favor of justification through faith, with an accompanying focus on the human being as individual.

In the course of presenting this argument, Grant offers a perceptive account of a wide range of writers and movements on the Continent that may be said to have links to the four poets in their religious development and poetic structuring. His learning is formidable, and offers, it seems to me, the firmest possible indication that the poets are part of a deep and broad series of developments in thinking about God and humanity. From Augustine to Henry More, from medieval vision to a hammering at the door of the Enlightenment (the capital is mine, here, as is the implied interpretation), we are carried through a varied, sometimes heroic, always compelling company, as the four writers are seen to belong now with one party, now with another. We may, in fact, become rather dizzied by the many, many personal introductions to various individuals; for in meeting them, and in attempting to understand their relationship to the poet or poets under consideration, we may tend to lose track of the conversation, the intent of the remark, the direction of Grant's demonstration of relationship.

Grant detects poetic expression responding to the intricacies of theological and ecclesiastical viewpoints as they come to the poet from others, and his presentation of this material is, I think, the finest aspect of his book. What results, very frequently, is both profound and graceful, as when Herbert's music or Donne's use of the first-person pronoun (to mention but two examples from a rich store) is seen as rooted in the religious heritage and acceptance of the two men. We find ourselves responding well to the symmetry of tradition as Grant offers it to us: it is always, I think, a happy experience to be given a new sense of direction or relationship in writing long loved.

As indicated earlier, the book does have some sense of strain in the presentation of questions and answers. Fairly often, I think, the dazzling display of learning with respect to the poets' antecedents on the one hand, and the sensitivity to the verse as poetic process on the other, remain two separated phenomena. We often lack a sense of inevitability, or at least of reasonable sureness concerning cause and effect—or, to be fairer to Grant's claims, concerning religious tradition and poetic response. And when this sense is missing, we may feel that we have worked on fairly demanding intellectual and spiritual materials, and have then been suddenly cast adrift. We see the lines of verse that Grant quotes, but we do not, at times, really feel that the case for influence or cause or specific spiritual ambience has been sufficiently made. But when this strain is not present (and that is most of the time), *The Transformation of Sin* is joyous, enriching going indeed.

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Hugh M. Richmond. *The Christian Revolutionary: John Milton*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1975. Pp. xi, 204. \$8.

The last few decades have provided a rich and varied abundance of scholarly discussions of Milton's work. In spite of the ever-widening chasm that separates us culturally, theologically, politically, psychologically from Milton, his work continues to fascinate, perplex, and inspire us. And the reactions of modern scholarly readers are almost always themselves

interesting because their subject is so multifaceted and vast. Each in his turn provides the "definitive" exposition of Milton's greatness or of Milton's failure in confident and persuasive terms, mining the Milton canon for the ore that reveals the richness or paucity of the vein. Richmond's book is no exception.

Richmond feels that in this century "we have at last begun to lose the capacity to respond to Milton's verse accurately and sympathetically" and his book sets out to restore "some of that responsiveness and the political effectiveness of which it is the essential correlative." The thesis postulates a Milton who is the "heir to the two great contradictory yet complementary traditions of European thought . . . he was a disciple of deliberate reason . . . derived in part from Greek sources like Aristotle and the Platonic Academy, and . . . a professed Christian in the selective tradition of intuitive Protestantism" (p. 21). Milton's confidence in the supremacy of the intellect and his lofty idealism produced his early poems and the prose work, where he expresses "his Platonically optimistic view of human capacity" (p. 30). Milton's dependence upon reason and idealism inhibited his artistic growth, but with the collapse of the Commonwealth, Milton's idealism was finally shattered and he had perforce to come to grips with utter failure. It is that process of conquest that inspires the three great works of Milton's maturity.

Richmond believes that "context defines content" and in developing his thesis he discusses Milton's works mainly chronologically and contextually, in terms of Milton's intellectual, domestic and political environment. Chapter 3 on "Orthodox Verse" deals with some of the minor poetry, including "Comus" and "Lycidas." This chapter offers some strange as well as perceptive comments. The castigation of false priests and Catholic spoilers of good Christians, for example, is taken to be an attack on "Laud's visible church" (p. 79), on "Laudian Anglicanism" (p. 41), although there is nothing in the poem to suggest that "Anglican Priest" and "false priest" are synonymous terms. The principal strength of the chapter lies in its sensible and sensitive discussion of "Comus." The contextual treatment here effectively elucidates and illuminates the text of the masque, which is concerned to show that "mere rectitude can only arrive at a stalemate with vice" (p. 72), a process to which, it is vigorously and persuasively argued, Sabrina makes a major contribution.

Chapter 4, "The Dream of Reason," discusses Milton's prose to emphasize Milton's idealism and impracticality, the abstract quality of his reason and his inability to recognize the true nature of man and the significance of historical fact. Before the chapter ends, however, Richmond attacks Milton for sounding like "a misanthropic extremist" in his analysis of his countrymen's failings. It is difficult to agree with the view, implicit in this chapter, that Milton should not have written his revolutionary prose because he should have realized it was bound to fail in its intention. Given such a premise, mankind would attempt very little and accomplish even less.

In Chapter 5 the fall of Milton into pamphleteering is after all seen as fortunate because "only its cataclysmic failure could have served as a prelude for a truly epic vision, to which mere youthful ambition cannot aspire without risk of ridicule" (p. 123). Milton's experience has finally freed him from the inhibiting bonds of idealism and pure reason; he now sets out to teach men how to reconcile themselves to inevitable failure. The chapter, however, is somewhat of a disappointment; it is perhaps too brief to do justice to the author's intention. It begins by marrying Milton's poetry to the jargon of psychiatry and the results are clear and obvious grounds for annulment (consummation is never effected). There are fre-

quent extravagant statements like "most moderns have lost the capacity to read anything in another sense than literal" (p. 131). The later discussion, however, concerned with Adam and Eve and the significance of Love and the educative function of suffering, is excellent, although the view that Man's failure is inevitable brings the whole theodical structure of *Paradise Lost* into serious question.

The final chapter, "The Christian Revolutionary," deals with *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. It is useful to see the confrontations between Satan and Christ as "a dialogue of one" occurring in the mind of Jesus, as Richmond does, but this idea cannot cover those instances where Satan appears as a character clearly outside the mind of Christ: at the baptism and during his consultations with his cohorts in the middle air. From that point where Christ is said to have "into himself descended" (II, 111), his experience of the Satanic suggestions is undoubtedly self-generated, a condition which prevails until Satan meets him "walking on a Sunny hill" (IV, 447) after the Night of Terror. Although Richmond ignores the problem posed by Satan's obvious existence as a being outside the mind of Christ, his perception of the nature of the great central "temptations" is illuminating and—although he makes little of this point—of enormous value in providing dramatic verve to a poem frequently said to be lacking in vitality and suspense. One might disagree with Richmond's assertion that the lines in praise of Athens (IV, 236-84) constitute "the greatest passage of verse that Milton ever wrote" (p. 169) and with the view that Jesus when he rejects the offer imbedded in that passage is rejecting "systematic thinking" (p. 172). In fact, if the "dialogue of one" reveals anything about Christ it surely reveals his capacity for and thorough devotion to "systematic thinking." However, Richmond concludes, the Christian hero, like Christ, when given choice, will choose to do "nothing significant" (p. 172). This seems a superficial interpretation of Christ's function in *Paradise Regained*. Christ's standing and waiting is surely spiritual activity of the highest order.

Richmond concludes that Christ stands and waits in vain and never receives "any sense of God's will for him" (p. 175). Clearly the heavenly banquet of which Christ partakes (liking well enough the Giver) harbours no symbolic suggestions for Richmond. For him, "The climax of Milton's career as a Christian poet" (p. 185) occurs when Samson recognizes "the unsolicited condescension of God's will to lowly human awareness" (p. 187).

In the "Epilogue," the final works are said to reveal, in summary, "Milton's unique blend of a tolerant but wholly disillusioned acceptance of human fallibility with a startling trust in an ultimately benevolent providence which seems likely to prove most valuable to the disoriented modern mind" (p. 196).

The Christian Revolutionary: John Milton is a provocative book which will appeal to some Miltonists because it presents a view of Milton's literary career and contributions agreeable to their own; it will appeal to others because it stimulates reconsideration of their own attitudes and forces them to muster their defenses; it will appeal to all because it drives us back to the text of Milton's work, where after all the full value of Milton eternally resides.

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