

Foreword

I HAVE BEEN SUPERVISING Filippo Falcone's work on John Milton over the years and I want to offer as my opening statement that it has been a pleasure throughout, from his very beginnings to the achievement of the present book, the outcome of his doctoral dissertation: I have supervised his strictly-speaking academic work (in collaboration with other colleagues), but I also had frequent occasions to discuss with him the issues—indeed sometimes argue and fight over them—of the path of research he started conducting of his own accord on the Miltonic topics of his choice, sailing closer to theology than to literature. This meant enquiring into theological issues next to literary ones, which double perspective would eventually lead to the present work.

The issue of liberty in Milton and of its source always came first and foremost for him, as he himself states in the acknowledgments pages of the present book. Such was the notion of “inner,” or “inward” liberty, which he maintains was his first interest in any case, as is immediately made clear to the reader by the title itself Filippo has thought fit to choose for his book. Thus it will be a pleasure for the reader, as it has been for the present writer, to discuss his peculiar literary as well as theological topics with Filippo Falcone and to hear from him the reports of how he was fearlessly opening up to discussions with Milton scholars from a wide variety of universities (to avoid the provincialism of sticking simply with his own institution); as with human beings, it has been equally captivating to hear him report about the books he was all the time reading: I have seldom met a young scholar so passionately fond of setting his eyes on anything available on his chosen topic and of leaving no stone unturned to make sure his would be the best “library” on the topic available, and so its bibliography is—and all first hand in collecting and reading, in understanding and making use of. Moreover, in the abovementioned acknowledgments pages, our author, in sending out his

thanks into the world, moves from men to books *via* a hint (“If a book is the quintessence of a man . . .”) at a passage from *Areopagitica*.

The present book in any case is never far from a theological outlook. Altogether it deals with how the gospel frees humankind from the rule of the law and of men and frequent are the cases in which the author argues with other critics on points of theology and on the way in which this discipline and field of study conditions the book’s reading of Milton’s poetical works. This may also be the place where to remind the reader that, before starting to write the present book, its author felt the appropriateness—indeed the necessity—to go back on a topic frequently tackled by critics with uncertain results, that of *De Doctrina Christiana* and its attribution, for which he is in favor of Milton himself.

The book which results from such a big effort painstakingly digs into Milton’s early prose writings to begin with, in which the attention to liberty on Milton’s part seems to be as strong as any other revolutionary’s in the unsettled atmosphere of the early and middle Forties, but in any case it is remarked that very soon Milton started equating inward liberty with Christian liberty, thus defining Milton’s libertarian revolution as an inherently inward one.

Filippo then moves on to look at Milton’s poetry and at the role played there by light to mean Christian liberty. This device, that corresponds to a poetic transposition of Christian liberty, is used in the first place in order to define Satan, but also of course Adam and Eve, thus generating a very original reading of the main characters in *Paradise Lost*. Thus Filippo’s reading of the crucial book 9 proves particularly thought-provoking. At the end of this very particular reading of all the aspects and the development of Milton’s work the book leads us to the conclusion that (to employ the author’s own words) “*Paradise Lost* teaches the lesson that the true Eden is within.”

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