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Rev. of *Milton and the Nature of Man*

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A. G. George, *Milton and the Nature of Man*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1974, viii + 168 pp., \$7.00.

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The author, a professor of English literature at the University of Delhi, undertakes in this volume to examine the concept of man which emerges from Milton's works, particularly *Paradise Lost*. His approach involves theological, psychological, and historical perspectives as well as those of literary criticism.

While admitting the presence of many strands of influence, Professor George contends that Milton's concept of man was basically biblical and that its most important element was the belief that man is made in the image and likeness of God. The implications of this dogma, which is described as the cornerstone of Christian thought from St. Irenaeus to Karl Barth, not only transcend both classical ideas and those of seventeenth-century Puritanism but make Milton's thought as relevant today as at any time in the past.

With these premises as his basis the author analyzes several aspects of man's nature as revealed in *Paradise Lost*: his dignity, his freedom and rationality, his original harmony with nature, with God, with himself. Milton sees man as a unified personality characterized by both individuality and humanity. By the latter term Professor George means human relationships. Individuality alone is not enough: it "is to be complemented with and completed by the reciprocity and the collateralness of love" (p. 69). In this context the nature of the Fall is treated at some length. Some important distinctions are made; sin did not cause the Fall but rather the Fall brought sin into the world; original sin disfigured but did not obliterate the divine image in man. As both free and fallen, man still retains, however dim and perverted the likeness, the "Divine similitude" (*Paradise Lost*, xi.512) with which he was created. The narrative structure of *Paradise Lost* must be seen in relation to this view of reality.

These points are not new either to theology or to Milton scholarship. However, the author argues them persuasively, and he does provide a new insight into the narrative of the Fall—or at least states it in new terms—when he insists that the relationship between Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* is truly an analogue of that between God and man. At the moment of the Fall love asserts itself. Though the love is distorted by jealousy and selfishness, yet the Fall demonstrates that the power of hate, even at the moment of its greatest triumph, has not been able to efface love entirely. This viewpoint synthesizes the two opposing stands usually taken by critics: that Adam's Fall, motivated by love for Eve, is a noble deed, or that as a transgression of God's law it is a sin pure and simple.

The method adopted by the author has advantages and disadvantages. He sets his analysis of Milton's concepts against the background of some representative thinkers: St. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kierkegaard, Cassirer, Barth, Toynbee. The method involves copious quotation from these writers as well as from Milton. Much useful material is thereby provided; yet the whole has the air of a dissertation painfully amassing material by piling up quotations. This may be less of a drawback for readers not intimately familiar with *Paradise Lost*, but to most Milton scholars the result will seem labored. The style too leaves something to be desired; in its successful efforts to be clear, it is monotonous and repetitious. The author makes a point of refuting or correcting the views of some of the standard critics on Milton but ignores almost entirely the work of more recent scholars.

Nevertheless, the book serves several useful purposes. The general reader with some theological bent will be interested in the demonstrations and the quotations; the professional theologian not well acquainted with Milton will see how theology can be presented by a great literary artist; and the literary scholar may be stimulated by the comparisons to pursue further study of his own. One of the greatest benefits, perhaps, is that those imbued

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with the vague feeling that Milton is irrelevant will see him for what he is: a Christian humanist whose work draws on the deepest truths of human nature and of the revelation which illumines it.