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Early Modern Poetic Exegesis

Henry Vaughan's Leprous Pharisee and Marcan Wilderness

Early modern English poets often put events from the life of Jesus to verse. They drew liberally from the four canonical gospels to do so, but those gospels sometimes relate events with unique or seemingly conflicting details (e.g., a man who is both leprous and a Pharisee). The shortest of the four gospels, the Gospel of Mark, often has the fewest unique details for poets to use. This relative paucity of unique details did not mean that early modern poets neglected Mark's possible contributions to their work—even if more modern literary critics seem to neglect Mark's possible contributions to early modern biblically based poetry. By contextualizing Henry Vaughan's "The Search" in biblically based early modern verse and exegesis, this article argues that the fullest reading of "The Search" relies on an understanding that Vaughan followed Mark's terse account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness instead of Matthew's and Luke's much more full accounts.

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> I confess, some seeming contradictions (not casually scattered, but) designedly placed [in the canonical Gospels], by Gods providence in his Word;
>
> First, To whet and exercise our diligence and industry.
>
> Secondly, To raise the reputation of Scripture; seeing (through mans corruption) *Intellecta ab omnibus, sunt neglecta à plurimis*; What all understand, many undervalue.
>
> Thirdly, To render the profession of the Ministery necessary, were it but to reconcile those contradictions to the capacities of their people.
>
> For these and other Reasons, some seeming contrarieties appear in Scripture; but directly and diametrically, Gods Word cannot be brought against his Word, to cross it; though it maybe brought into it, to clear it.[1]

It is now both so uncontroversial and well-understood that early modern culture was scripturally saturated that the effects of such a saturation risk being undervalued in our critical readings of their literary works. *Intellecta ab omnibus, sunt neglecta à plurimis*, as the Anglican clergyman Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) wrote in his commentary on the account of Christ's temptations.[2] How did such scriptural familiarity affect the way that devout early moderns wrote poems based in biblical events? One might reductively suggest that early modern religious poets drew from the various biblical texts that comprise the Bible as one might casually draw from a single well—as if the complexities and contradictions of the Bible flowed easily together into one transparent, insipid liquor. However, as this paper argues, early modern religiously based poems demonstrate that their poets savoured the nuanced contradictions and differences amongst the Bible's sometimes divergent accounts, quite often foregrounding those nuances and allowing them to resonate with sense at key moments in their works. Poets partook in the intellectually and spiritually edifying exegetical work that Thomas Fuller suggests the Bible stimulates. That is, when writing poems based on biblical events, poets like Henry Vaughan and George Herbert recognized and then balanced the seeming contradictions and differences of the Bible in their poems for increased effect—a type of metaphysical wit whereby the recognizable contradictions and differences in the Bible were reconciled in perhaps surprising

[1] Thomas Fuller, *A Comment on the Eleven First Verses of the Fourth Chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, Concerning Christs Temptations* (London, 1652), 119.

[2] Ibid.

ways for readers, but surely edifying ways for poets who managed to show biblical contradictions and differences as illustrative rather than problematic.

A Leprous Pharisee

While critical methods for explaining biblical differences in details across the Bible continue to change, the differences themselves are, and have long been, easily recognizable to close readers of the Bible. For example, modern and early modern exegetes alike have readily recognized that each of the four canonical Gospels relates a reasonably detailed account of Jesus being anointed. The skeletal outline of these accounts is similar: a woman anoints Jesus at a gathering; a male figure at the gathering contests the anointing; and Jesus defends the woman's actions. However, the finer details conflict in numerous ways. For example, the anointing appears early in Jesus' ministry in Luke (Luke 7:36–50) and then either six (John 12:1–8) or two days (Matt 26:6–13 and Mark 14:3–9) before his final Passover in the other three Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, an anonymous woman anoints Jesus (Matt 26:7; Mark 14:3); in John, the anointer is Mary (John 12:3), the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 11:1); in Luke, the anointer is identified as "a woman in the city, which was a sinner" (Luke 7:37), a woman who had frequently been associated with Mary Magdalene.[3] The location of the anointing was amongst the problematic details for early moderns who wished to reconcile these accounts. In Matt 26:6 and Mark 14:3, Jesus is anointed at the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany; in Luke 7:36–50, Jesus is anointed at Simon the Pharisee's house. While twenty-first century commentators might explain such similarities and differences amongst these accounts by appeal to literary dependence or shared oral traditions and then subsequent authorial redaction, early moderns often sought either to differentiate or to reconcile such accounts as historical events. Differentiation was a relatively simple process for dealing with seeming contradictions: details simply cannot contradict if they do not have the same referent. That is, one does not need

[3] For very accessible modern commentaries on how Mary Magdalene became associated with several biblical women, see Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: Harper, 1993), 16 and 93–97, and Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 33. Biblical quotations come from *The Holy Bible 1611 Edition: King James Version. A Word-for-Word Reprint of the First Edition of the Authorized Version Presented in Roman Letters for Easy Reading and Comparison with Subsequent Editions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

to reconcile details between the four accounts of the anointings if each account refers to a different event. Reconciliation, on the other hand, required some creativity to justify details that logically cannot—but that must—hang together because the historical veracity of their referent is accepted. For example, if one believed that Matthew/Mark and Luke are indeed accurate in their location for the anointing and that all three Evangelists describe the same historical occurrence, then there must be some way of reconciling a leper (i.e., ritually unclean) with a Pharisee (i.e., rigorous adherent to Mosaic Law). With the number of striking similarities and differences amongst the accounts for the anointings, it is perhaps unsurprising that early modern commentators and poets variously suggested that Jesus was anointed three,[4] two,[5] or one[6] time(s) in his life.

In his seventy-two line lyrical poem "St. Mary Magdalen" which first appeared in his second part of *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (1655), Henry Vaughan conflated details from the four accounts of the anointings and further associated the anointer with Mary Magdalene.[7] In a poem of this length, Vaughan of course did not attend to all that the Bible has to say about either the anointer or Mary Magdalene. It is notable, therefore, that rather than avoiding the seemingly irreconcilable difference of location for the anointing (i.e., at Simon the Leper's or Simon the Pharisee's house), he included the differences in the final stanzas:

[4] That is, they grouped Matthew and Mark together, but left Luke and John as distinct events. See Johan Hiud, *The Storie of Stories* (London, 1632), 71–72, 299; John Mayer, *A Commentarie vpon the New Testament* (London, 1631), 299.

[5] They grouped Matthew, Mark, and John together, but left Luke as a distinct event. This is by far the most common grouping in the early modern period. See Thomas Bastard, *Five Sermons* (London, 1615), 81; John Calvin, *A Harmonie vpon the Three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke* (London, 1584), 366–70, 677–78; Samuel Craddock, *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists* (London, 1668), ch. IV, § XI, ch. V, § LXII; John Diodati, *Piovs Annotations vpon the Holy Bible Expounding the Difficult Places Thereof* (London, 1643), Matt 26:7–8, Luke 7:37; Henry Garthwait, Μονοτεσσαρον (Cambridge, 1634), 67–69, 178–79; Henry Hammond, *A Paraphrase and Annotations upon All the Books of the New Testament* (London, 1659), 213–14; Robert Hill, *The Consent of the Foure Euangelists* (London, 1598), chs. 49, 110); Leonard Hoar, *Index Biblicus* (London, 1668), §§ 47, 118; Edward Leigh, *Annotations upon All the New Testament Philologicall and Theologicall* (London, 1650), 157; and John Sweetnam, *S. Mary Magdalens Pilgrimage to Paradise* (St. Omer, 1617), 84–90.

[6] By their marginal cross-references, early modern Bibles tended to suggest a relationship amongst all four anointings, but that relationship was not particularly well-defined. The Tyndale New Testament and the Coverdale and King James Bibles, for example, variously encouraged reading across all four anointings through their marginalia.

[7] As did other poets. See Gervase Markham, *Marie Magdalens Lamentations* (London, 1601) and I. C., *Saint Marie Magdalens Conversion* (1603).

Self-boasting *Pharisee*! how blinde
A Judge wert thou, and how unkinde?
It was impossible, that thou
Who wert all false, shouldst true grief know;
Is't just to judge her faithful tears
By that foul rheum thy false eye wears?

This Woman (says't thou) *is a sinner*:
And sate there none such at thy dinner?
Go Leper, go; wash till thy flesh
Comes like a childes, spotless and fresh;
He is still leprous, that still paints:
Who Saint themselves, they are no *Saints*. (61–72)[8]

Critics have noted that Vaughan identified Simon the Leper with Simon the Pharisee here, but these lines are more than just casual identification.[9] Vaughan combined the two biblically incongruent characters by their pejorative senses[10] and thereby intensified the criticism against anyone who unjustly judges the weeping penitent. He used the Bible's seeming contradictions to strengthen his theological point: one must present oneself humbly and penitently before Christ, exemplified by Mary, rather than uncleanly and hypocritically, exemplified by the composite character of a leprous Pharisee. Where Mary contritely sheds penitent tears, the Pharisee is "blinde" (61) to such action because of spiritual illness: her "faithful tears" (65) contrast with the "foul rheum" that covers his "false eye" (66) and with his need to wash himself spotless (69–70). Her "true grief" (64) contrasts with his hypocrisy: the Pharisee recognizes the uninvited penitent as "a sinner" (67), but fails to recognize that surely there are also sinners amongst his invited guests (68). In Vaughan's hands, the seeming contradictions are shown to have meaning: they come together for a resonant social commentary.

[8] I quote all of Vaughan's works from L. C. Martin, ed., *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957).

[9] French Fogle, ed., *The Complete Poetry of Henry Vaughan* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 305n4; Martin, *Works*, 749nn59, 61; Alan Rudrum, ed., *Henry Vaughan: The Complete Poems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 618n69.

[10] The Gospels often present the Pharisees as opposing Jesus and, therefore, they were frequently interpreted in a negative light. See, e.g., Matt 23:1–33; Matt 12:1–8, Mark 2:23–28, and Luke 6:1–5; Matt 15:1–9; and John 18:1–3.

Searching Each Gospel

Where early modern exegetes logically or lexically explained how each Gospel contributed to the overall biblical story, poets incorporated such contributions into the rhetorical, narrative, and poetic fabric of their works. Such efforts are evident in exegetical and poetic treatments of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness: Matt 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13, and Luke 4:1–13. For example, Matt 4:3 reports that the devil tempted Jesus to turn "stones" to bread, but Luke 4:3 uses the singular "stone." In his commentary on the temptations, Anglican clergyman Daniel Dyke (d. 1614) explained the difference by way of synecdoche, where one or part stands for the many or whole: stone suggests many stones as a pestilent fly suggests a swarm.[11] Poet Giles Fletcher (1586?–1623), on the other hand, incorporated the difference into the description and the narrative of his poem. Fletcher retold the story of the temptations in *Christs Victorie on Earth*, one of four cantos that comprise the lengthy poem of over 260 eight line stanzas, *Christs Victorie, and Triumph in Heaven, and Earth, over, and after Death* (1610). Fletcher simply has the plural to set the scene and the singular for the action of gathering and tempting with a specific stone:

> For stones doe growe, where corne was lately sowne:
> (So stooping downe, he gather'd up a stone)
> But thou with corne canst make this stone to eare. (II.20.4–6)[12]

Or again, when Jesus enters the wilderness, Matt 4:1 and Luke 4:1 report that he was "led"; Mark 1:12, on the other hand, relates that Jesus was "driven." For this difference, Anglican clergyman Henry Hammond (1605–1660) interpreted Scripture by Scripture, noting that ἐκβάλλειν has a less forceful sense elsewhere in Scripture.[13] Conversely, in his long poem, over two thousand

[11] Daniel Dyke, *Two Treatises* (London, 1616), 237; for other such explanations see Leigh, *Annotations*, 104, John Lightfoot, *The Harmony of the Foure Evangelists, among Themselves, and with the Old Testament. The Second Part* (London, 1647), 4, and William Perkins, *The Combat betweene Christ and the Diuell Displayed: Or a Commentarie vpon the Temptations of Christ* (London, 1606), 18.

[12] I quote from Frederick S. Boas, ed., *Giles and Phineas Fletcher: Poetical Works*. 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), an edition which numbers by stanza but not by line: for ease of reference, I cite by canto, stanza, and line number within that stanza.

[13] Hammond, *A Paraphrase and Annotations upon All the Books of the New Testament*, 144. For other explanations see Dyke, *Two Treatises*, 216; Fuller, *Comment*, 5; John Lightfoot, *The Harmony, Chronicle and Order of the New-Testament* (London, 1655), 1–2; and Perkins, *Combat*, 1.

lines in length, on the temptations, *Paradise Regained* (1671), John Milton allowed the Son to recognize the internal tension that anyone might feel at a moment of life-defining choice: "And now by some strong motion I am led / Into this wilderness" (I, 290–91).[14] Poetical works about the temptations are replete with such poetical exegesis of even the smallest biblical differences.

Yet modern critics tend to neglect the possible contributions of the shortest of the temptation accounts, Mark 1:12–13, to early modern poems about the temptations. This neglect has long been recognizable in criticism of the most well-known poem on the temptations, *Paradise Regained*. For example, Elizabeth Marie Pope explored Milton's use of his biblical sources, stating that all literary treatments of the temptations but Milton's followed one narrative structure, Matthew's:

> But throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it seems to have been customary, almost obligatory to use the Matthew order [of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness] in every work which left the decision in the hand of the author: a harmony of the Evangelists, a life of Christ, a mystery play, a poem, an "exposition" of the temptation, a sermon or a group of sermons which did not form part of a large collection specifically based on Luke. *Paradise Regained* is the only exception to the rule that I have so far encountered.[15]

In Barbara Kiefer Lewalski's still largely influential monograph *Milton's Brief Epic*, Mark's contribution is mentioned only parenthetically on the first page:

> Milton's *Paradise Regained* presents in four books, 2,070 blank verse lines, the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, narrated by the Synoptic Gospels in a few short verses (Matt 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13, Luke 4:1–13). Since the poem presents Christ's three major temptations according to the sequence in Luke rather than that in Matthew, and since Luke provides some warrant for conceiving of additional temptations as well, it evident that Luke's version is the poem's principal biblical source.[16]

[14] I quote from John Carey, ed., *Complete Shorter Poems* (Harlow: Longman, 1997).

[15] Elizabeth Marie Pope, *Paradise Regained: The Tradition and the Poem* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1962), 8.

[16] Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966), 3.

Notably here, though Mark 1:12–13 equally allows for numerous temptations by virtue of its stating that Jesus was "in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan" and of its non-specific temptations, Mark does not get equal billing with Luke for its contribution on that point. Even Watson Kirkconnell's thorough catalogue of analogues to *Paradise Regained* reports that "all subsequent [to the Gospels] literary treatments of the Temptation of Christ are derived directly or indirectly from either Matthew or Luke."[17]

Standing on the shoulders of such critics, readers might easily be excused for failing to see Mark's possible contributions in poems where the temptations play a significant role precisely because of the horizon of expectations to which they have been pointed. Such expectations impoverish readings of Vaughan's "The Search." By virtue of their relative length, Matthew's and Luke's accounts certainly offered early modern exegetes more details than did Mark's. However, while clergymen like Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), William Perkins (1558–1602), and Thomas Fuller[18] ordered their sermons and commentaries upon Matthew's longer and more detailed account, they continually reminded readers how each Gospel contributed to the temptation event within that order—including Mark's contributions. In this respect, commentators most frequently noted Mark's unique detail of the "beasts" being in the wilderness with Jesus (Mark 1:13),[19] a detail upon which Vaughan calls at the heart of "The Search."

Understanding how Mark contributes to the story of the temptations is crucial to unfolding Vaughan's poetic exegesis in "The Search." Appearing in the first part of *Silex Scintillans* (1650), "The Search" is a 96 line lyrical meditative poem in which a searcher traces events in Jesus' life in order "To find [his] Saviour" (5). The importance of the Marcan account to this poem first becomes apparent through the poem's convoluted shifts in verb tense. These shifts first gained critical meaning through Louis L. Martz's reading of "The Search"—a reading in which this poem reflected Ignatian spiritual exercises where individuals meditated on events in Christ's life and imagined

[17] Watson Kirkconnell, *Awake the Courteous Echo: The Themes and Prosody of* Comus, Lycidas*, and* Paradise Regained *in World Literature with Translation of the Major Analogues* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 251.

[18] Lancelot Andrewes, *The Wonderfull Combate (for Gods Glorie and Mans Saluation) betweene Christ and Satan* (London, 1592); Perkins, *Combat*; and Fuller, *Comment*.

[19] See Andrewes, *Wonderfull Combate*, 4; Calvin, *Harmonie*, 134; Dyke, *Two Treatises*, 208; Fuller, *Comment*, 27; John Heigham, *The Life of Ovr Lord and Saviovr Iesvs Christ* (1634), 266–67; Thomas Taylor, *Christs Combate and Conquest* (Cambridge, 1618), 19; and John Udall, *The Combate betwixt Christ and the Deuill* (London, [1588?]), B1v.

themselves at those events.[20] The shifts in tense in the poem seem to reflect the searcher's straddling of the world of the meditation and the world of his meditating. The poem begins in the present tense, "'*Tis* now cleare day: I *see* a Rose / Bud in the bright East" (1–2). It moves to the present perfect as the search begins: "all night *have* I / *Spent* in a roving Extasie / to find my Savior; I *have been* / As far as Bethlem, and *have seen* / His Inne, and Cradle" (3–7). The poem then shifts into the past for the recollection of events: "Being there / I *met* the Wise-men, *askt* them where / He might be found" (7–9, emphasis added). When the searcher declares his intention to enter the wilderness where Christ is tempted, the searcher switches to a simple future, a tense yet to be used and incongruent with the other tenses of the poem: "*I'le* to the wilderness" (53). Matthias Bauer points out that "the treatment of time (and concomitantly, space) attracts the reader's attention: the predominant semantic field of traveling and pilgrimage, the striking sequence of tenses, the number of adverbs referring to place and time—all of which make it difficult to identify a clear temporal sequence in the speaker's account."[21] More specifically, in a poem where a searcher in his present searches events that have already passed, a future tense foregrounds itself. As Alan Rudrum aptly notes, "the chronological scheme (following the course of Christ's life on earth) is broken at the point where the poet decides *I'll to the wilderness*."[22] Through its use of tense, the poem marks this wilderness as significant.

The poem also marks the wilderness as significant by its use of chronology and of events unique to individual Gospels. The search begins with events from Jesus' infancy and proceeds to events of Jesus' adult life. Through the initial part of this chronological search, the searcher unsurprisingly puts himself in events unique to individual Gospels: there are only two canonical Gospels with infancy narratives and those two Gospels tell quite different stories.[23] The searcher arrives at the "Inne, and Cradle" (6–7) and amongst "the Doctors" at the Temple (13–15), events unique to Luke 2:7 and 41–51 respectively; the searcher also recalls the Wise-men visiting (8–10) and

[20] Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 86–90.

[21] Matthias Bauer, "Time and the Word: A Reading of Henry Vaughan's 'The Search'," in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*, ed. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 293.

[22] Alan Rudrum, *Henry Vaughan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), 72.

[23] I.e., only Matthew (Matt 1–2) and Luke (Luke 1–2) have infancy and youth narratives, and their narratives differ significantly.

Jesus' flight into Egypt (11–13), events unique to Matt 2:1–11 and 13–15 respectively. With the next event that the searcher encounters, the adult Jesus' discourse with a Samaritan woman at Sychar (an event less frequently celebrated in early modern poetry), a pattern begins to be established: this event is also unique to a Gospel, John 4:4–5, and this unique Johannine detail continues the chronological search (i.e., from Jesus' infancy now into his adulthood). However, in going to Sychar, the searcher passes chronologically over the event that should occur between the young Jesus at the Temple and the adult Jesus at Sychar:[24] Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. From Sychar, the searcher continues chronologically towards the end of Jesus' life. This chronological pattern is broken when, as the terminus of the search, the searcher returns to the wilderness, an event that will now be told according to the only Gospel that has yet to contribute uniquely: Mark.

Being foregrounded by tense and chronology, the wilderness seems to be exceptionally significant to this search. Its significance lies in its biblical referent. Even though Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the temptations in the wilderness are much more detailed, Vaughan seems to have relied on Mark. He did not include details from the more nuanced Matthean or Lucan accounts except where they coincide with the Marcan account.

Some of the details here descend from the temptation accounts of Matthew and Mark, from Luke and Mark, or from Matthew, Luke, and Mark; however, Marcan details are the only ones always present and Mark provides the only unique detail. The "wilderness" (53) hails from all three of the Synoptics (Matt 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1) but the "beasts" (54) are solely Marcan (Mark 1:13). The searcher relates that Jesus "forty days withstood the fell / And high temptations of hell" (57–58): this chronology can only descend from Luke or Mark, where Jesus specifically is "in the wildernesse fourtie daies, tempted of Satan" (Mark 1:13; cf. Luke 4:2).[25] Angels are with Jesus

[24] The common chronological ordering of the life of Jesus according to the four canonical Gospels is Jesus' temptations before the meeting of the Samaritan at Sychar: see Craddock, *Harmony*, 39–42, 59–64; Garthwait, Μονοτεσσαρον, 21–22, 30–33; Hill, *Consent*, 7–8, 10–11; Hiud, *Storie*, 22–24, 32–34; Hoar, *Index Biblicus*, §§ II.18, 27; and Lightfoot, *The Harmony, Chronicle and Order of the New-Testament*, 12, 25–26.

[25] One could attempt to argue for the verbal echoes of Matthew and Luke in the word "fell" (57) and the phrase "high temptation" (58) because Matthew and Luke have the specific temptation where Satan tempts Jesus to cast himself from the Temple (Matt 4:8 and Luke 4:5). However, such echoes could work only superficially and against the context in the lines where they are found: Christ does not withstand the temptation on the Temple for forty days; rather, in Matthew and Luke that temptation explicitly occurs once at the end of the forty

"The Search"		**Mark**	**Matt**	**Luke**
I'le to the wilderness, and can		1:12	4:1	4:1
Find beasts more merciful than man,		1:13		
He lived there safe, 'twas his retreat	55			
From the fierce *Jew*, and *Herod's* heat,				
And forty days withstood the fell,		1:13		4:2
And high temptations of hell;				
With Seraphins there talked he		1:13	4:11	
His father's flaming ministry,	60			
He heavened their *walks*, and with his eyes				
Made those wild shades a Paradise,				
Thus was the desert sanctified				
To be the refuge of his bride;				
I'le thither then; see, It is day,	65			
The Sun's broke through to guide my way.				

THE TEMPTATIONS IN "THE SEARCH" WITH SALIENT BIBLICAL REFERENCES

(59–60) only in Matt 4:11 and Mark 1:13. Further, the more specific details of Matthew and Luke are conspicuously absent. "The Search" does not mention Christ's fasting or hunger (Matt 4:2 and Luke 4:2) or three specific temptations (Matt 4:3–10 and Luke 4:3–12), details perhaps most frequently discussed by early modern exegetes. By both its silences and its details, the representation of the temptations in "The Search" has a very Marcan feel.

One might rightfully be tempted to question if Vaughan is indeed relying on Mark here and if such a reliance is indeed significant. For example, one could argue that Vaughan's allusion to the temptations seems Marcan because of its brevity (i.e., Mark's short account is similarly a summary). However, Vaughan does not compress this section of the poem; rather, he lingers. The fourteen lines dedicated to the searcher in the wilderness count more than those dedicated to the Passion or burial.[26] One might also argue, as Martz

days. More significantly, in Matthew and Luke the temptation is for Jesus to "cast" himself down: casting is active; falling is passive. Jesus' actions need to be volitional for one to find the true typological source of the echo—"the Fall" in Gen 3. Jesus withstands all temptations through will where Adam fails through will.

[26] Lines 32–44 and 45–52, respectively.

has, that a symbolic interest—rather than a biblical allusion—is Vaughan's primary concern here: "Christ's retirement to the Wilderness is usually taken by the meditative handbooks as a symbol of the retirement of the soul to solitude for prayer and meditation: either actual or 'spiritual retirement.' This seems to be the implication here."[27] Certainly the poem allows for this symbol; but to look to this symbol without acknowledging its obvious biblical referent—in a poem filled with obvious biblical referents—seems disingenuous.

Rather, understanding that Vaughan alludes to Mark here is important for two reasons. The first reason is to correct these lines' referent in modern literary criticism. For example, in his edition of Vaughan's poems, Alan Rudrum cites Matt 4:1 at this point.[28] In his essay in honour of Rudrum, Bauer also refers the reader to Matt 4:1 as the salient biblical reference,[29] perhaps following Rudrum's edition.

The second reason to acknowledge Mark's contribution here is to allow the possibility of a deeper reading through edifying poetic exegesis, a possibility revealed by the poem's conclusion in its reference back to the wilderness. As the morning breaks on wilderness, the searcher straddles the world of his meditation and the act of writing the meditation:

> But as I urg'd thus, and writ down
> What pleasures should my Journey crown
> What silent paths, what shades, and Cells,
> Faire, virgin-flowers, and hallow'd *Wells*

[27] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 89. One might further be tempted to read "beasts" thematically along these lines. Vaughan uses "beasts" thirteen times in *Silex Scintillans* Parts 1 and 2; Imilda Tuttle, *Concordance to Vaughan's* Silex Scintillans (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1969), 12. His usage falls into two broad categories. In the first, beasts are discussed as a general category of animals discussed within a greater instructional context. For example, "Rules and Lessons" (85–90) divides animal life into three general categories roughly along the lines of Gen 1, which, when properly observed, provide moral instruction. Or again, in "Dressing," "beast" juxtaposes with the man in need of grace (31–36); cf. "Rules and Lessons" (78), "The Check" (27), and "The Morning-watch" (14). The second broad category comprises allusions to specific biblical verses, which is most obvious in "Psalm 104" because of that poem's paraphrastic nature: lines 33 and 54 simply employ the language of Ps 104:11 and 20 respectively; cf. "The Book" (15–24) and Gen 1–3 and "The Call" (24–29) and Deut 14:6. "Beasts" in "The Search" falls into this second category, a specific scriptural allusion.

[28] Rudrum, *Complete Poems*, 540n56.

[29] Bauer, "Time and the Word," 299.

I should rove in, and rest my head
Where my deare Lord did often tread. (67–72)

"Cells" (69) resonates with meanings that apply both to the world that has been searched and the world of the searcher. It can refer to a humble dwelling in the wilderness of the meditated world: "a lonely nook; the den of a wild beast."[30] It can also suggest "any one of a number of small compartments or niches into which a larger structure is divided."[31] That is, it can suggest the individual biblical verses of the searcher's meditating world, verses to which he can look to study better such locations and events. The past tense of lines 71–72 seem to allow for the first sense only, but the second sense is opened by the poem's directive final lines:

1.
Leave, leave, thy gadding thoughts;
Who Pores
and spies
Still out of Doores
descries
Within them nought.

2.
The skinne, and shell of things
Though faire,
are not
Thy wish, nor pray'r
but got
By meer Despair
of wings.

3.
To rack old Elements,
or Dust
and say
Sure here he must
needs stay
Is not the way,
nor just.

[30] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "cell," 1c.
[31] Ibid., 7b.

Search well another world; who studies this,
Travels in Clouds, seeks *Manna*, where none is. (75–96)

As both Martz and Lewalski variously argue, this conclusion directs us away from such meditative exercises (i.e., "cell" in the first sense, where one locates oneself in the meditated world): for Martz towards the world of man and the Eucharist, the manna which makes Christ fully present in this world;[32] for Lewalski towards heaven, the locale of the ascended Christ and (through the poem's epigram from Acts 17:27–28) towards emphasis on "Christ's redemptive acts for [the searcher's] own spiritual life."[33] While the poem's final lines certainly direct the reader away from the imaginative world that was searched, such readings perhaps undervalue how "manna" (96) in the poem's final line refers the reader back to the wilderness so heavily fore-grounded in this poem.[34] The poem's conclusion pulls the manna, cells, and wilderness together.

In his poem on the nature of Scripture, Vaughan has equated "manna" with the sustenance of Scripture itself:

Welcome dear book, souls Joy, and food! The feast
Of Spirits, Heav'n extracted lyes in thee;
Thou art lifes Charter, The Doves spotless neast
Where souls are hatch'd unto Eternitie.

In thee the hidden stone, the *Manna* lies,
Thou art the great *Elixir*, rare, and Choice;
The Key that opens to all Mysteries,
The Word in Characters, God in the *Voice*.

O that I had deep Cut in my hard heart
Each line in thee! ("H. Scriptures," 1–10)

[32] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 90.

[33] Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 335.

[34] Manna, of course, was the sustenance of the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod 16:14–15). Early modern commentators sometimes suggested a connection between the wilderness where the Israelites roamed for forty years and the wilderness where Jesus' was tempted forty days: see Lightfoot, *The Harmony, Chronicle and Order of the New-Testament*, 16; Perkins, *Combat*, 6; Taylor, *Christs Combate*, 43.

The Bible contains "manna." Scripture is "souls Joy, and food," a sustaining text which is "the Key that opens to all Mysteries," "which is The Word in Characters," and in which "each line" is equally important and desirable. Read with the scriptural manna in mind, "The Search" directs its readers away from a roving meditative search (as Martz and Lewalski have noted), but it also directs readers towards the Bible in general where sustenance is found in each silent path, shade, and cell.[35] While the unique contributions from the lines of the more verbose Gospels might be more immediately evident in "The Search" (i.e., Luke's account of the Inn and young Jesus at the Temple, Matthew's account of the Wise men and the family's flight to Egypt, John's account of the Samaritan woman at Sychar), only when we recognize the foregrounded referent upon which the poem turns (i.e., Mark's short temptation account) do we recognize how each line of each Gospel *does* contribute. "The Search" directs its readers towards the essence of the intellectually edifying activity which Fuller suggests that the Bible inherently stimulates: recognizing how each Gospel—regardless of length or difference—contributes by finding manna in the smallest of cells.

How All Thy Lights Combine

In his Preface to the second part of *Silex Scintillans*, Vaughan states his admiration for George Herbert,[36] and so his poems are frequently read relative to Herbert's influence. If readers searched for poems of sustained narrative amongst the more than 150 poems in Herbert's poetical work *The Temple* (1633), they would find only three poems at least as long as "The Search"—"Perirrhanterium," "The Church Militant," and "The Sacrifice"—and only the latter two have the sense of extended narrative similar to the "The Search." Of these two, only "The Sacrifice" comprehensively explores events in the life of Christ. In "The Sacrifice," Christ narrates his own Passion over sixty-

[35] Bauer also sees the implicit reference here to the word of God ("Time and the Word," 302), but over-extends his reading of "manna" to an allusion to the first of the three specific temptations as presented in Matt 4:3 and Luke 4:3, noting that "in Matthew's account Jesus is tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread." While his observation of the typology that links manna to the Israelites in the desert is certainly true, "The Search" makes no attempt to address this specific temptation. Manna here recalls the locale rather than temptation.

[36] "The first, that with any effectual success attempted a *diversion* of this foul and overflowing stream, was the blessed man, Mr. *George Herbert*, whose holy *life* and *verse* gained many pious *Converts*, (of whom I am the least) and gave the first check to a most flourishing and admired wit of his time" (391).

three three-line stanzas. The stanzas each conclude with a one-line refrain through which Christ asks the reader to identify with his suffering. Like "The Search", "The Sacrifice" gains meaning through a meditative process centered in Scripture.

"The Sacrifice" has received generous critical attention. William Empson pushed the poem into the critical spotlight by finding conflict and double meaning (or "ambiguity") in the final lines of "The Sacrifice," double meaning that reflects the psychological conflict of the poet. Empson's type of "ambiguity" in "The Sacrifice" occurs when the poet employs a word or phrase for which there "are the two opposite meanings defined by the context, so that the total effect is to show a fundamental division in the writer's mind."[37] Empson alerted readers to a possible double sense in the final lines of "The Sacrifice," stating that the ambiguity of the final refrain demands that readers must choose how it should be read:

> But now I die; now all is finished.
> My wo, mans weal: and now I bow my head.
> Onely let others say, when I am dead,
> Never was grief like mine. (249–52)[38]

The refrain shifts from the same question that concludes sixty-one other stanzas ("Was ever grief like mine?") to a statement ("Never was grief like mine."). Such a shift in the ultimate refrain helps to foreground this stanza. As well, in conjunction with line 251, the refrain further foregrounds itself by remaining within story time and creating an external prolepsis. Jesus both quotes himself and foretells what others may say of him in the future:

> English has no clear form for the Oratio Obliqua. He may wish that his own grief may never be exceeded among the humanity he pities, 'After the death of Christ, may there never be a grief like Christ's'; he may, incidentally, wish that they may say this, that he may be sure of recognition, and of a church that will be a sounding-board to his agony; or he may mean *mine* as a quotation from the *others*, 'Only let there *be* a retribution, only let my torturers say never was grief like theirs, in the day when

[37] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 225.

[38] I quote Herbert's poems from Helen Wilcox, ed., *The English Poems of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

> my agony shall be exceeded.' (Better were it for that man if he had never been born.)[39]

In "The Sacrifice," Jesus anticipates that readers will reflect on what it means to be a God-made-man at his moment of death—both in Christ's and their own words.

Engaging Empson, subsequent critics ground the poem in early modern religious habits of thought that might open readings of the poem. Rosemund Tuve, for example, rightly argued against much of the psychological emphasis of Empson's reading. Among her many insights, she noted that "The Sacrifice" draws on *O vos omnes* and on the *Improperia* traditions, antiphons with responses in the Good Friday liturgical service that mimic Jesus' reproaches from the cross.[40] Martz extended Tuve's reading, examining the "The Sacrifice" in terms of Continental meditational practices and noting that mental communion with Christ is achieved in such recollections of the Passion. For Martz, "The Sacrifice" is a meditation upon the liturgy that makes explicit the paradox of an omnipotent God-made-man who suffers and dies out of merciful love for his creation.[41] In challenging Martz's and Tuve's reading and in seeing "The Sacrifice" as subverting Catholic meditation in favour of Protestant sensibilities, Ilona Bell explores the implications of the final refrain's change from question to a new and definitive statement: "This resolution compels us to reconsider the traditional imitation of Christ's Passion, for Christ orders us to reiterate our decisive separation from his suffering, to 'say' that his grief is inimitable."[42] While each of these readings has indeed enriched readings of "The Sacrifice" by building on Empson through variously proposed early modern religious habits of thought, each neglects to recognize the one other instance of change in refrain, the refrain of stanza 54. If the refrain's change from question to statement is indeed significant, certainly readers must also consider how this final refrain relates to its only duplication in the poem.

[39] Empson, *Ambiguity*, 265; cf. Ilona Bell, "'Setting Foot into Divinity': George Herbert and the English Reformation," *Modern Language Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1977): 227.

[40] Rosemond Tuve, "On Herbert's 'Sacrifice'," *Kenyon Review* 12 (1950): 58. Cf. Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (New York: Octagon, 1966), 160–62; Ariane M. Balizet, "'A Jewish Choice': The Judaic Past and Present in the Poetry of George Herbert," *George Herbert Journal* 26, no. 1 and 2 (2002): 46–64.

[41] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 91–96.

[42] Bell, "'Setting Foot into Divinity'," 227; cf. Christina Malcolmson, *George Herbert: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 64–65.

By virtue of being the only two stanzas with this refrain, stanzas 54 and 63 are foregrounded and demand interpretation relative to each other, interpretation based in the differing contributions of the Evangelists. At the moment of his death, Christ utters quite different statements depending on the Gospel one reads. In Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34, Jesus' final words are, "*Eli, Eli, Lamasabachthani*, that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee?"; these Gospels then relate that Jesus "cried againe with a loud voice, yeelded vp the ghost" (Matt 27:50, Mark 15:37). Stanza 54 clearly echoes this Matthean/Marcan formulation: line 213 presents Jesus' final words, and line 215—the only half line of the poem[43]—mimics Jesus' unarticulated cry:

> But, *O my God, my God!* why leav'st thou me,
> The sonne, in whom thou dost delight to be?
> *My God, my God—*
> Never was grief like mine. (213–16)

As stanza 54 is the first stanza with a metrically deficient line, as this deficient line leads into Jesus' superlatively declarative rather than repetitively interrogative expression of grief, and as this deficiency and superlative declaration foreground Jesus' dying words as presented in Matthew and Mark, readers might reasonably expect that in this stanza Jesus would conclude his life and narration. Yet, the poem continues, reverting to the regular refrain until stanza 63 where it presents Jesus' dying words (again), but now in the formulation of a different Evangelist. In John 19:30, Jesus states definitively at the moment of death, "It is finished," and then he bows his head and dies. Stanza 63 concludes the poem in this way. "But now I die; now all is finished" (249) echoes this Johannine formulation, and, with that formulation, Herbert masterfully allows Jesus to conclude his narration and the story naturally and simultaneously. When Jesus dies in this story that he is narrating, he can no longer narrate: his life and narration "finish" together.

The content and style of these two stanzas emphasize the intellectually and spiritually edifying activity that the Bible stimulated for early moderns. The poem—like the biblical accounts on which it is based—demands that readers return multiple times and in different formulations to the moment when a God-made-man suffered and ultimately died on the cross. Further,

[43] As Wilcox recognizes in her note to this line, unfinished lines are rare for Herbert (110n215).

such a demand foregrounds the poem's silences, specifically Jesus' last words as presented in Luke 23:46: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These Lukan words have often been equated with Jesus' final cry of Matt 27:50 and Mark 15:37. In Calvin's *A Harmonie upon the Three Euangelists*, for example, one finds the following explanation of Luke 23:46 couched in commentary on Matt 27:50:

> Luke, who maketh no mention of the firste crying, doth report the wordes of the second cry, which Matthewe and Mark doe passe ouer. And hee saieth that hee cried, *Father into thy handes I commend my spirit*: wherein he declareth, that though hee had bene hardly shaken with violēt temptations, yet his faith was not shaken, but alwaies kept his place inuincible… And truely faith cannot be more certeinly and firmely approued, then where a godly mā, when he seeth himselfe beaten on euery side, that he findeth no comfort in menne, despising the madness of al the world, doth vnlade his sorowes and cares in the bosome of God, and resteth in the hope of his promyses.[44]

Quoting Ps 31:5, in which the psalmist supplicates for deliverance, Luke's Jesus outrightly displays a certain strength, faith, and resolve in his final words. Herbert's omission of this resolved cry in a poem that emphasizes that "never was grief like [his]" could hardly be accidental. Rather, in the light of these two stanzas which quite strikingly foreground themselves, the poem's selections and omission of Jesus' final words from across the Gospels would certainly linger on the palate of readers—but only for readers who savour the differences within the Bible.

Such a reading based on the appreciation of biblical difference can be confirmed through Herbert's poem "The H. Scriptures II." As does Vaughan's "H. Scriptures," Herbert's "The H. Scriptures II" ruminates on the edifying activity that Fuller suggested the Bible stimulates.[45] Through a constellation conceit, Herbert expressed the challenge of understanding the whole of Scripture:

[44] Calvin, *Harmonie*; cf. Desiderius Erasmus, *The First Tome or Volume of the Paraphrase Erasmus upon the Newe Testamente* (London, 1548) [Luke 23:46].

[45] As Chana Bloch notes, collation "provides a major structural device" for "The Sacrifice"; that is, the collation of Scripture with Scripture. Chana Bloch, *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): 65.

> Oh that I knew how all thy lights combine,
> And the configurations of their glorie!
> Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
> But all the constellations of the storie.
>
> This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
> Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie: (1–6)

This conceit is a vehicle for expressing the intellectual longing stated in the poem's first line: a desire to understand how *all* of the Scriptural stars combine in a patterned way. Lines 5–6 explain the conceit, rematerializing the stars as marks on leaves of paper, marks that can be narratively or proximally distanced. Even though—or perhaps because—early moderns increasingly had the ability to flip through these leaves for themselves, the various contributions and seeming contradictions were as evident as stars on a clear night, yet were also as challenging to interrelate in a holistically meaningful way.

In the Beginning at the End

Early moderns recognized and regularly sought to interrelate the seeming contradictions and the differences of the Bible. Our readings of early modern religious poems will continue to open if they are guided by Edward Le Comte's eloquent summary in his introduction to the single most recognizable biblically based English poem, *Paradise Lost*: "It must be remembered that Milton had an audience that knew one book better than we know any book."[46] This poem is located at the outer terminal limits of the early modern period, the period which first afforded wide general access to all of the Bible's seeming contradictions and differences, and at the beginning another period that would find new critical-exegetical methods for exploring such contradictions and differences. This poem displays possibly the single most notable and unjustly maligned example of poetic exegesis. *Paradise Lost* books 7 and 8 reconcile the seeming contradictions of the Bible's two creation accounts. Gen 1:1–2:4 provides a seven-day creation account of a transcendent God who formulaically speaks into existence: "Let there be… and there was.…" The angel Raphael recounts this story of creation over four-hundred lines in book 7. By contrast, Gen 2:4–25 has a much more anthropomorphic God

[46] John Milton, *Paradise Lost and Other Poems*, newly annotated and with a biographical introduction by Edward Le Comte (New York: Mentor, 1981), 33.

who fashions humanity by hand:[47] "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). Adam relates this creation account at length in book 8 at the often criticized prompt of Raphael:

> say [Adam] therefore on;
> For I [Raphael] that day [of your creation] was absent, as befell,
> Bound on a voyage úncouth and obscure,
> Far on excursion toward the gates of hell;
> Squared in full legion (such command we had)
> To see that none thence issued forth a spy,
> Or enemy, while God was in his work,
> Lest he incensed at such eruption bold,
> Destruction with creation might have mixed.
> Not that they durst without his leave attempt,
> But us he sends upon his high behests
> For state, as sovereign king, and to inure
> Our prompt obedience.[48]

To read these lines as anything other than an engagement with the Bible's seeming contradictions and differences is to miss the point.[49] When one reads such lines as an engagement with the Bible's seeming contradictions and differences, such lines become animate examples of the edifying work that lies behind them. In each reading of "St. Mary Magdalen," a leprous Pharisee can exist. Each reading of the "The Search" serves as a reminder to search each silent path, shade, and cell of the most important document

[47] As with all such instances in the Bible, the seeming contradictions were well explored by early modern exegetes: see Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations upon the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis* (1616); John Calvin, *A Commentarie of John Caluine, upon the First Booke of Moses Called Genesis: Translated out of Latine into English, by Thomas Tymme, Minister* (London, 1578); George Walker, *The History of the Creation* (London, 1641); and Andrew Willet, *Hexapla in Genesin* (Cambridge, 1605).

[48] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (1968; New York: Longman, 1998), 8.228–34.

[49] For critics who have read Books 7 and 8 as examples of poetic exegesis, see Michael Cop, "John Milton's *Paradise Lost* VII, 492–494," *Explicator* 70, no. 1 (2012): 23–26; J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 9–25, 256; Philip J. Gallagher, "Milton, the Bible, and Misogyny," in *Milton, the Bible, and Misogyny*, ed. Eugene R. Cunnar and Gail L. Mortimer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 9–48; and Ernst Häublein, "Milton's Paraphrase of Genesis: A Stylistic Reading of *Paradise Lost*, Book VII," *Milton Studies* 7 (1975): 101–25.

for so many early moderns, Scripture alone. When Christ reminds readers that "never was grief like [his]" with his last words in "The Sacrifice," he encourages readers to ponder more fully that grief by balancing differing, yet equally important, iterations of that moment.