Word and Rite

Word and Rite:
The Bible and Ceremony
in Selected Shakespearean Works

Edited by

Beatrice Batson

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For Linda
who gave of her exceptional abilities in order that we might
offer new insights to others

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FOREWORD

The essays collected here were originally presented at the eighth annual Shakespeare Institute, organized by Wheaton College's most esteemed and beloved Dr. E. Beatrice Batson. Eight is an allegoric number, representing that which is beyond time, so it was entirely appropriate that we gathered for the eighth time—after the semester's work was finished, in a time beyond ordinary academic time, to consider word and rite in Shakespeare, which is essentially about the way in which the eternal meets the temporal. Rites and rituals are attempts to put handles on mysteries, and in their Christian incarnation in sacrament they are the actions which concretize mystery: the mystery of the union of two people in marriage; the mystery of death by water that is also birth in baptism; the mystery of the sacrificial body taken in as He takes us in the Eucharist. But any rite or ritual—sacred or secular—is an attempt to bring order and establish boundaries.

Rites frequently fail in Shakespeare—from the formal state banquet in *Macbeth* during which Banquo's ghost takes his place at the King's table and the occasion ends in chaos, to the rites that attend Ophelia's burial in *Hamlet*, to the ill-considered but required declarations of love at the beginning of *King Lear*. These rites, after all, do not put handles on the mysteries they attempt to approach. They fall apart and call attention to their own destruction. Occasionally, in final scenes we see an attempt to create order through ceremony—weddings in the comedies and in the tragedies something like what happens in *Hamlet* when Fortinbras has Hamlet "borne like a soldier to the stage," and the community observes the occasion of his death with "soldier's music and the rite of war." And in fact that stage to which he is borne reminds us that theatre itself is a particular kind of rite.

In Shakespeare word and rite are as inseparable as word and sacrament in worship. Without one the other is inefficacious, so outward signs of inward truths are linked with the words of these plays and with Scripture and the Word incarnate. That Shakespeare was influenced by the words of Scripture is indisputable; that he understood sacrament as the visible sign of spiritual truth is also a given. The essays in this collection, however, go beyond the mere recognition of influences to the observation of ethos and the identification of Shakespeare with the profundities of theological

insight. But why should that surprise us? Shakespeare connects the Word to the written word, the Word made flesh to the incarnational act of poetry.

—Jill Peleaz Baumgaertner
Wheaton College

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I gratefully acknowledge permission from the University of Chicago Press to reprint large sections of Jeffrey Knapp's essay. The portions were taken from Knapp's latest book, *Shakespeare Only*, which was published in 2009 by the University of Chicago Press, which owns the copyright.

I express my extraordinary thanks to all contributors who wrote readable but scholarly papers. Without their cooperative efforts, there would obviously be no book.

I also wish to reiterate the first few words of the acknowledgments. The gracious assistance of these people who worked behind the scenes have made contributions beyond their imagination to the completion of this book.

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INTRODUCTION

BEATRICE BATSON

Rites and ceremonies were frequently appropriated in the plays of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries, including writers such as Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, Robert Greene, John Webster and Christopher Marlowe. Rites were usually religious in nature, but there were exceptions. These rites were embodied within the plays, not offstage, but again, this was not always the practice. Religious rites included a number of sacred events, such as baptism, weddings, coronations, the Eucharist, confessions, and funerals. Holy objects may also be considered a religious rite.

The focus of this book is primarily on religious rites in selected plays of Shakespeare. The various chapters were given in the form of lectures in June 2008 at the Wheaton College Shakespeare Institute, and later shaped into a book under the title *Word and Rite: The Bible and Ceremony*. In the following eight chapters there is a serious attempt by writers to show the extent to which the playwright emphasized religious rites and for what purpose in respective works. Since there is some controversy over whether Shakespeare embodied the religious rites within selected works, perhaps as a dumbshow, so that they could be presented on the stage, receives slight attention. What interests other writers is what Shakespeare considers to be the original source of the rites. Is it the Bible? Tradition? Or is the source both the Bible and Tradition? Shakespeare's era definitely is a period of religious controversy and one in which some of his contemporaries wrote parodies on the rites; it is only appropriate to ask whether Shakespeare also followed the same practice.

Readers will find diversity among the various subjects that individual authors chose; some more carefully focused on the overarching subject than did others, but all discover fresh thoughts not only on the author's individual subject but also on various ways a writer and thinker may find differing paths to the primary rubric. What readers will undoubtedly discover in the majority of the chapters is a particular way in which the Christian tradition intersects the writings of Shakespeare. Extensive bibliographic references and an Index are also provided.

Since the Bible is certainly a strong influence on this book, we have included one entire chapter on "Shakespeare and the Bible." The chapter reveals not only a possible attitude toward rites and ceremony but also exposition on a popular controversy of Shakespeare's era regarding his own religious position. Was the dramatist a Protestant or Catholic or do we really know?

Leland Ryken begins his study of Shakespeare and the Bible by showing how little attention is given to the subject by mainstream Shakespearean scholarship. Scholars who are interested in the subject deeply regret such neglect.

The storyline of Shakespeare and the Bible begins with the large number of English Bible translations that spanned the sixteenth century. To Ryken, the history of English Bible translation from Tyndale through the King James Version is one of the most exciting adventure stories on record. What almost guarantees this story to be exciting to readers of this paper, in my judgment, is Ryken's "fourfold interpretive grid" on the history of English Bible translation in the sixteenth century as well as his engaging writing of the grid. Perhaps it is not giving away too much information for potential readers to know now the four features of his grid: (1) the triumph of the vernacular Bible provides an account of the way England became a Biblical culture in Shakespeare's lifetime; (2) English Bible translation encompassed the entire cross-section of the population; (3) English Bible translation was almost exclusively Protestant; (4) The translation was a story of almost unremitting hostility to all that was happening.

Following the storyline of the English translations and to events that immediately followed, Ryken turns to a discussion of the extent of the Bible's presence in Shakespeare's plays. Readers will probably find it quite astonishing to discover that Shakespeare's works contain more references to the Bible than the plays of any other Elizabethean playwright—five times the range of Marlowe and Steele. What is also interesting is that Ryken offers a tally of the biblical references, the book of the Bible with the largest number of references as well as the Bible story that most frequently appears and which translation the poet-dramatist uses.

What also must be stated is that the story of translating the Bible into English is also the beginning of a new danger for the famous translator, William Tyndale. It became too perilous for him to carry on his work in England; so he relocated to Cologne and lived in hiding in order to escape threats on his life from Catholics. "When he completed his translation of the New Testament (1525)," says Ryken, "copies had to be smuggled into

England in bales of wool and bags of wheat." As Bibles flooded England, so also did hostility toward the translators intensify. Printed attacks were hurled at Tyndale by Thomas More in words as barbed as "filthy foam of blasphemies out of his beastly brutish mouth" or "a hellhound fit for the hogs to feed upon." Nonetheless, Tyndale continued his work until lured out of hiding by a Catholic sympathizer. In 1535 he met his death outside of Brussels, where he was "strangled and burned at the stake."

Before leaving the story of translation of the Bible, Ryken directs the reader's attention to the subject of what Tyndale achieved in his lifetime and his influence in England immediately afterwards. He responds to the question in several thoughtful paragraphs, then writes of other translations, giving special attention to the Geneva Bible, to the reforms of Queen Elizabeth, to memorable contributions of James I, and to the reception of the Bible by the rank and file of England.

The next major concern in the chapter is a response to the question of how Shakespeare acquired his extensive knowledge of the Bible. Admitting that he is treading in the area of speculation, Ryken offers five plausible possibilities, ranging from "his education in the Stratford Grammar school" to "general cultural assimilation." Without doubt, Shakespeare was also an avid reader of books, including the Bible.

Leland Ryken closes his discussion of his selected topic by carefully examining the biblical presence in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. To support his position, Ryken constructs a continuum of ways in which the Bible is a presence in this play. After presenting with care his approach, he says: "I have spoken of Shakespeare's spontaneous use of biblical phraseology, his use of straight biblical allusion, and his referencing of the Bible as part of evoking its ideas and views of reality."

Before completing his study, Ryken writes of ways in which the Bible prompted Shakespeare to write in a certain manner. He further suggests that as readers scrutinize the mosaic of biblical passages in Shakespeare's writings, they are able to "recreate how the author's creative imagination worked in compressing the passage," and he illustrates by thoroughly examining the famous "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy which he calls a "virtual mosaic of biblical allusions."

From the material he covers, Leland Ryken closes his study of "Shakespeare and the Bible" with five conclusions, an excellent section which offers far more than a few statements previously stated in the body of the chapter. Readers will undoubtedly discover for themselves that conclusions can be fresh and provocative.

Grace Tiffany desires to spend more time on words and language than on rites and ceremony. Her emphasis is primarily on the triumphs of

English over French in England. She begins her paper with an account of a French Canadian anti-English law, but the entire chapter must be read with care before one understands "how steeped was the early modern ethic of English resistance to things French and otherwise continental in historical and geographical circumstances." As she continues, there are two features that she keeps in the foreground: (1) the differences in usage between French and English words and the history of the transitions in England from the use of French at the aristocratic level to English, and (2) the story of the influence of the Geneva Bible on Shakespeare's English.

To develop her focus, Tiffany begins with the earliest nationalist English in England during the late medieval and early modern periods, and then inquires into the ways Shakespeare represents the triumph of English over French on the Renaissance stage. She states that at the starting point of his English history cycle, Shakespeare chose the late fourteenth century, when spoken English was ascendant even among aristocrats descended from the Norman French. Growth of the use of English occurred in law, in the courts and in the writing of official documents. It is equally of interest to Shakespeareans that three of the five kings of major concern to Shakespeare in his First and Second Tetralogies made their wills in English. Perhaps it should also be stated that even though he was ever able to see both sides of most questions, Shakespeare seemed willing for French to remain suspect throughout the history plays. What Tiffany contends is that Shakespeare's presentation of the "glories of English and the decadence of French in the history plays was profoundly influenced by the Reformation, which in the 1500's led many English playwrights to exploit their country's new publicly assumed moral identity." Records indicate that Protestant sympathies were dominant during this time despite Eamon Duffy's contention that "covert Catholicism was everywhere during late sixteenth-century England. At this time, too, the Geneva Bible was widely read and the Reformation was widely advanced.

Tiffany readily admits that the above-mentioned occurrences do not provide information on Shakespeare's private attitude toward Catholicism, but she does hold that "his sixteenth-century representation of England's fifteenth-century wars with France provided a virtuous proto-Protestant England pitted against erring and decadent Catholic lords," and in the history plays studied in this chapter, "French follies were merged with stereotypically Catholic vanities."

Without question it was history plays that enabled Shakespeare to discuss "the English-over-French conflict most seriously and most effectively," holds Tiffany, and she adds that he does this as he matches "French/English language wars to the theme of nationhood with . . .

religious overtones." It should also be remembered that the debate surrounding the establishment of English Protestantism and the use of the English language was a central issue. Combined with this was the specific occurrence of "English disdain for priests' dependence on a Latin rather than a vernacular liturgy" in the performances of rites and ceremonies. The growth of English was also due to the various Bible translations, especially the Lollard translation and finally the Geneva "vernacular translation which lay at the heart of England's differences with Rome." Yet Tiffany clearly reminds all readers that history of Bible translation is, like their nation's, one of conflict with continental powers. Her vividly depicted account of this conflict is engagingly presented as she tells of "bloodshed and continental exile endured by those who labored to produce the translation." How these tales were disseminated and to what extent the Geneva Bible widely influenced English speaking and writing, particularly Shakespeare's dialogue, are remarkably handled by Tiffany. She reminds all that Shakespeare can, if he desires, leave the simple syntax and diction of the Geneva Bible and appropriate the "grandiloquent, Latinate style" and other manifestations of "Romish, Continental Vanities." Before closing her chapter she reminds readers that sixteenth-century Europe was mostly Catholic, and England was served by "a biblically-informed construction of itself as an island 'Eden' against its continental enemies."

Before examining David George's essay "Abbreviated Rites and Incomplete Ceremonies"as a source of dramatic presence in Shakespeare's time, we recognize that he first explores two compelling theories: (1) official prohibition would not allow any real representation of a religious ceremony on stage, and (2) drama by its nature requires rites such as christenings, weddings and funerals to be brief. George contends that there were only three examples of abbreviated rites in Shakespeare's plays or in his lifetime. Whether there was any clear official prohibition of any religious rites is difficult to substantiate. There were numerous verbal attacks against the licensing of plays and playhouses from the moralists, but does that mean that there was official prohibition of the plays? Readers will discover that George holds there is no lack of clarity. Equally clear is his view on why there are many examples of abbreviated rites in Shakespeare's works.

Spending a few comments on courtship in Shakespeare's era and on the poem, "Venus and Adonis," with the possibility that that poem in particular will illuminate Shakespeare's and Anne Hathaway's courtship, George contends that this route provides little understanding of the rite of marriage. The best way to study the rite of marriage, he suggests, is to focus on proposals, weddings, and wedding nights in dramas, when there

have been "private but valid marriages." To support this view he chooses several plays, including *Measure for Measure, Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest, The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Obviously, with this selection, one expects a variety of interrupted, abbreviated, or even "changed" rites. What we also recognize is that there are few births and christenings in Shakespeare's plays that show how the poet-dramatist handled rites; consequently George wisely turns to *Henry VIII* for a rather extended study, and for a less thorough explanation he refers to *Pericles* for future illumination on the handling of rites.

A final rite explored by George is the funeral. He considers Ophelia's funeral to be "the most poignant example of a Christian funeral." A brief, but careful explanation, based on the text, follows.

Abbreviated rites are abundant in Shakespeare's writings and David George has examined works that illustrate and illuminate them, especially marriage and funeral rites.

Following a discussion of varied rites in Shakespeare's works, Keith Jones further explores the widespread references to the marriage rites. In his judgment, marriage rites are abundant in Shakespeare's dramas, notably in the comedies.

Jones states that the word *rite* has undergone a course of expansion. Since according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the meaning of *rite* has extended from specific and religious meanings to more general application, he spends several paragraphs showing the diversity of meanings of the word. Although he contends that by the twentieth century the word *rite* is used as a "journalistic term for any ceremony," he holds too that there remains at the core of the idea of rite a note of solemnity.

What appears certain to Jones is that there are particular starting points in a study of the rites underlying Shakespearean comedy and he gives brief attention to this view, but he prefers to concentrate on the construction of the rite of marriage in Shakespeare's era and on the Shakespearean stage. Even though he writes with appreciation of Marissa Greenberg's essay, "Cross from Scaffold to State," and certainly agrees with most of her thinking, unlike Greenberg, he spends little time on the intersecting of the rite of comedy with the ritual of punishment. (Jones appears to think of rite and ritual as being identical terms.) He does, however, examine "Shakespeare's problematic and complicated presentation of the marriage rite as a means of understanding a complicated and specific play, *Measure for Measure*.

From the first act of the play, one question is paramount: What constitutes a valid marriage? In considering the specific question, Jones ponders the possibilities of its relation to English Renaissance comedy.

Readers will appreciate the way in which he draws on anthropology and English law in order to discover any relation to the patterns of comedy, and why there are inaccurate conclusions pertaining to these relationships.

Jones next turns to a rather thorough treatment of the view of English law on the subject of marriage. It is the law, he believes, that is a good starting point for understanding the position in which Claudio and Juliet find themselves at the beginning of the play and for explaining the plight of Angelo and Marianna at the end, but the rite of marriage calls for further discussion of essentials necessary to a valid marriage. That there are types of marriage presented few problems, but understanding the ramifications of these types is a different matter.

Recognizing the thinking of several scholars, Jones holds that there were three recognized types of marriage in Renaissance England: (1) a marriage of cohabitation (2) a marriage valid in ecclesiastical law (3) a marriage valid in common law. The first type would satisfy one's neighbor; the second would satisfy concerns of Church and state, but without the third the issue of "property rites could not be satisfactorily addressed." It was primarily the ramification of the third view, contends Jones, that "secular and state authorities were increasingly determined to regularize marriage in England, especially from 1580-1640." Quoting a prominent scholar, Laurence Stone, Jones states that the church courts were already attempting to push more of the population into formal and public weddings in church, presided over by a clergyman.

What the latter view—and indeed the types mentioned above—meant for couples who were planning to marry or even for Claudio and Juliet in the play is a large question. To what extent Jones's somewhat lengthy explanation coincides with what Shakespeare may have thought of a valid marriage is perhaps a larger question, but probably the largest question of all is whether the rite has gone awry in the English Renaissance "problem comedy."

Jack Heller begins his study, "'Your statue spouting blood': *Julius Caesar*, the Sacraments, and the Fountain of Life," by stating that scholars on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* have attempted to show Caesar as a figure of Christ and Rome, with allusions to the Protestant figuration of the Holy See as the Whore of Babylon. Other scholars contend that Shakespeare uses imagery associated with the sacraments in the sixteenth century, and that characters within the play, such as Brutus, Antony, Decius and Caesar himself, treat and speak of Caesar's body and blood as objects of sacramental observance. Heller suggests early that objects may be considered a rite.

Heller believes that the sacramental imagery used in this play is common to the writings and visual arts pertaining to the rite of baptism and the Eucharist by Catholics and Protestants of the sixteenth century. Furthermore, he seeks to show that the Fountain of Life imagery originates from several biblical passages, especially the Revelation of John coming closest to presenting Christ himself as the Fountain of Life. What is particularly informative in Heller's views of Shakespearean allusions to the Fountain of Life are the references in the second scene of the second act of the play, when Caesar and Decius discuss Calpurnia's dream. Discussion leads to disagreement, and Heller contends that the coming imagery of both Cassius's and Decius's version of the dream comes from the baptismal representations of the Fountain of Life. At this point, Heller interjects the view of a fifth-century scholar who believes that the Fountain of Life imagery embodies two complementary views of baptism: a view based on Romans 6:3-4, and the second grounded in John 3:5. As Heller explicates the two references, he clearly explains how they unfold the complementary views of baptism which he mentions.

After discussing rare but typical Fountain of Life images in various parts of the world, such as the center panel of a triptych painted by Jean Bellegambe, Heller believes that of special interest to Shakespeareans are the several features of such a painting that can be found in the imagery of Shakespeare as well as how "the painting conforms to the idea that baptism figures regeneration as completed after death."

Another famous Fountain of Life image is a stained glass window at the Bob Jones University Gallery (Greenville, SC) simply entitled the Fountain of Life (created in the first half of the sixteenth century, it was originally in the St. Anne's Chapel at Chateau de Boomors in Longue, France). This Fountain of Life embodies numerous exceptional images; perhaps one of the most uncommon features is one that recalls the image in relation to Calpurnia's dream: immediately below the top font receiving the blood of Christ are at least four spouts on pipes directing the blood to a large pool below." (see *Julius Caesar* 2.2.85).

Heller discovered few Protestant images, but mention should be made of the altar of the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Weimar, Germany. The baptismal font is no longer present because the image reveals "salvation unmediated by ritual." One of the best places to find Fountain of Life images from a Protestant perspective, Heller believes, is in church hymnals. In the lyrics of hymns such as "There Is a Fountain," by William Cowper, "Nothing But the Blood," by Robert Lowry and others.

Returning to Caesar's account of Calpurnia's dream, Heller then emphasizes that it "conforms in its details to the common features of the

baptismal Fountain of Life images." Decius reinterprets the Calpurnia dream in such a manner that the baptismal image has been transformed into a paradoxical, not a logical image. He further holds that only two parallel passages in the New Testament (Matthew 20:22-23 and Mark 10:38-40) ever mention the elements of the two rites together. Undoubtedly, Heller is firmly convinced of his position, for readers will discern that at this point he has not exhausted support for his stance.

Heller finally suggests that the interpretations of Calpurnia's dream by Caesar and Decius are really not a disagreement over the doctrine of transubstantiation and a Calvinistic symbolic perspective on Holy Communion; but what the reconfigured dispute does is to set "baptism against the Eucharist, Caesar's initial baptismal interpretation versus Decius's Eucharistic interpretation."

Jack Heller writes of additional Fountain of Life imagery, but he concludes that the sacraments fail to function sacramentally and ends his argument with these words: "by using the common features of the Fountain of Life imagery, Shakespeare treats the tragedy of *Julius Caesar* as pre-figuring the tragic results of the sixteenth-century arguments over the sacraments."

In "The Authorship of Confession in Shakespeare's Sonnets," Jeffrey Knapp begins with this sentence: "In her foreward to a recent neuroscientific appreciation of Shakespeare entitled *The Bard on the Brain*, the writer Diane Ackerman affirms 'the simple, universally accepted truth' that in terms of 'artistic genius' Shakespeare 'stands alone.'" Knapp goes on to note that David Kastan believes that "the very 'concept' of 'unique genius' was 'virtually invented for' Shakespeare after his death." The dramatist Robert Greene "denounced [him] as an 'upstart Crow' . . . and lambasted [him] as a . . . 'Johnny-do-all' laboring under the absurd delusion that he could emulate real poets."

Jeffrey Knapp disagrees with all of these. But, what does he believe? Knapp's primary concern is to discover how Shakespeare himself understands authorship, and Knapp looks for his answer in the writings that most plainly adopt an autobiographical pose: the sonnets. He recognizes that it has long been believed that Shakespeare's self-portrait in the sonnets is "unconventional" in the young man sonnets at the beginning and in the dark lady sonnets at the end. Therefore, Knapp will argue that Shakespeare did intend to present himself as "standing alone," but the dark lady sonnets strive "for a singularity of effect that more nearly approaches Greene's conception of Shakespeare than Ackerman's. In these sonnets, Shakespeare claims a kind of unique genius as theatrical professional only when he can also imagine and portray himself on the very principle of the

theater's vulgarity and commonplace, only when he can confess himself its chief of sinners."

As Knapp views the writings that most clearly adopt an autobiographical pose, he sees almost immediately that the speaker of the young man sonnets holds a kingly power over the young man's poetry and art. He further sees that the speaker shows a spirit of self-loathing, which becomes the keynote of the remaining sonnets, in which the speaker transfers his affections to the dark lady.

The speaker of the sonnets reflects on the young man's power, indeed kingly power, over his poetry as well as his affections. Yet the young man's many virtues, his "being all" in "one" weakens the speaker's confidence in his own self-sufficiency. Frequently, he refers to his lack of self-sufficiency, mentioning again and again his "blots" and "defects." Knapp acknowledges that "in sonnet 109, where the speaker once again professes to the young man that 'thou art my all' and yet also confesses to the perversity of having 'rang'd from him,' the speaker for the first time imagines himself . . . as the 'all' of something other than worthiness." Does he not also wish to imagine and portray himself as the very principle of uncommonness and unworthiness?

Even a cursory reading of the dark lady sonnets is to be aware that something other than "worthiness" is embodied in many lines of the poetry. Knapp sees the first two of the sonnets as being among the most tawdry of the sequence, presenting the speaker as a man sexually "diseased" and unhelped by any "sovereign" cure. What the speaker makes of this is a confession.

In his book, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, Knapp argues that one of the ways theater people defended their "unworthy" profession was to present themselves as "accommodationists" who deliberately pass as libertines in order to capture the attention of the "profane theatergoers" and then seek to convert them to better lives. After all, the Apostle Paul called himself the chief of sinners, and in order to help other sinners be saved, he had made himself all things to all men. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, asserts that Jesus forgave his sins so that he—the chief of sinners—might become a pattern to them who should believe on Christ and enjoy life everlasting.

Knapp states that the young man himself "lights the way toward a remedial view of the speaker's confessions." If this is true, he asks, is there the slightest possibility that the dark lady provides a similar model? Knapp does not ignore a response to his question. Jeffrey Knapp's fresh reading of Shakespeare's sonnets is new and imaginative. This confessional deserves high praise.

In his thoroughly-researched paper, “Each Letter in the Letter: Textual Testimonies in Shakespeare,” Brett Foster begins with the words, “Many approaches beckon to readers who intend to study ‘word and rite’ in Shakespeare.” He acknowledges that examining biblical borrowings or theologically resonant passages probably remains the activity most relevant to the subject. Even though this approach has borne much fruit, it also has its ultimate limitations. He declares that his focus will be one that considers more “material dimensions and effects of ‘word and rite,’ and of the staging of the words and even the Word—not echoes of the Word, but rather its presence in books onstage.” The focus of this paper obviously will be on the performance-oriented approach.

Continuing his discussion with books, Foster states that they appealed to playwrights as “ideal objects to signify commitment, concealment, or conflict in a stage world propelled by competing messages and ambitions among its characters.” In Foster’s judgment, books as “cultural and stage objects are worthy of evaluation,” and although they have been studied as “material that influenced Shakespeare’s imagination and informed his plays,” they have received less attention as “staged words” or word forms. Foster holds that Shakespeare saw many “dramatic possibilities in books: they signify absent persons or things, illuminate character types . . . , introduce social conventions, manipulate image or conceal strategy.” He also makes the strong claim that one can encounter examples of stage properties in nearly every play, and in each case the presence of physical objects are serving a purpose. If this is true, readers will find numerous occasions to agree or disagree with Foster’s discoveries in selected plays in this study and in other plays in which they find stage properties.

In Foster’s view the most famous of identifiable onstage books are those written by the Roman poet, Ovid. He considers Ovid’s influence on works such as *The Taming of The Shrew, Cymbeline, Sonnets, 2 Henry VI, Troilus and Cressida* and other dramas. The book is present and is a strong, key stage property. The important question to ask is: what does the book actually accomplish in a particular play? Readers can be assured that provocative and important findings await them. Keep in mind that a reader may still desire to decide whether the book is referential or material.

In order to name what the book accomplishes in some plays, it seems helpful to observe where the image of the book contributes to feelings of anxiety, anger, guilt or despair. Hector, for example, “repels Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida* with a book simile whose specificity belittles the speaker.” Also, the image of being open and readable, as, for example, in the case of Lady Macbeth regarding her husband or the deposed Richard II reluctantly admitting that he is “marked with a blot, damned in the book of

heaven," but Richard plans to ponder his faults for he urges, "Give me that glass, and therein will I read."

Another aspect of the darker conceptualization of books is clearly presented in the Jack Cade story which shows, especially in sections of *2 Henry VI*, Cade's reaction against the presence of books. Foster also finds of interest Shakespeare's treatment of books as magic and power as depicted in the *Henry VI* plays and in *The Tempest*, but sees as a possible antidote to the "darker conceptualization" in *As You Like It*, particularly in the familiar panegyric of Duke Senior, the "sweet are the uses of adversity," and in the script-writing of Orlando.

Foster spends several pages on two plays, *Hamlet* and *Richard III*, that feature religious books onstage. In *Hamlet*, he discusses the book—likely the prayer book—held by Ophelia when Hamlet famously soliloquizes, and says upon his noticing her: "Soft you now, / The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered."

Richard III uses a religious book—a prayer book—prominently onstage. Readers will notice one strong similarity between the uses of a religious book in *Richard III* and *Hamlet*: both uses are displays of deceit. Foster shows these as a vivid portrayal of performance-oriented analysis.

What has a special appeal for many readers of Renaissance-Reformation history is the way the Queen herself had a "profound identification with books." Not only does Foster remind the reader of this, but he also states that "portraits and frontispieces featured Elizabeth . . . with religious book in hand," and that her prayers reflected the importance of the Word. These and other citations by Foster indicate that the Word still had a significant place in Shakespeare's works; and Foster believed it to be wise to include explicit associations in Shakespeare's language. With these examples he closes his paper. Undoubtedly, most readers will be convinced that the English Renaissance stage is a "place for religious portrayal."

Christopher Hodgkins begins "Prospero's Apocalypse" with conclusions: "Our revels now are ended," and immediately continues with one of the various "farewells" in *The Tempes,t* which powerfully delivers the sense of an ending: "The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces / The solemn temples, the great globe itself, / Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve / And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep." This powerful farewell "punctuat[es] *The Tempest*," says Hodgkins, "with its images of aesthetic and cosmic dissolution, its haunting use of the death-as-sleep metaphor, its elegiac leave-taking." He further calls these words "a kind of tune for the last

things, the Apocalypse set to sweet and melancholy music. Since *The Tempest* is in fact Shakespeare's last full play and so a sort of swan song, these words would seem to spell the promised end."

Yet we must remember that the powerful words of this "farewell" do not come at the end of the play but in the fourth act, and it is only one of the many farewells in the play. As Hodgkins contends, "even when the play's true end comes in the fifth act—after Prospero 'drowns his magic books and breaks his sorcerer's staff and sets Ariel free at last,' after his epilogue begs the audience's benediction—even this is not the end, but a kind of promised beginning." What does Hodgkins mean by these words? He knows that the curtain closes and the play ends, but he is now thinking of Prospero and Shakespeare. Prospero tells the readers and viewers that he will be off to Milan, and Shakespeare is returning home to Stratford. Both individuals are making a new beginning.

At this point Hodgkins suggests that the "ending of *The Tempest* is neither dire enough nor final enough for true apocalypse—that there is not enough wrack, ruin, or wrath to give the full sense of an ending." Frank Kermode claimed in his book *The Sense of an Ending*—as stated by Hodgkins—"that Shakespeare wrote his history plays and *The Tempest* to repudiate the biblical idea of an end to history since in Kermode's words, Shakespeare lived 'in an age too late for apocalypse, too critical for prophecy.'" Recently several critics such as Joseph Wittreich, Cynthia Marshall, Stephen Marx and Maurice Hunt have argued that Kermode's claims are false.

Nevertheless, in one sense he may be right, for Hodgkins suggests that an artist like Shakespeare, living among "doomsdayers" and "doomsayers," may have felt a serious need to question their apocalypticism. One of Hodgkins's challenges to readers is to think carefully on the ending not only of *The Tempest* but also of the Apocalypse of John. Before there is any comparison, he calls for a clear understanding of the difference between the traditional denotation and modern connotation of the word "apocalypse." Briefly, the Greek denotes "an unveiling and a bringing to light"; but present connotations are "negative and dystopian." He further requests the reader to see every potential sense of the word *apocalypse*: "doom and judgment, . . . but also, and finally, repentance, restoration, redemption, reconciliation."

Hodgkins follows with a few statements on Cynthia Marshall's *Last Things and Last Plays: Shakespeare's Eschatology* and Steven Marx's *Shakespeare and the Bible*. To what extent their views of apocalypse add to the understanding of Hodgkins's subject, readers will readily observe. To what extent Hodgkins agrees or disagrees with Marshall and Marx is

equally clear, but is he willing to call *The Tempest* a work of tragicomic theater an apocalyptic play? Perhaps even more intriguing, will he be willing to call John's *Apocalypse* theatrical? Are there numerous resemblances between John of Patmos's apocalyptic work and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*? Will the response to the latter question reveal support for a more expansive meaning of apocalyptic writing than either Marx or Marshall suggested? Does true apocalypse embrace more than earthly retribution and divine doom? And, does it embrace mercy with justice? At what point does the tragic drama turn fully tragicomic?

Examining and responding in thoughtful manner to these and other questions will assist all readers to understand more fully the true meaning of apocalypse but will also assist in determining the significance of the visionary figures (like Gonzalo, Ferdinand and Miranda) in *The Tempest* as apocalyptic writing. Similar questions should also be asked of Caliban, Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso.

In thinking over the entire play, perhaps one final gaze at Prospero would be helpful: At one time, he was a "counterfeit divine ruler" who set out to transform others, but ultimately he finds it necessary to transform himself, and he knows that his ending is despair unless he is relieved by prayer.

CHAPTER ONE

SHAKESPEARE AND THE BIBLE

LELAND RYKEN

We approach the subject of Shakespeare and the Bible through a cloud of contradictory claims and—even more—neglect. Sidney Lee claimed that biblical references were "not conspicuous in Shakespeare's plays" (16). But Levi Fox, in *The Shakespeare Handbook*, claims that "the Bible is Shakespeare's biggest source" (38). In his book-length study entitled *Shakespeare's Reading*, Robert Miola devotes a mere four sentences to the Bible. This is in obvious contrast to Peter Milward's assertion that the English Bible was "the most fundamental and universal" of all Shakespeare's "sources" (*Biblical Influences* vii). David Daniell, meanwhile, calls us back to reality when he proposes that if we were to tell "a young Shakespeare scholar that a detailed knowledge of the New Testament is an essential companion to Shakespearean study," the suggestion would be met with total indifference (*Bible* xiv).

In Shakespeare biographies and handbooks, the Bible is mainly a subject of neglect. Many sources devote no attention to the Bible as an influence on Shakespeare's plays: Mark Eccles, Peter Quennell, Marchette Chute. Stephen Greenblatt, Thomas Marc Parrott, and Stanley Wells give the subject one sentence, Park Honan two sentences, and David Bevington (*How to Read a Shakespeare Play*) three sentences. Most biographers give the topic a cursory one paragraph (Dennis Kay [*William Shakespeare*], Kenneth Muir, Edgar I. Fripp), or two paragraphs (Peter Ackroyd, Anthony Holden, Samuel Schoenbaum, Russ McDonald), or three paragraphs (Eric Sams, D. L. Johanyak).

Of course there is a lineage of book-length studies of Shakespeare and the Bible—by Charles Wordsworth, Thomas Carter, Richmond Noble, Peter Milward, and most notably Naseeb Shaheen. But this represents a coterie interest rather than the mainstream of Shakespearean scholarship.

This surely is a great regret to scholars interested in Shakespearean intersections with the Christian faith.

The Context: English Bible Translation Before Shakespeare

The story of Shakespeare and the Bible begins with the ferment of English Bible translation that spanned the sixteenth century. The history of English Bible translation from Tyndale through the King James Version is one of the most exciting adventure stories on record—an adventure story that has the beginning—middle—end shapeliness that Aristotle claimed for a good plot. For my purposes, I will impose a fourfold interpretive grid on the history of English Bible translation in the sixteenth century. (1) The triumph of the vernacular Bible is an account of how England became a biblical culture in Shakespeare's lifetime. (2) English Bible translation in the sixteenth century encompassed the entire cross-section of the population, from the ruling monarchs to the uneducated plow boy and illiterate lay person. (3) English Bible translation in the sixteenth century was almost exclusively a Protestant achievement. (4) It was also a story of nearly unremitting Catholic hostility to what was happening.

The story begins with William Tyndale (1494-1536), a linguistic genius competent in seven languages who dazzled the best scholars of his day. Educated at Oxford (BA, 1512; MA, 1515 [Daniell, *Bible* 140]), and with a possible stint at Cambridge (Daniell, *Tyndale* 49-54), Tyndale was deeply influenced by Erasmus's Greek New Testament, published a year after Tyndale received his MA from Oxford. Tyndale's desire to translate the Bible into English went hand in hand with his status as an ardent reformer, and therein lay a problem. What Tyndale saw as his life calling—translating the Bible into English—brought him into conflict with the Catholic church.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the wake of what is loosely called the Wycliffe translations of the Bible into the English vernacular, a document known as the Constitutions of Oxford (1408/1409) initiated what David Daniell calls "the severest censorship in the country's history" (*Bible* 108). The possession of religious vernacular texts was considered evidence of heresy (Daniell, *Bible* 109), and Article 7 of the Constitutions forbade anyone to translate any text of Scripture—even single verses—into English, or to own such a translation, without clerical permission (Daniell, *Bible* 110). In 1521, possibly the year of Tyndale's ordination to the priesthood (Bobrick 89), Cardinal Wolsey climaxed his confiscation of heretical books by leading a solemn procession to St. Paul's Cathedral to

oversee the burning of cartloads of reformation books (Bobrick 96). Benson Bobrick accurately summarizes Tyndale's impasse as follows: "As long as the Constitutions of Oxford remained in force, Tyndale could not carry out his purpose anywhere in England, and after he spent a year in London in vain efforts to secure a station favorable to his design, he realized that he would have to abandon it entirely, or seek his fate abroad" (Bobrick 96).

So Tyndale relocated to Cologne, where he set about translating the New Testament. He lived in hiding to escape threats to his life from Catholics. When he completed his translation of the New Testament (1525), copies had to be smuggled into England in bales of wool and bags of wheat (Daniell, *Tyndale* 186-188; McGrath 84; Moynahan 92-97). Catholic clerics and defenders were beside themselves with hostility to the English Bibles that flooded England. Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, conducted burnings at St. Paul's Cathedral (Bobrick 107; Daniell, *Tyndale* 191-193; Marius 323; Moynahan 101).

Thomas More was enlisted to conduct a printed attack on Tyndale, and he threw himself into the venture like a man possessed. In fact, More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* ran to four volumes, and his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, even though unfinished, runs to nearly 2000 pages and half a million words (Daniell, *Bible* 149). More vilifies Tyndale on page after page, calling him a "filthy foam of blasphemies out of his brutish beastly mouth," a "hellhound" fit for "the hogs of hell to feed upon," and "a hell-hound in the kennel of the devil" (Bobrick 113; Daniell, *Bible* 149). Tyndale stayed the course and translated the Pentateuch and a few additional Old Testament passages. He also revised his own New Testament. But he was lured out of hiding by a Catholic sympathizer named Henry Phillips, and he met his end outside of Brussels in 1535, where he was strangled and burned at the stake.

What did Tyndale achieve in his own lifetime and immediately afterwards? First, his Bible translation sparked a grassroots revolution in England. Lay people of all ages gathered throughout the country to read and hear the English Scriptures (Daniell, *Bible* 157). Tyndale himself had famously told a Papist that he aspired to "cause a boy that driveth the plough" to "know more of the Scripture than thou dost" (John Foxe, as quoted by Daniell *Bible* 142). Tyndale achieved his goal: his opponent Thomas More was appalled at the idea of the Bible's being disputed in the taverns by "every lewd [ignorant] lad" (Bobrick 111; Chambers 254).

Finally, what is meant by the cliché "without Tyndale, no Shakespeare?" First, Tyndale's Bible struck a blow for the English vernacular as opposed to Latin as the language used for important matters. It is hard for us to

imagine the extent to which Latin was the *lingua franca* of scholarly and ecclesiastical writing. Tyndale's New Testament ended that hegemony. According to Brian Moynahan, "The real horror of Tyndale's [New] testament to the [Catholic] Church was not so much the words in themselves . . . but that they were English words" (106).

Additionally, the specific kind of English that Tyndale used was the foundation for subsequent English. Tyndale's hallmark was clarity, and David Daniell asserts that Tyndale first *gave* his country "an English plain style" (*Bible* 158) and then helped to *establish* it by virtue of the widespread reading of his New Testament. Tyndale also enlarged the vocabulary of the English language. It is a commonplace that many of Tyndale's words and phrases made their way into the English language: *peacemaker, intercession, scapegoat, atonement, my brother's keeper, the salt of the earth, the signs of the times, a law unto themselves.*

Finally, it was Tyndale's translation that made the English Bible a cultural force in England, and thus Stephen Greenblatt can correctly assert that without the influence of Tyndale's New Testament and Cranmer's Prayer Book "it is difficult to imagine William Shakespeare" (91).

Tyndale's work was followed by a ferment of English Bible translation: Coverdale's Bible, 1535; Matthew's Bible, 1537; the Great Bible, 1539; the Geneva Bible, 1560; the Bishops' Bible, 1568. The apex of the entire movement was the King James Bible of 1611, a date too late to make this translation useful to Shakespeare, though Shakespeare may have read from it in his retirement in his role as lay rector or reader in Holy Trinity Church. The fact that there was a late Catholic entry in the field (Douay-Rheims: NT 1582; OT in two volumes in 1609-1610) is irrelevant to the story I am telling, inasmuch as Catholic hostility to the Protestant tradition of Bible translation remained unabated.

I propose that English Bible translation in the sixteenth century was the Protestant counterpart of the building of cathedrals in the Catholic Middle Ages. The Protestants channeled their best efforts into constructing an edifice of the Word.

I would like to make some additional comments about the Geneva Bible of 1560. The Geneva Bible was the Bible of the English Reformers. It was produced in Switzerland by Puritan refugees who had fled persecution under the Catholic Queen Mary. The Geneva Bible became the household Bible of English-speaking Protestants and has always been known informally as "the Puritan Bible," not only because it was produced by Puritan exiles living in Calvin's Geneva but also because it included Puritan preferences in translation of certain controversial words as well as anti-Catholic marginal notes. Further, because of certain formatting