

NOTICE WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States [Title 17, United States Code] governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. No further reproduction and distribution of this copy is permitted by transmission or any other means.

**INFO #: 11659282 CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO
JANICE STONE**

SHIP VIA: **ARIEL 129.65.20.42**
ARIEL 129.65.20.42

FILLED ON: 7/30/2001

Infotrieve, Inc.
41575 Joy Rd.
Canton, MI 48187
Phone (800) 422-4633 or (800) 422-4633 ext. 8
Fax (734) 459-5280



SHIP TO: 2690 / 2690

**CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO
JANICE STONE**

**INTERLIBRARY LOAN DEPARTMENT
KENNEDY LIBRARY
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93407 United States
United States**

Please contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this article
Email: service@infotrieve.com Phone: (800) 422-4633

CUSTOMER INFO

FAX: ARIEL

COURIER: FEDEX & BILL

ARIEL:

NOTES:

ARTICLE INFORMATION

CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE

50(11):157- AUT 2000

RYKEN

SHAKESPEARE AND THE BIBLE (BOOK REVIEW)

CCD 3450
SHIP VIA ARIEL 129.65.20.42

ORDER # MARX 440814
BILLING REF
ORDERED ON 7/24/2001
FILLED ON 7/30/2001
NEED BY
ATTENTION JANICE STONE
INFO # 11659282

This document is protected by U.S. and International copyright laws. No additional reproduction is authorized. Complete credit should be given to the original source.

whether it is necessary for the wounded psyche to invent Him.

Galen Johnson
Baylor University

Shakespeare and the Bible. By Steven Marx. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-19-818440-9 (cloth), 0-19-818439-5 (paper). Pp. 165. \$39.95 (cloth), \$18.95 (paper).

The key to understanding Steven Marx's book is to know that it is part of an Oxford University Press series titled Oxford Shakespeare Topics. The book is accordingly an introduction and overview of ways in which the Bible is present in Shakespeare's plays. Its aim is scope, and Marx's most obvious virtue as a writer is his penchant for organization. This is seen first of all in the book's covering the entire span of Shakespeare's canon by discussing representatives of the four major genres: romance (*The Tempest*), history play (*Henry V*), tragedy (*King Lear*), and comedy (*Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*). In keeping with Marx's aim to choose representative texts and treat them in detail, he pairs each play mainly with just one part of the Bible. *The Tempest* receives double treatment, being paired with Genesis at the beginning of the book and Revelation at the end. *Henry V* is discussed in connection with Moses and David, *King Lear* with the book of Job, *Measure for Measure* with the Gospels, and *The Merchant of Venice* with Romans.

But the urge for tidiness and symmetry goes well beyond this. In the author's words, "Consistent with the five-act structure of Shakespeare's plays, each chapter is divided into five parts. In the chapters that follow, these five parts can be roughly correlated with five recurrent concerns: the place of book and play in the larger structure of the Bible and Folio; generic elements they share; specific allusions that link them . . . ; parallels of plot and theme; and significant differences between them" (17).

The opening theoretical chapter makes larger claims for Shakespeare's indebtedness to the Bible than do the chapters that analyze the plays. Two pillars comprise the theoretical framework. One is typology, though in a somewhat watered-down version. It is defined only as "a method of noting similarities and correspondences between texts" (14), which is of course the only valid way for applying the concept to Shakespeare's relationship to the Bible, but which obscures the fact that in the Bible itself the type foreshadows its ultimate fulfillment in the antitype. The second tradition has more validity as a model for what Shakespeare did. It is Hebrew Midrash—creative elaboration and interpretation of the biblical text by a later writer. The theoretical framework of typology and Midrash is hardly necessary for what Marx actually does, since they are no more than analogues or metaphors for what Shakespeare did with the Bible, and the framework is happily left behind when Marx gets to the real business of the book.

I might note in passing that the book is accurately focused on Shakespeare *and* the Bible, rather than the Bible *in* Shakespeare. The work is equally about the Bible and Shakespeare. Marx is expert in both and more original in his literary analysis of the Bible. For readers primarily interested in Shakespeare's use of the Bible, the proportionate space given to the Bible may be a trifle off-putting, while for readers interested in the Bible it is an asset.

Given the topic of the book, the questions that naturally arise are (a) how *consciously*

Shakespeare incorporated the Bible into his plays and, correspondingly, (b) how confidently we can claim a biblical presence in the plays. The introduction makes relatively bold claims in locating a biblical presence in Shakespeare rather than simply in the reader with biblical interests. Thus we read that "Shakespeare was influenced by the Bible," that "understanding the plays' references requires thorough familiarity with the Scriptures" (13), and that "Shakespeare himself took up the invitation to 'kiss the book'" (16). The publisher's blurb on the back cover, incidentally, makes even stronger claims, asserting that the Bible "inspired" Shakespeare's uses of myth, history, comedy, tragedy, techniques of staging, and methods of characterization.

I paid close attention to the rhetoric used in the actual analysis of Shakespeare's plays, and that rhetoric is consistently modest and low-keyed in what it claims about Shakespeare's indebtedness to the Bible. The basic strategy of Marx's book is comparative. Parallels between a biblical and Shakespearean text are placed side by side, and the matter is allowed to rest there. Stronger claims are made, appropriately, when the topic is actual biblical allusions in Shakespeare, but this looms less conspicuously in the book than I had anticipated. Marx's most customary strategy is first to adduce something from or about a biblical text and then find something similar in the Shakespearean play under discussion. The operative terms of the book, repeated throughout, stress correspondence and no more: "just as," "also," "likewise," "resemblances," "similarly," "share," "in both works," etc. Sometimes the comparison occurs within a paragraph, while at other times successive paragraphs transact the comparison. The clarity of the procedure is admirable, but the effect eventually becomes a bit predictable, monotonous, and contrived.

Discussions of an author's relationships to the Bible exist on a continuum. At one end we find verifiable use of the Bible by an author, as signaled either by extratextual statements by an author or allusions within the text. As we move across the continuum, we leave the realm of certainty and enter a sphere of possible indebtedness, and here we speak of correspondences or echoes or parallels instead of allusions (Marx at one point uses the formulas "linguistic echoes, thematic parallels, and similarities in plot" [75]). At the far end of the continuum, the Bible is a framework that the critic rather than author has introduced into the discussion. The most customary methodology here is the finding of analogues to the Bible in a literary text. Marx belongs largely in this latter camp (except, of course, when he discusses verifiable allusions). "As in the Bible, so also in Shakespeare" is the basic methodology of the book.

I found myself of a divided mind about this methodology. On the one hand, I found Marx's modest and even understated approach very winsome. In place of Roy Battenhouse's dogmatic and sometimes far-fetched excursions into alleged biblical analogues, Marx is largely content to put the parallels beside each other and let the reader do with them as he or she wills. But surely the "bottom line" questions are (a) whether Shakespeare (and not just we as readers with an interest in the Bible) rooted his plays in the Bible, and (b) whether adducing a biblical parallel enhances one's understanding of the given motif in Shakespeare. I did not find either of these criteria consistently met by Marx's discussion. An exception is the discussion of biblical allusions in Shakespeare, but this, let it be said, is well worn territory. The more original feature of Marx's book is the big patterns and motifs that he finds in the Bible and then applies to Shakespeare. To cite two random examples, both Job and Lear experience a stripping of the hero as part of tragic suffering, and both the book of Revelation and *The Tempest* dislocate smooth narrative flow into a kaleidoscope of fragments and repeated actions. Does the

presence of these motifs in Shakespeare's plays stand silhouetted with greater clarity for having been paired with the biblical text than it would if simply delineated by itself, and does the pairing indicate that Shakespeare himself intended the pairing? For me the answer is "no." This is not to say that I find Marx's discussion uninteresting, but this is largely because I share his interest in the Bible as literature.

The stricture I stated in the preceding paragraph is not a criticism of Marx's book so much as an indication of an impasse that scholarship has long shown regarding Shakespeare's relationship to the Bible and indeed to the Christian faith. If Shakespeare's imagination was as saturated in the Bible as scholarship increasingly inclines to believe, it should be possible to establish that relationship on a firmer footing than by means of analogues and quasi-allegorizing (which in Marx's book partly takes the form of claiming that authority/power figures in Shakespeare's plays call to mind the role that God plays in the Bible). Yet the appeal of analogue and allegory has been perennial.

Shakespeare and the Bible is not the definitive treatment of the topic for which the world of scholarship still waits. It is an excellent interim report. It exhibits the virtues that are appropriate to its genre as part of the Oxford Shakespeare Topics series. It is a beautifully organized introduction to the issues that it addresses. It is a tribute to Marx to have covered so much territory so succinctly. Within its limited scope the book is admirably researched and provides a helpful guide to rival critical traditions on various plays and issues. Marx is a master of the apt formula, and he is at his best in finding patterns and motifs in texts. While his analysis of Shakespeare is largely a synthesis of received wisdom, much of what he says about biblical texts is nicely original.

Leland Ryken
Wheaton College

Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne. By Theresa M. DiPasquale. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8207-0309-5. Pp. xviii + 338. \$58.00.

Theresa M. DiPasquale's *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne* is the best single-author study of Donne's poetry since Edward Taylor's account of the *Anniversaries* in *Donne's Idea of Woman* (1991). DiPasquale's book is distinguished by its extensive and careful scholarship, its clear and effective style, and its intelligent focus on the actual substance of Donne's poetry. Unlike so much recent publication by young scholars, her work shows a real interest in her topic rather than a concern for gaining admission to the circle of fashionable theorists by means of a plethora of irrelevant citations. While DiPasquale demonstrates an appropriate familiarity with and responsiveness to other critics in the field, she concentrates on primary sources: Donne's own writing and contemporaneous works that establish his context. *Literature and Sacrament* is worth the trouble even for someone who disagrees with its conclusions, because it raises questions pertinent to the understanding of Donne and his age and argues rationally and lucidly. Students may read this book without being mystified by jargon, misled by inaccurate information, or corrupted by shoddy diction and syntax.

DiPasquale's principal concern is to explore how Reformation controversy over the nature and effect of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, informs the language and