1644, Thomas Pierce turned to a mild Arminianism, on which he then expanded in 1655. A graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, he would be appointed Dean at the Restoration.

16. Pierce, *Corpusculum pacificatorium*, 131–32. Translation: "Different is the freedom of the will for the man who is in a state of regeneration and transformation. For he has been transferred from a state of depravation to a state of grace (i.e., to the third state of man), from error to truth, from incredulity to faith, from darkness to light, from sin to God . . . A new freedom of the will results [from this state], not to be sure a freedom from the very presence of sin, but from the slavery of sin. Illumined by new light, [the believer] is endowed with new strength through the Holy Spirit" (my translation).

After Jesus' departure from earth, his disciples are promised not to be left orphans. A comforter, the Paraclete, will come from heaven to dwell within man. God's perpetual law of truth will no longer be encompassed in external formulaic prescriptions, but will become part of man's inward essence. By engraving the law on the heart of man, the Spirit will thus fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah and provide the inward counterpart and synthesis of that truth which is only found in the "written records pure," in fact, those same records which are "but by . . . [that] same Spirit understood." The new law will no longer be a law of works, but a law of faith, as the Spirit will solely pursue it in man on the basis of faith in the Son's imputed righteousness. Such faith in turn will not be void of works (12.427), for the distinctive expression of faith shall be love.

The reader will immediately recall the words of Paul in Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." *De Doctrina* finds in the specification "of the law" the key to overcoming the alleged discrepancy between Paul and James in the New Testament: if for James "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,"¹⁷ it is because he is referring to "works of faith."¹⁸ "Paul does not say that man is justified simply through faith, without works, but *without the works of the law*."¹⁹ As a result, *De Doctrina* goes so far as to argue, in Thomistic terms, that "if to believe is to act," as the examples show which the treatise draws from the Old Testament, "then faith is an action, or rather a habit acquired by frequent actions . . . Actions, however, are usually said to be effects rather than instruments; or perhaps they might better be called causes, though of less moment than principal causes."²⁰

The Latin treatise here yet fails to account for something *Paradise Lost* seemingly underscores: faith has a very definite object under the full manifestation of the covenant of grace and its revelation to Adam. If the object is Jesus and his work on the cross, and if faith is "trust" (12.418), it follows that works of faith cannot be causes, if secondary.²¹

17. Jas 2:24.

18. CPW 6.490.

19. CPW 6.490.

20. CPW 489. In arguing for *De Doctrina's sola fide* justification, Campbell does not acknowledge the reference to works as secondary causes of justification (Campbell, *John Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana*, 111).

21. Rom 4 is exemplary of this point in that the prototypical faith of Abraham is

The benefit of Christ is, on the contrary, embraced by that quality of faith in the Son which produces works as effects.²² While the likes of Ames get lost in defining internal-external dynamics,²³ Calvin has it best, “No faith, or only a dead faith, is without works.”²⁴ That Milton is referring to true faith as opposed to dead faith without yielding ground to works of faith as a cause of justification is conclusively indicated by the assurance given to Adam that “This godlike act / Annuls thy doom” (427–8), a *single* internal act of living faith delivering him from “the death” he “should have died / In sin for ever lost from life” (12.428–9).²⁵

Final though the gap from Scholastic categories to Evangelical may appear to be, we read that true liberty “from [right reason] hath no di-vidual being.” In other words, there cannot be one without the other. Both William Ames’ *Marrow* and *De Doctrina Christiana* speak of “right reason”²⁶ as the ability to “discern the chief good”²⁷ leading to “absolute rectitude”²⁸ or “self-government and self-control.”²⁹ The latter include “both the control of one’s own inner affections, and the pursuit of external good and resistance or endurance of external evil”³⁰ or “outward as well as inward obedience” to God’s will.³¹ Hence both works appear to match the understanding of freedom as restored through the rational control of sinful passions.

It has been argued, however, that in Milton right reason is only revived by true liberty. In other words, the freedom reason provides proves

trust that God will give him a progeny regardless of human impotence.

22. CM 17.9: “It is faith that justifies, not agreement with the Decalogue; and that which justifies can alone render any work good; none therefore of our works can be good, but by faith; hence faith is the essential form of good works, the definition of form being, that through which a thing is what it is.”

23. Ames, *Marrow*, 234–36.

24. Calvin, *Commentaries: James*, 22.2.314.

25. While the arrangement of the lines directly associates “this Godlike act” with the act of embracing the benefit of the cross by faith not void of works, the entire motion of the passage maintains a connection between “this Godlike act” and “His death for man” (425) which points to the other side of one and the same coin.

26. Cp. Ames, *Marrow*, 225; CPW 6.720.

27. CPW 6.395.

28. Ames, *Marrow*, 225.

29. CPW 6.720.

30. CPW 6.720.

31. Ames, *Marrow*, 226.

in Milton an effect, as opposed to a cause, of the inward liberty produced by grace. In fact, reason can only be *right* if it is born of freedom.

What comes first then? The answer comes to us by exploring the relationship between right reason and faith. Milton appears to do away with the Thomist vision of faith as intellect-based obedience perfected by will-driven charity³² only to embrace Luther's equation of *recta ratio* with *fides*.³³ In the Reformer, right reason is assimilated to faith,³⁴ provided the latter amounts to right thinking about God³⁵ and trust in his faithfulness and truthfulness.³⁶ Insofar as it coincides with faith, right reason (initially upheld by prevenient grace) is informed by that true liberty (initially in the form of the Son's clothing Adam and Eve's nudity) which is for faith to appropriate and which has the power to hold the principle of sin at bay. Right reason and true liberty therefore appear to transpire simultaneously.

Although early Reformers would themselves subscribe to Milton's stances, a more manifest common denominator among Milton, General Baptists and Quakers is found in Moyse Amyraut and Saumur³⁷ which

32. See *Summa*, 22ae. q. 4, art. 3. Myers, *Milton's Theology of Freedom*, 119.

33. Christopher, *Milton and the Science of the Saints*, 98–99.

34. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 2.262.

35. Ibid., 2.238, cited in Christopher, *Milton and the Science of the Saints*, 98–99.

36. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 2.295, cited in Christopher, *Milton and the Science of the Saints*, 98–99.

37. The Academy of Saumur inextricably binds its name to the personality and work of the French Protestant divine Moyse Amyraut, (1596–1664). Born at Bourgueil the son of a lawyer, Amyraut was directed to the forensic profession by his father. After earning the degree of licentiate of laws at the University of Poitiers, he turned to the study of divinity. We next find him in Saumur, a pupil of the Calvinist John Cameron, and a licensed minister of the French Protestant Church. As such, he was first appointed to the church of Saint Aignan and, two years later, Saumur. After the publication of his *Traité des religions* in 1631, Amyraut was chosen to represent the provincial synod of Anjou, Touraine and Maine at the national synod of Charenton. Here he was committed to address the king with *The Copy of their Complaints and Grievances for the Infractions and Violations of the Edict of Nantes*. Whereas Catholic representatives had been accorded the right to stand, Protestant delegates had addressed the king on their knees. Amyraut displayed his strong sense of liberty and entitlement by refusing to kneel down and, his resolution remaining unmitigated even after Richelieu's personal address, he was ultimately granted the same right as the Catholic deputies. The Quakers would themselves come to be known as somewhat less than deferential in their demonstrative acts. Over thirty works are attributed to his pen. His generally Calvinistic background does not altogether obliterate his distinctive approach. In his *Traité de la predestination* (1634), Amyraut expounded his one-way predestinarian view of univer-

contributes to the definition of Milton's drift from the rationalism of mainstream post-Reformed Scholasticism to the spiritualism informing Independency, Quakerism and General Baptists. In writing to Richard Jones, a former pupil based in Saumur, on 1 August 1657, Milton emphatically manifested his approval of the Saumur Academy which Jones was attending:

a place where you can enjoy cultured leisure and the society of learned men . . . So long as you remain there, you will be in har-

salismus hypoteticus. Calvin's limited extent of atonement was replaced by the view of atonement as universal yet hypothetical. The sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction for all sinners was in fact juxtaposed to its limited efficacy. Whereas grace could be offered to everyone, only individual faith could appropriate its salvific efficacy. To be sure, "Amyraut maintained the Calvinistic premises of an eternal foreordination and foreknowledge of God, whereby he caused all things inevitably to pass: the good efficiently, the bad permissively . . . But in addition to this he taught that God foreordained a universal salvation through the universal sacrifice of Christ offered to all alike (*également pour tous*), on condition of faith, so that with respect to God's will and desire (*voluntas, velleitas, affectus*) grace was universal, but as regards the condition it was particular, or only for those who would not reject it and thereby make it ineffective . . ." He reasoned from the standpoint of God's love towards his creatures; Calvinism reasoned "from the result, and made actual facts interpret the decrees." "Amyraut also made a distinction between natural ability and moral ability, or the power to believe and the willingness to believe: due to intrinsic depravity man possessed the former, but not the latter" (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 1.483). A charge of heresy would not fail to rise which was addressed at the consecutive synods of Alençon (1637), Charenton (1644) and Loudun (1659). In all three instances Amyraut was acquitted of all charges. Far from suffering from these attacks, the renown of the Academy of Saumur soared alongside Amyraut's lectures. One of Amyraut's notable pupils, the Quaker William Penn entertained views on religious freedom and toleration variously reflective of Amyraut's own. Notable is also Amyraut's advocacy of fellowship among all Christian churches holding to the main tenets of the Reformation. For all the dogmatic controversies, Amyraut's theology was largely regarded as in line with the Reformed tradition. In expressing his disagreement with the Saumur divines, François Turretin consistently identified them as "our ministers" (*Institutiones theologiae elencticae*, 4.17.4; 12.6.3; 14.14.6) on the ground of shared fundamentals. John Owen himself praised both Cameron and Amyraut's understanding of divine justice and the Trinity (Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:79–80. On Amyraut's view of the Trinity, see Moyse Amyraut, *De mysterio trinitatis*, part 1, 3–5). The main promoter of Amyraldian hypothetical universalism in England and himself a pupil of John Cameron was William Davenant. Davenant held to a general atonement in terms of intention and sufficiency. God's universal desire for the salvation of all men formed the basis for conditional salvation. "In the floor debate on redemption at the Westminster Assembly, Edmund Calamy of the Davenant School attempted to insert Amyraldism into the Catechism" (Blunt, "Debate of Redemption at the Westminster Assembly," 5–10).

bor; elsewhere you will have to beware the Syrtes, the Rocks and the Song of the Syrens.

Saumur is unreservedly described here as a haven, a safe refuge of truth being contrasted to the beguiling appearance of truth against which Jones should guard himself “elsewhere.” Amyraut’s progressive reaction against post-Reformed Protestant Scholasticism constitutes a significant *trait d’union* between Calvinism and Independent, General Baptist and Quaker theology. In fact, his shift from a theology centered on intellectual faculties to logocentric spiritualism³⁸ finds a notable counterpart in both Quakers and General Baptists and, though largely accounted for in terms of purpose and genre, it is ideally reflected in the ultimate spiritualism of Milton’s poetry.

In *De l’élévation de la foy et de l’abaissement de la raison* (1641), Amyraut argues for the limited or relative potential of natural reason, yet the unlimited reach of faith opening the eyes of natural reason. Faith (right reason) he thus regards as far surpassing natural reason, though encompassing its functions, a dying to self to be built up by the grace and light of Christ.³⁹ Along the same lines, with regard to salvation and the Christian life, Milton understands God’s prevenient grace as shedding light on man’s frail condition that he may fully trust in the deliverance provided at the cross:

... once more I will renew
His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthralled
By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
Upheld by me ...
...
By me upheld, that he may know how frail
His fall’n condition is, and to me owe
All his deliv’rance, and to none but me. (3.175–82)

38. Endy argues for Amyraut as a rationalist based on his assessment of his earliest treatise (1631), while siding with B. G. Armstrong (*Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*) in considering the French divine as substantially though not formally Calvinist (Endy, *William Penn*, 100). Amyraut’s early rationalism granted, a drift towards spiritualism appears to inform his treatise *De l’élévation de la foy* (1641) and his different visual angle on predestination in his *Traité de la prédestination* marks a decided step in the direction of conceiving of God’s love as personally pursuing all individuals.

39. Likewise Penington maintains that man “is to be wholly broken down and brought to nothing, even in the very Naturals, that he may be new made and built up in the newness of the Spirit” (*Some Questions and Answers*, in *Works*, 1.363).

That divine act of upholding man's natural faculties which for Myers is to result in true liberty in terms of freedom of choice⁴⁰ is in fact defined by the recurrence of the object pronoun "me." The circular motion of the chiasmus "Upheld by me . . . By me upheld" contrasts the person on whom the delivering initiative rests with man's enthralled and impotent self. The result of the quickening of grace is not to enable man's faculties to achieve true freedom, but to allow man to perceive his condition and rely on the one who alone is the true source of deliverance.

In the final analysis, *Paradise Lost* breaks away from Scholastic tenets in its understanding of faith as right reason's selfless pursuit of God and in the concomitant assimilation of Christian liberty to the principle of grace and its Spirit-empowered ramifications. If *Paradise Lost* is about how to make man free in the first place, the answer is found in its soteriological message.

In seeking an embryonic introduction to the poetical unfolding of the latter in the poem, no more defining sketch is found than in Isaac Penington's witness to the manifestation of God

By the voice of his Son, by the arm of his Son, by the virtue of his Son's light and life inwardly revealed and working in our hearts. This loosed us inwardly from the darkness, from the bonds of sin and iniquity, from the power of the captive and destroyer, and turned our minds inwardly towards our Lord and Saviour, to mind his inward appearance, his inward shinings, his inward quickening; all which were fresh from God and full of virtue.⁴¹

40. Myers, *Milton's Theology of Freedom*, 152. See pp. 154–55, n. 64.

41. Penington, "The Testimony of Thomas Ellwood Concerning Isaac Penington," x.