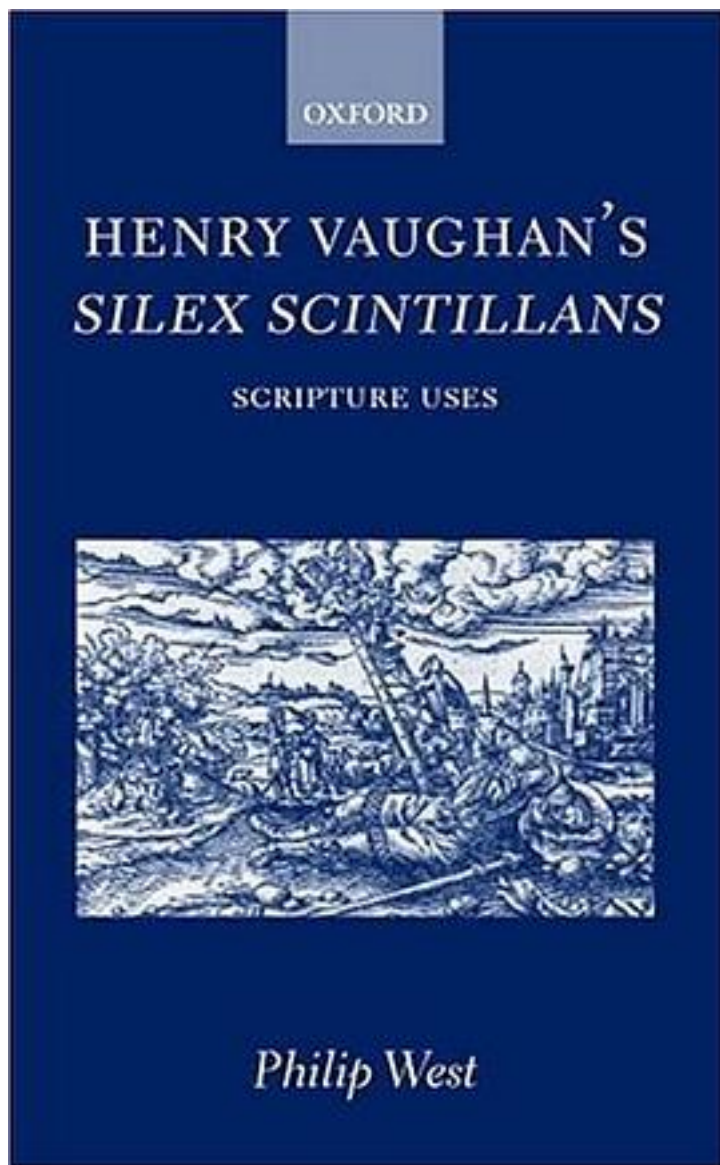


Henry Vaughan's Silex Scintillans



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It has been said that the poems of Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans* (1650; 1655) are the most biblical in English: this book revises our understanding of that claim, not by rejecting it, but by asking what it might have meant in the 1650s. Recovering the historical, literary, and scriptural context of Vaughan's poetry and his neglected prose works, particularly *The Mount of Olives* (1652), this study reveals the different ways in which Vaughan's work is shot through and fired by the Bible as it was read in the 'Godly nation' of the mid-seventeenth century. The uses, or scripture practices, singled out, relate both to his position as an 'Anglican survivalist' during the Commonwealth and to his acceptance of George Herbert's task of writing 'true hymns': his reading of the Genesis story of Jacob as an analogue for his own experiences as a Christian and as an image of the true Church in the 1650s; his framing of *Silex Scintillans* as an act of thanksgiving modelled on Hezekiah's song in Isaiah; his construction of a paraliturgical 'rule' of holy living; his exposure of the 'false prophets' of the Last Days prophesied by Christ; and his profoundly scriptural rejection of the fraud (as he saw it) of millenarian religion.

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