

the 1655 edition as it would have appeared to early modern readers. Still, the desire to structure the three-volume set chronologically is perfectly reasonable, and it would have been unviable to reprint the first part twice in an already lengthy edition.

The well-informed and cogent paratextual material in this new edition of the *Works* makes it clear that the writings of Henry Vaughan—the product of civil wars (and culture wars) and their aftermath—are more relevant than ever. His eight major works—*Poems, with the Tenth Satyre of Juvenal Englished* (1646), *Silex Scintillans* (1650, 1655), *Olor Iscanus* (1651), *The Mount of Olives* (1652), *Flores Solitudinis* (1654), *Hermetical Physick* (1655), *The Chymists Key* (1657), and *Thalia Rediviva* (1678)—speak to our own troubled times. They exemplify or address such subjects as writing literature in a polarized age; literature as a form of political resistance; the covert politics of translation; the therapeutic benefits of creative writing; finding psycho-spiritual hope and peace during periods of turmoil; the desire to remain holy or untainted in an age of dirty dealings; the methods by which to secure one's mental and physical health; the value and benefits of nature; and the meaning of life and willing acceptance of death. For those interested in following up on these and other topics, the editors provide a twenty-page select bibliography of primary and secondary sources at the conclusion of the third volume.

In sum, Dickson, Rudrum, and Wilcher have produced an exemplary scholarly edition of the works of Henry Vaughan. It is characterized by scrupulously edited texts as well as accessible and authoritative paratextual material that serve as a map for readers to navigate Vaughan's richly diverse and deeply relevant oeuvre. It is impossible to imagine three editors whose combined expertise on Vaughan would equal that of Dickson, Rudrum, and Wilcher, given that they have dedicated decades of their academic lives to assessing and analyzing the works of the Welsh writer. This edition represents a significant milestone for Vaughan studies and will hopefully encourage students and scholars to revisit the works of the self-styled Silurist. No research library should be without it.

Holly Faith Nelson, *Trinity Western University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2020.113

*Milton and the Parables of Jesus: Self-Representation and the Bible in John Milton's Writings*. David V. Urban.

Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018. xii + 316 pp. \$89.95.

---

David Urban follows such prominent works of scholarship as Dayton Haskin's *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (1994) and Stephen Fallon's *Milton's Peculiar Grace* (2007) by

reading Milton's canon from the perspective of his self-representation. In this highly readable book, Urban offers a sharp focus on the relationship of the personal and the poetic by arguing that, over the course of his life, Milton found deep connections between his own concerns and four of Jesus's parables from the book of Matthew.

The book has three parts, organized not by chronology but by parable. Part 1 concerns the parable of the talents and the parable of the laborers, part 2 the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and part 3 the parable of the householder. In part 1, Urban describes Milton's fear of being the unprofitable servant as a manifestation of his anxiety about his own relationship to God. Urban traces Milton's concern with the use of his talents from Sonnet 7 ("How soon hath time") through the autobiographical preface to the second book of *The Reason of Church Government* and Sonnet 19 ("When I consider"). These highly personal texts ultimately remind Milton of God's grace that "offers relief from past failures and divine hope for an uncertain future" (52). Urban then presents a regenerationist reading of *Samson Agonistes* in which Samson learns to use his talent in response to God's call, and a comparison between Abdiel in *Paradise Lost* and the Son in *Paradise Regained*. Both represent the "ideal servant of God" (77), their steadfastness and patience.

The strongest section of the book—on the wise and foolish virgins—examines manifestations of the parable in Sonnet 9 ("Lady, that in the prime"), *A Masque . . . at Ludlow Castle*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. Beginning with scholars' arguments about Milton's own gender identity, Urban identifies the lady of Sonnet 9 as Milton's initial idealization of Mary Powell, a point Urban connects to the idealization of marriage in the divorce tracts and of chastity in the masque. As Urban makes clear, Milton's version of chastity includes marital sexuality, which Adam and Eve learn can be "genuinely redemptive" (141). Improper sexuality, or passion, causes Samson's failure: his freeing himself from passion allows him to return to God's favor as his champion.

The final section, on the householder "which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old," uses this very brief story as Milton's model for reading and using the scriptures. Urban sees this metaphor as an exhortation to read Jesus's teachings "in light of the Hebrew scriptures" and to pass "such knowledge on to his own audience" (192). The parable thus provides the justification for Milton's practice in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *De Doctrina Christiana* of being guided by "the inner scripture of the Spirit" (195). From this perspective, the epic voice in *Paradise Lost* becomes a direct parallel to Moses, both inspired by the Holy Spirit. In *Paradise Regained*, both the Son and Mary relate and interpret what they have learned. Finally, Samson learns to read and apply his intuitions of God's call.

Urban offers a coherent argument for identifying parables as a significant vehicle for understanding both Milton's personal and poetic visions. He also clearly frames his thesis within the context of the larger conversation on Milton's self-representation, in accessible language. The audience for this book should therefore include readers

whose familiarity with Christian scriptures may be weak and those who may be unfamiliar with this subject within Milton studies.

However, readers may be annoyed by Urban's tendency to assume as settled certain issues that remain debatable, to the point where he sometimes overlooks textual points that could compromise his argument. In his discussion of *A Masque*, for example, he mentions only in passing that the Lady becomes trapped in Comus's chair. This point has generated extensive discussion about the Lady's chastity, but a reader would not know this from Urban's presentation. He also seems to assume that Samson's regeneration is a settled question, and that Eve's supposed narcissism is without nuance. Readers should regard this book as an engaging, but not definitive, contribution to the study of Milton's life and works.

Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, *Texas State University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2020.114