



William Fulke's Bishops/Rheims New Testament Confutation
Print
10 3/4 x 7 1/2 in

William Fulke
English
1589

SHAKESPEARE AND THE RHEIMS NEW TESTAMENT (1582): OLD CLAIMS AND NEW EVIDENCE

IN the face of increasing interest in the subject of Shakespeare and religion, the tradition continues that he supposedly read or used the English Bible in various translations, especially the Geneva and Bishops' versions, but allegedly not the Rheims. At first blush, because Shakespeare lived in England and was subjected to the propaganda of Elizabeth's regime, this seems to make sense. The Prayer Book, the Homilies, and the English translations of the Bible were virtually inescapable influences; and so, it seems plausible that his works contain allusions to the Bishops' and Geneva Bibles, the Prayer Book and the Homilies. In *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* (1935), Richmond Noble provided evidence for the tradition in its most compact and convincing form. Since then, the cause has been taken up by Naseeb Shaheen with a more expansive treatment in *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (1999, rpt. 2011).¹

Formerly, it was somewhat credible, as Shaheen puts it, that "Arguments that Shakespeare . . . was acquainted with the Rheims are too far-fetched and contrived to be taken seriously" (35). However, in the light of recent scholarship, this claim no longer makes sense. The Rheims New Testament (1582) was preceded by a long line of previous translations of the Bible, especially the Tyndale (1526), the Great (1539), the Geneva (1560), and the Bishops' (1568). Translated in exile at Rheims principally by Gregory Martin, formerly of St. John's College, Oxford, it provided extensive notes and annotations. Intended to counter English Protestant translations, it in fact followed them in many ways, differing of course at crucial points.² Contrary to the simplistic carnard about the Protestants going back to "the original Greek" and the Catholics to the "corrupt" Latin Vulgate, in fact the title page of Rheims reads, "Diligently Compared with the Original Greek." The question was which Greek texts were more accurate, a problem that Gregory Martin, who was proficient in Greek and Hebrew, attempted to resolve by recourse to St. Jerome and the Church Fathers, who presumably better understood Greek and possibly had access to better texts. The Rheims translation drew an elaborate and fascinating response from the Protestant controversialist William Fulke, who in 1589 published an edition of the Bishops' and Rheims versions in parallel columns with commentary.

To be sure, with Catholicism illegal, the Rheims New Testament certainly would have been a dangerous book to have around, although perfect cover would have been afforded by a copy of Fulke's edition. But it is

apparent that two root assumptions, once quite plausible, have blocked any full consideration of the Rheims translation by Noble and Shaheen. First, if indeed the Rheims translation “does not appear to have had a wide circulation, [since] after it was published in 1582 it was not reprinted until 1600” (Shaheen 35), Fulke’s publication of the Bishops’ and Rheims versions in 1589 went into two additional printings in 1601, suggesting it was more widely read, possibly as a fascinating contrast of theological commentary. Second, allusions to the Rheims version of the New Testament were dismissed by Shaheen “because the translators of the Rheims frequently borrowed Geneva readings” (35). But in that case Shakespeare may have alluded to either the Rheims or the Geneva New Testament. Where both are the same, allusions to Geneva may well be to Rheims. Noble cites three instances at Lk 23.34, Lk 15.16, and Mt 10.29 (64-67). Thirdly, while Noble and Shaheen were explicit about allusions to the Homilies and Prayer Book, they largely ignored Catholic sources, occasionally ascribing them vaguely to “tradition rather than Scripture” (Shaheen 544). Finally, one must certainly concede that some Old Testament allusions come from the Geneva or the Bishops’ version, but the evidence Shaheen offers for New Testament allusions is remarkably slim. Of “approximately thirty” examples he cites from Geneva, only fifteen are to the New Testament, seven of which are the same in both Rheims and Geneva, and only eight are distinctively Genevan. But as I shall attempt to show, there are far more allusions to Rheims that are overlooked by both Noble and Shaheen, who clearly lacked an ear for Catholic phraseology.

My aim in this essay, then, is to argue that, while Noble and Shaheen’s studies are helpful and testify to Shakespeare’s allusions to English Protestant translations, the Elizabethan Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer, they create a one-sided impression and fail adequately to consider the Rheims New Testament and Catholic sources. As a recent study points out, “The diversity of versions reflected in Shakespeare’s writing indicates that ‘Shakespeare’s Bible’ cannot be taken for granted as unitary, since it consists of a network of different translations” (DeCook and Galey 9). The project needs to be expanded in order to be more inclusive. I do not provide an exhaustive list here, but only a number of notable examples. I have provided a summary table of such examples at the end of this essay.

BEFORE turning to the evidence for Shakespeare’s use of the Rheims version, one must acknowledge an important limitation. After pointing out that Shakespeare could have acquired references by reading the Bible or secular sources, by hearing the Bible or the Homilies read in services, or by hearing it mentioned in general conversation (39), Noble

delivers an important caveat:

From these examples it will be seen that some caution must be exercised in making any claims for any version. Because a passage in Shakespeare can be identified as corresponding with a passage in a particular version, it does not of necessity follow that that has been Shakespeare's immediate source. He may have been indebted to another version or to some intermediate, or to some other part of the Bible not noticed by the student. (62)

Since the criteria of "certain, probable and possible" allusions employed by Noble and Shaheen are somewhat questionable, it is perhaps more convincing to point to "correspondences" between Shakespeare and the various versions. With Noble's caveat in mind, I shall call attention to certain and possible correspondences to Rheims, and more significantly to important omissions, lack of attention to context, truncations of passages, and single Latinate words.³ For those who are unconvinced of Shakespeare's Catholicism, the difficulty remains of locating the sources of his numerous references to Catholic matters in a culture that repressed Catholic ceremonies and texts. Rheims provides a possible compendium.

In any event, Noble and Shaheen both find four "certain" references that correspond to the Rheims translation. In *As You Like It*, the remark "The tree yields bad fruit" (3.2.116) is a reference to Mt 7.18. Rheims has "a good tree can not yeld evil fruites" and all others have "a good tree cannot bring forth bad [or evil] fruit" (Shaheen 223).

With the comment in *All's Well That Ends Well* "I am for the house with the narrow gate" (4.5.50-51), the distinctive reference from Rheims is to Mt 7.13-14 "Enter ye by the narrow gate," which differs from "Enter in at the straight gate" in all other English translations (Shaheen 278-79).

A third example occurs in *Coriolanus* with mention of "the cockle of rebellion" (3.1.70), where only Rheims has "cockle" according to Shaheen (663-64), who however rightly attributes it to North's translation of Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*. All other translations have "tares." Shakespeare also uses the word in *Love's Labor's Lost* (Shaheen 134-35).

A final example occurs in *The Tempest* when Prospero says that "Not a hair perish'd" (1.2.217), a reference to Rheims Acts 27.34 "For there shall not an hearer of the head perish of any of you," against all other versions which have "There shall not an hearer fall from the head of any of you" (Shaheen 740-41). And one might add, perhaps less certainly, Iago's phrase from *Othello* "Put money in thy purse." (1.3.339). Rheims has "Do not possesse gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses" (Mt 10.9). Tyndale has "Possesse not golde, nor silver, nor brasse in your gerdels," and

Geneva has "Possesse not golde, nor silver, nor money in your girdels," whereas the Great and Bishops' bibles have "Possesse not gold, nor silver, nor brasse in your purses."

SOLID though the findings of Noble and Shaheen are, they miss the most significant connection. In part, the most obvious allusion or correspondence to Rheims involves the phrase "do penance." The translator of Rheims, Gregory Martin, objected that the Greek word "metanoia" was uniformly rendered by Protestant translators as "repent," rather than "do penance." Thus, Matthew 3.2 is translated in the Tyndale, Geneva, Great, and Bishops' translations as "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," whereas in the Rheims translation it is "Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This important difference in translation occurs numerous times in the New Testament. It is of importance for the Catholic sacrament of penance and the theological notion of satisfaction for sins. Noble and Shaheen overlooked the nineteen instances in which the word "do penance" occurs in Shakespeare's plays.⁴

Again, "confess" is a word in Rheims that carries a specific sacramental meaning different from the Tyndale, Geneva, Great, and Bishops' translations which have "acknowledge our sinnes" (see James 5.16; 1 John 1.9). Shakespeare refers some fifteen times to auricular confession. For example, in *Measure for Measure*, Juliet confesses to the Duke disguised as a Franciscan priest: "I do confess it [my sin], and repent it, father" (2.3.29). In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Silvia wants Eglamour to meet her "At Friar Patrick's cell, / Where I intend holy confession" (4.3.43-44; repeated 5.2.41-42). In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet tells the Nurse that she is going to "[Friar] Lawrence's cell, / To make confession, and to be absolv'd" (3.5.233). And finally in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes says to Camillo "priest-like, thou/ Hast cleans'd my bosom: I from thee departed / Thy penitent reform'd" (1.2.237-39).

A word allied to "confession" is of course "conscience," which occurs in *Henry V* (esp. 1.2.31, 96), *Hamlet* (5.2.67), *The Merchant of Venice* (2.2.1-29), and *Henry VIII* (esp. 2.2.17; 2.3.32; 2.4.204). Shakespeare employs it one hundred thirty-five times. Shaheen only records the reference to the "worm of conscience" in *Richard III* (1.3.221) and *Much Ado* (5.2.84), discussing it as a medieval representation of a troubled conscience "without overtones of Scripture" (341-42, 212-13). But a number of references in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 8.7, 10, 12 and 1 Tim 1.5, 19) indicate that conscience requires correction and therefore must be formed by an external authority. In two passages, Shakespeare implies a traditional Catholic notion of a conscience formed by the external authority of the

BEAUREGARD

Church as opposed to the private autonomous conscience advocated by many Protestants. In speaking to his cardinal advisors, Henry V says:

May I with right and conscience make this claim?
(*Henry V* 1.2.96)

Similarly, Henry VIII speaking to Cardinal Wolsey and others says:

I meant to rectify my conscience — which
I then did feel full sick, and yet not well —
By all the reverend fathers of the land
And doctors learn'd.
(*Henry VIII* 2.4.204-07.)

Both passages do require a nuanced interpretation. Henry V is set in Medieval England, and Henry VIII did in fact consult “reverend fathers of the land / And doctors learn’d” in rectifying his conscience. Moreover, the traditional Catholic notion of a conscience subject to authority still had some currency, even later with figures like John Donne.⁵ Nevertheless, these two passages carry a Catholic charge.

Shakespeare also uses the word “revenge” twelve times corresponding to Rheims at Romans 12.19, which reads “Revenge to me: I wil reward, saith our Lord,” whereas the Tyndale, Great, Bishops’, and Geneva Bibles have “Vengeance is mine: I wil repaye, saith the Lord.” Thus, in *Richard II*, we find the phrase “Let heaven revenge” (1.2.40), and in *Richard III*, “God will revenge it” (2.1.139) and “God will revenge it, who I will importune” (3 2.2.14). The notion of God’s revenge occurs also in *Hamlet* “prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell” (2.2.584) — in *3 Henry VI* three times (1.3.41, 1.1.53, 2.2.7), e. g., “heavens be reveng’d on me!,” three times in *Titus Andronicus* (4.1.40, 74, 129), once in *Pericles* (3.3.240), and once in *King Lear* (2.1.45).

Arguably, then, we have some fifty or more references to the Rheims translation over the “approximately thirty” Shaheen attributes to the Geneva Bible, of which fifteen are to the New Testament and only eight are distinctively Genevan. He also finds seven references to the Bishops’ New Testament (41).

BUT there are some other significant, but more complex, considerations. At times, Shakespeare embeds some Scriptural phrases, common to both Rheims and the other English translations, in a Roman Catholic context. Because they occur in such a context, it is possible that they come

RENAISSANCE

from Rheims, whether directly or indirectly. In any case, their meaning is adjusted and they are fit into a Catholic context.

For example, the commonplace phrase "amendment of life" is absent from the Rheims text of Scripture, although it occurs some twenty times in the annotations. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena pretends to undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostela, doing penance barefoot in fulfillment of a vow. Shaheen quotes only the italicized portions of the following lines (unnoticed by Noble), correctly attributing them to "strong overtones of both Scripture and the Prayer Book." But obviously the context of going on pilgrimage and doing penance clearly suggests the Catholic practice of doing penance in amending one's life:

I am St. Jaques' pilgrim, thither gone.
Ambitious love hath so in me offended
That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon
With sainted vow *my faults to have amended*. (3.4.4-7)

Again, the Countess's question in *All's Well* about Bertram is alleged to have "clear overtones of Scripture" by virtue of her mention of "the wrath of greatest justice" (Shaheen 276):

What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive,
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice. (3.4.25-29)

Both Geneva and Rheims have "day of wrath . . . of the just judgment of God" (Rom 2.5). But the phrase "wrath of God's justice" is again embedded in a Catholic context. Even further, Helena does not appear to be an angel whose prayers "heaven delights to hear / And loves to grant." The lines refer very subtly to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. And the notion of prayer "reprieving," or interceding and freeing someone from God's wrath, is obviously Catholic. Even if the lines refer hyperbolically to Helena, her role as intercessor is cast in Marian form. On the contrary, the Homily on Prayer says that "we must call neither vpon Angel, nor yet vpon Saint, but only and solely vpon GOD."

So also this occurs with *The Winter's Tale* where Shakespeare uses the commonplace word "penitence" in the Catholic context of making satisfaction for sins, done by redeeming them and "paying down":

BEAUREGARD

Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
A saint-like sorrow. No fault could you make
Which you have not redeem'd; indeed paid down
More penitence than done trespass. (5.1.1-4)

The word “penitence” is absent from Tyndale, Geneva, and the other English translations, which prefer “repent” and “repentance.” Shakespeare’s passage seems closest to Rheims Acts 3.19, “Be penitent therefore, and convert, that your sins may be put out.” Rheims has over twenty variations of “penitence” such as “penitent,” “penitents,” and “impenitence.”

Another reference to “prayer,” embedded in a Roman Catholic context, occurs in the epilogue to *The Tempest*, where there is a reference to “prayer” and “indulgence,” a word found in the Rheims annotations but not in any other English Bible. Prospero asks the audience for prayers that “pierce” and “assault Mercy itself,” perhaps a reference to the book of Sirach in the Apocrypha (Douay-Rheims 35.21; KJV 35.17): “For the prayer of them that humble themselves, shall pearce through the clouds.” But note the active sense of prayer interceding in order to “relieve” Prospero of despair and “free” him of his “faults”:

Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free. (Epilogue)

This runs counter to Protestant doctrine and the Homilies “Of Good Works” and “An Homily of Prayer.”⁶ Passages suggesting the efficacy of prayer to God for someone occur in Acts 12.5, 2 Cor 9.14, Phil 1.3-4, Col 1.3 and 4.3, and 2 Thess 1.11. The Rheims annotation to 2 Tim 1.16. 18 has

Ver 16. What a happy and meritorious thing it is to relieve the afflicted for religion, and not to be ashamed of their disgrace, irons, or what miseries soever.

Ver. 18. Our Lord. To have this prayer of an Apostle, or any priest or poor Catholic man so relieved, giveth the greatest hope at the day of our death or general judgment, that can be and it is worth all the lands, honours, and riches of the world.

But the Homily "Of Good Works" attacks "Papisticall superstitions" when such prayers, particularly indulgences or "pardons," are intercessory, meritorious, and efficacious.

ASIDE from some translation-specific passages and commonplace phrases embedded in Catholic contexts, Shakespeare's plays include the traditional ecclesiastical roles of bishop and priest, not to mention abbots, friars, abbesses, and nuns. Rather surprisingly, Noble and Shaheen say nothing of the bishops found in seven history plays, in which 1 Timothy 3.2 is especially relevant on the ideal qualities of a bishop. Thus, although they refer to the Homilies and the Book of Common Prayer, their reductive and inconsistent method excludes Catholic traditions. What are we to make, for example, of marriages performed by friars in *Much Ado* (5.4.29-31), *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.179-82), and *Measure for Measure* (5.1.378-79)? Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 7.34, we find a reference to virgins: "And the woman unmarried and the virgin, thinketh on the things that pertaine to Our Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." Over time this developed into the tradition of women's religious orders, and thus we find in *Measure for Measure* the Poor Clare novice Isabella referring to "fasting maids whose minds are dedicate / To nothing temporal" (2.2.154), a close approximation of 1 Corinthians 7.34.

Then, there is the sacramental order. In the Scriptural text of Rheims, the word "sacrament" occurs obscurely four times at Eph 1.9, 3.3, 3.9, 5.32; but in the traditional sense, approximately five hundred times in the annotations. "Mystery, secret" are preferred in the Tyndale, Great, Geneva, and Bishops' versions. As for particular sacraments, Shaheen records Shakespeare's references to Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony (829). But as we have seen, auricular confession goes unnoticed. With respect to the Eucharist and "taking the sacrament," as in Eucharistic communion or the Scriptural "breaking of bread" (Lk 24.35, Acts 2.12, 1 Cor 11:27-29), Shakespeare uses the phrase eight times. Perhaps the reference reflects the Homily "Of the Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament," or the Prayer Book Communion Service or the annotations in Rheims (1 Cor 11.27-29), but Noble and Shaheen overlook it. They also miss the subtle allusion to the Eucharist in *Measure for Measure* where Angelo says of his prayer, "heaven [God] in my mouth, / As if I did but only chew his name" (2.4.4-5). Shakespeare's use of the word "chew" suggests the Eucharist is more than a "name," that is, a sign or symbol, whereas the Homilies and Thirty-Nine Articles (nos. 28 and 29), not to mention Fulke and the Geneva Bible (John 6: 53-54, n. 12), refer to the Eucharist as "spiritual food" in opposition to

the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which provoked a significant sixteenth-century theological controversy. The Articles have it that

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. (Art. 28)

And:

The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as S. Augustine saith) the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing. (Art. 29)

But both Noble and Shaheen overlook these eucharistic overtones and relate Angelo's remark only to Matthew 15:8: "This people draweth nere vnto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with the lippes, but their heart is farre off from me."

As I have suggested above, Shakespeare's vocabulary at times reflects the Rheims rather than the other English versions of the New Testament. A number of distinctive Latinate words besides "sacrament" provide possible connections. Perhaps most significantly, Shakespeare uses "charity" some sixty times. In contrast to the nine references in the text of Rheims and one hundred ninety in the annotations, the other English translations prefer the word "love," except for eleven references in the Bishops' version, one at Rom 13.10, one at Jude 1.12, and nine at 1 Cor 13.1-13, 14.1. Geneva uses the word only once at Jude 1.12. Shakespeare uses some other unusual Latinate words that occur in Rheims: "agnize" once (see Philemon 1.6), "cogitation" twice, "emulation" eleven times, "condign" twice (see Rom 8.18 "the passions of this time are not condign to the glory to come"), "adulterate" six times, "calumniate" twice, "unction" twice, "eunuch" fifteen times, and "prescience" four times (see Acts 2.23; 1 Peter 1.2). Daniell extols Shakespeare for his use of "plain English," the "great bequest of Protestantism" ("Protestant Mind" 8, 12). Truly, we admire Shakespeare, as has often been pointed out, for his combination of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate words, as in the phrase "the multitudinous seas incarnadine" (*Macbeth* 2.2.59). Shakespeare was obviously not averse to Latin phraseology. To be sure, he also avoids much of the novel Latin of Rheims. And when it comes to the traditional Latinate names for the four cardinal virtues, they occur sparingly in Shakespeare and the English ver-

sions of the New Testament, including Rheims. But there is one exception with the doctrinally significant word "justice," which occurs over two hundred times in Rheims. For example, where Rheims has "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice" (Mt 5.6) and "crowne of justice" (2 Tim 4.8), the others have "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness" and "crown of righteousness." Rather significantly, Shakespeare employs "justice" over one hundred fifty times, "righteousness" not once and "righteous" only seven times. So also with the words "virtue" and "merit." Interestingly, Shakespeare never uses the word "Bible," except as "pible," comically garbled in *Merry Wives* (2.3.7).

As for the subject of virtue itself, there is a telling reference to the seminary of Rheims of some consequence: in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Lucentio "hath been long studying at Rheims" (2.1.79-80). Significantly, he comes to Padua to study "Virtue, and that part of philosophy . . . that treats of happiness / By virtue specially to be achieved," a clear reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Later, Petruchio exults in Kate's "new-built virtue and obedience" (5.2.118); the play illustrates the concept of acquired virtue, a humanist and Catholic notion contrary to the Protestant rejection of free will and meritorious "works."⁷ Hamlet too tells the players "in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must *acquire and beget* a temperance that may give it smoothness" (3.2.4-7, my italics). The word "virtue" and its variants occur nearly four hundred times in Shakespeare's works. The Protestant translators avoided the word and predominantly took *dunamis* to mean "power," "miracle," "great work," "ability," and "strength" (see for example, Mt 11.20-23). The Thirty-nine Articles contain no reference to the word "virtue," but only to good works dependent on grace (Arts. 10 and 12). The Homilies use the word numerous times, but not in the sense of acquired or meritorious virtue. Rheims also avoided the word in the Scriptural text, but not in its annotations where there are over one hundred references. The word is central to the sixteenth century humanist and Catholic traditions, and it implies the notion of "merit." The word "merit" occurs over one hundred fifty times in the annotations to Rheims, and Shakespeare himself uses it some seventy times. In *Love's Labor's Lost*, most obviously, the Princess remarks playfully "See, see, my beauty will be sav'd by merit. / O heresy in fair, fit for these days" (4.1.21-22), and in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena ascribes her success in curing the King to "Inspired merit" (2.1.148). In relation to the former play, Shaheen oddly cites the homily "Of Fasting" without a reference to a Catholic source (127-28); and with respect to the latter play, he fails to notice the phrase altogether, in spite of the fact that it accurately describes the Catholic conception of grace inspiring merit, or as the Council of Trent put it (Sixth Session: Ch. XVI): "Christ . . . continu-

ally infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be pleasing and meritorious before God.”⁸

On the question of interpretation of Scripture, a particularly intriguing passage occurs in *Cymbeline*, where the oracle in the play is not delivered orally, but read from a scroll, a text come down from Jupiter that is too difficult to understand. It is then subjected by a “soothsayer” to “construction” or exegesis in a figurative, not a literal manner (5.5.425 ff.). Although Calvin and the Geneva Bible recognized figurative reading, they stressed the plain and literal sense of Scripture, but here we have “authorities explain[ing] sacred writing to [a] bewildered laity,” suggesting Catholic practice.⁹ One might add that the soothsayer works back from English to Latin to discover the meaning, just as a Catholic might refer from the English Bible back to the Latin Vulgate. Even further, the obscurity of Scripture was used by Catholic theologians as an argument against the claim of Calvin that Scripture was self-authenticating through personal inspiration by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ In the Thirty-nine Articles (Art 6), the claim is that Scripture “containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man.” From the Catholic view, in the absence of clarity and in the presence of different interpretations, some sort of authority was necessary to determine, to “read” or to “prove,” what the meaning of Scripture was in crucial matters. Various central Reformation issues — justification by faith, the nature of the Eucharist, auricular confession, purgatory, Papal authority — would seem unclear in Scripture, which led St. Francois de Sales to observe in his *Controverses*, written in 1595:

If then the Church can err, O Calvin, O Luther, to whom will I have recourse in my difficulties? To Scripture, they say; but what will I do, poor man that I am? For it is with regard to Scripture itself that I have trouble. I do not doubt whether or not I should adjust faith to Scripture, for who does not know that it is the word of truth? What bothers me is the understanding of this Scripture.

Here is a concern over the definitive meaning of Scripture on key points of doctrine, and by extension church unity and authority, a concern perhaps resonating in the mode of interpretation featured in *Cymbeline*. The passage may be an example of decorum, what is appropriate to ancient Roman religious practice, or it may be Shakespeare’s personal projection of Catholic habits onto an ancient Roman situation and setting.

What are we to make of all this? First of all, in spite of Noble’s and Shaheen’s helpful efforts, it is obvious that the project remains incom-

plete. They had little ear for Catholic phraseology. But no one person, however erudite, can catch all the "echoes" and "references" to the Bible in Shakespeare. For example, both Noble and Shaheen surprisingly missed the allusion to "hard hearts" in *King Lear* (3.6.77). The project thus needs to be expanded. Second, the obvious exclusion of Catholic references calls for a more inclusive and less sectarian method incorporating both Scriptural and traditional sources. For starters, there is Robert Persons's *The Christian Directory* (1582), used by Catholics and also by Protestants in its expurgated form under the editorship of Edmund Bunny. "Hardness of heart" is dealt with therein at some length, as is "resolution," a word occurring thirty-one times in the plays. The catechisms of Edmund Bonner, Peter Canisius, and Robert Bellarmine might also be of interest.

It is difficult to understand how Shakespeare came by his knowledge of Catholic matters and his "references" corresponding to the Rheims New Testament. Catholic works were suppressed and hard to come by in sixteenth-century England. To be sure, many of his references might be explained by the plays' settings in ancient Greece and Rome or the Middle Ages, or by his Italian or French sources. But whether this is always the case remains to be seen.

One cannot determine Shakespeare's personal faith from his allusions to Scripture, whether in the Geneva or Rheims version. Contrary to unsubstantiated claims that he attended Church of England services, where he heard the Bible read aloud, the existing evidence suggests otherwise. He failed twice to pay his taxes for St. Helen's parish, where he is listed by name and where he left his tax bill outstanding. And, according to Samuel Schoenbaum, he is not among those "in any of the annual lists of residents of the Clink parish (St. Saviour's) compiled by the officers who made the rounds to collect tokens purchased by churchgoers for Easter Communion, which was compulsory."¹¹ And even if he did attend Church of England services, he would have heard the Bishops' version, not the Geneva. The Rheims New Testament, with its extensive annotations, would have provided a rich source of Catholic information, and William Fulke's refutation, with the Rheims text in parallel columns to the Bishops', would have made Rheims available. This would seem to be the most plausible scenario, particularly in view of other evidence of Shakespeare's Catholicism, and particularly because Rheims and the Bishops' versions provide well over fifty references, as compared with the "approximately thirty" in Geneva cited by Shaheen. But of course, we cannot safely assume Shakespeare always relied on printed texts. All we can point to, with respect to the Geneva, the Rheims, and other translations, are "echoes" and correspondences in wording, with a very few certain "references." But Rheims should be given its due.

Shakespeare's Use of the Rheims New Testament [71 references]¹²

1. Undisputed references to Rheims: [4].

<i>As You Like It</i> 3.2.116	"The tree yields bad fruit." Rheims Mt 7.18. has "a good tree cannot yield evil fruites" [Geneva and all others have "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit" (Shaheen 223).]
<i>AWW</i> 4.5.50-51	"I am for the house with the narrow gate." [See Rheims Mt 7.13-14 "Enter ye by the narrow gate" and Lk 13.24 "Strive to enter by the narrow gate." All other translations have "straite gate."]
<i>Othello</i> 1.3.339 ff.	"Put money in thy purse." See Rheims Mt 10.9 "Do not possesse money in your purses." [Tyndale and Geneva have "money in your girdles" and Great and Bishops have "brasse in your purses."]
<i>Tempest</i> 1.2.217	"Not a hair perish'd." See Rheims Acts 27.34 "For there shal not an heare of the head perish of any of you." [All other versions have "fall from the head of any of you."]

2. References to Penance: [19]

See Mt 3.2, "Doe penance: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Rheims). The phrase occurs also at Mt 4.17; Mk 6.12; Lk 16.30, 17.3; Acts 2.38, 8.22, 26.20; Rev 2.5, 16, 21, 22, 3.3, 19. [See to the contrary "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Tyndale, Great, Geneva, Bishops').]

<i>TGV</i> 1.2.64-5	My penance is, to call Lucetta back And ask remission for my folly past.
<i>TGV</i> 2.4.129	I have done penance for contemning Love
<i>TGV</i> 5.2.38	As he in penance wander'd through the forest
<i>TGV</i> 5.4.170	'tis your penance but to hear The story of your loves discovered
<i>ADO</i> 5.1.273	Impose me to what penance your invention Can lay upon my sin
<i>LLL</i> 1.1.115	And bide the penance of each three years' day

RENASCENCE

<i>LLL</i> 1.2.129	you must suffer him to take no delight nor no penance
<i>LLL</i> 5.2.711	I go woolward for penance
<i>MV</i> 4.1.271-2	from which ling'ring penance Of such misery doth she cut me off.
<i>SHR</i> 1.1.89	And make her bear the penance of her tongue?
<i>TN</i> 3.4.138	we'll have him in dark room and bound . . . for our pleasure and his penance
<i>2H6</i> 2.3.11	after three days' open penance done
<i>2H6</i> 2.4.20	Now thou dost penance too
<i>2H6</i> 2.4.75	Let not her penance exceed the king's commission
<i>2H6</i> 2.4.105	Madam, your penance done, throw off this sheet
<i>H8</i> 1.4.17	They should find easy penance
<i>H8</i> 1.4.32	The penance lies on you
<i>H8</i> 5.3.43	they need no other penance
<i>SON</i> 111.12	nor double penance, to correct correction

3. References to "Confess, confession, confessor": [11]

See "Confess therefore your sins" in James 5.16 (Rheims 1582, 1600) versus "Knowledge your fautes" (Tyndale, Great, Bishops') and "Acknowledge your faults" (Geneva). See also "If we confess our sins" in 1 Jn 1.9 (Rheims 1582, 1600) versus "If we knowledge our synnes" (Tyndale, Great, Bishops') and "If we acknowledge our sins" (Geneva).

<i>MM</i> 2.1.35	bring him his confessor
<i>MM</i> 2.3.29	I do confess it, and repent it, father
<i>MM</i> 3.1.166	I am confessor to Angelo
<i>MM</i> 4.3.128	one of our convent, and his confessor
<i>RJ</i> 2.3.56	riddling confession finds but riddling shrift
<i>RJ</i> 2.6.21	even to my ghostly confessor
<i>RJ</i> 3.3.49	being a divine, a ghostly confessor
<i>RJ</i> 3.5.233	to make confession, and to be absolv'd
<i>RJ</i> 4.1.22	come you to make confession to this father?

BEAUREGARD

<i>TGV</i> 4.3.43-44	At Friar Patrick's cell, Where I intend holy confession.
<i>TGV</i> 5.2.41-42	Besides, she did intend confession, At Patrick's cell, this even...

4. References to "revenge" in relation to God or heaven: [12]

Compare Rheims Rom 12.19 "Revenge to me: I wil reward, saith our Lord" with Tyndale, Great, Geneva and Bishops' which have "Vengeance is mine: I wil repaye, saith the Lord."

<i>R II</i> 1.2.40	Let heaven revenge
<i>Hamlet</i> 2.2.584	prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell
<i>3H6</i> 1.1.53	heavens be reveng'd on me!
<i>3H6</i> 1.3.41	lest in revenge thereof, sith God is just, He be as miserably slain as I.
<i>3H</i> 2.2.7	withold revenge, dear God!
<i>R3</i> 2.1.139	God will revenge it.
<i>R3</i> 2.2.14	God will revenge it, who I will importune
<i>Titus</i> 4.1.40	or else to heaven she heaves them for revenge
<i>Titus</i> 4.1.74	what God will have discovered for revenge.
<i>Titus</i> 4.1.129	revenge the heavens for old Andronicus!
<i>Per</i> 3.3.24	the gods revenge it upon me and mine
<i>Lear</i> 2.1.45	the revengive gods 'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend.

5. Other contextual references to penance: [5]

See also penitence, penitent, penitents, penitential, penitently, etc. Penitence can signify simple contrition, Catholic or Protestant, but the following carry a specifically Catholic penitential context:

<i>MM</i> 2.3.21-23	I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience, / And try your penitence, if it be sound, / Or hollowly put on. (spoken by the Duke dressed as a Franciscan friar hearing Juliet's confession)
---------------------	---

RENASCENCE

<i>AWW</i> 3.5.93-95	Come pilgrim, I will bring you Where you shall host. Of enjoin'd penitents There's four or five, to great Saint Jaques bound.
<i>WT</i> 1.2.237-39	. . . wherein, priest-like, thou Hast cleans'd my bosom: I from thee departed Thy penitent reform'd.
<i>WT</i> 5.1.1-4	Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd A saint-like sorrow. No fault could you make Which you have not redeem'd; indeed paid down More penitence than done trespass.
<i>H5</i> 4.1.298-305	Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay, Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built Two chauntries, where the sad and solemn priests Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do; Though all that I can do is nothing worth, Since that my penitence comes after all, Imploring pardon. (Henry is describing his "yearly pay" for prayers and his construction of two chantries to offer masses for Richard II).

6. References to "conscience" with Catholic context: [2]

See, for example, 1 Cor 8.7, 10, 12 and 1 Tim 1.5, 19 and numerous other references in Scripture which indicate that conscience requires correction and therefore must be formed by an external authority. There are 135 references to the word in Shakespeare, but note the following which imply a Catholic notion of a conscience formed by the external authority of the Church as opposed to the private autonomous conscience advocated by many (but not all) Protestants.

<i>H5</i> 1.2.96	May I with right and conscience make this claim?
<i>H8</i> 2.4.204-07	I meant to rectify my conscience — which I then did feel full sick, and yet not well — By all the reverend fathers of the land And doctors learn'd.

7. References to "taking the sacrament": [10]

These eight of these references are to receiving the Eucharist unworthily and are missed by Shaheen, but perhaps the reference reflects the Homily

BEAUREGARD

“Of the Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament,” or the Prayer Book Communion Service, or the annotations in Rheims (1 Cor 11.27-29).

<i>AWW</i> 4.3.136	I'll take the sacrament on't
<i>IH6</i> 4.2.28	ten thousand french have ta'en the sacrament
<i>R3</i> 1.4.203	thou didst receive the sacrament to fight
<i>R3</i> 5.5.18	as we have ta'en the sacrament
<i>JN</i> 5.2.6	we took the sacrament
<i>R2</i> 1.1.139	ere I last receiv'd the sacrament, I did confess it
<i>R2</i> 4.1.328	you shall not only take the sacrament [spoken by the Abbot]
<i>R2</i> 5.2.97	a dozen of them here have ta'en the sacrament . . . to kill the King
<i>Hamlet</i> 1.5.77	Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled, No reck'ning made [see Rheims annotation to 1 Tim 3.15]
<i>MM</i> 2.4.4-5	heaven [God] in my mouth, As if I did but only chew his name

8. References to marriages in the presence of friars: [3]

<i>Much Ado</i> 5.4.58	give me your hand, before this holy friar
<i>RJ</i> 2.4.181-82	and there she shall, at friar Lawrence's cell Be shrived and married
<i>MM</i> 5.1.378	do you the office, friar

9. References to Purgatory: [2]

Rheims has 18 references in its annotations.

<i>Hamlet</i> 1.5.11-13	my days of nature Are burnt and purg'd away
<i>Othello</i> 4.3.77	I should venture purgatory for't

10. References to intercessory prayer and indulgences: [3]

<i>AWW</i> 3.4.25-29	Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear / And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath / Of greatest justice.
----------------------	---

RENASCENCE

<i>Tempest</i> (Epilogue)	And my ending is despair Unless I be relieved by prayer, Which pierces so that it assaults Mercy itself and frees all faults. As you from crimes would pardoned be, Let your indulgence set me free.
<i>Phoenix & Turtle</i>	For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

NOTES

1) More recently, see Hannibal Hamlin, "Shakespeare" in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*, 225-38, and Barbara Mowatt "Shakespeare Reads the Geneva Bible" in *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book*, 25-39. Both provide useful background on the Geneva Bible and helpful commentary on Shakespeare's Scriptural allusions, but as usual they overlook the Rheims version. The frequent claim that the Geneva version was "Shakespeare's Bible" assumes that "the English people were reading the Bible in great numbers" and that "everyone read, or heard read . . . the English Bible . . . [which] was the life-blood, the daily, even hourly, nourishment of the nation and of ordinary men and women" (David Daniell, "Reading the Bible" 168-70). If eighty-one editions (printings?) were produced during Shakespeare's career (Shaheen 28), and if, as Daniell claims (165), half a million copies of the Bible were sold in a population of six million, the percentage of purchasers would be less than 10% of the population. Thus, as Robert Whiting has argued, the evidence indicates that, because of illiteracy, indifference and penury, "only a minority of English people yet read the Bible," mainly because it was not affordable and the cost of education was high (*Local Responses to the English Reformation*, 197-201).

2) The most convenient way to compare Scriptural passages among the various early English versions is to consult *The New Testament Octapla: Eight English Versions of the New Testament in the Tyndale-King James Tradition*, ed. Luther A. Weigle. I have also used *The Geneva Bible: The Annotated New Testament, 1602 Edition*, ed. Gerald Sheppard. For the Rheims annotations to the New Testament, see John Breckinridge, et al., eds. *The New Testament . . . First Published by the English College of Rheims, Anno 1582*.

3) For references to Shakespeare's words and phrases, see Marvin Spevack, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. A more convenient online concordance can be found at the *Open Source Shakespeare*.

4) For Shakespeare's representation of the sacrament of penance, see David Beauregard, *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Plays*, Chapter 1.

5) For example, see John Donne on conscience, *The Sermons of John Donne*, 4: 220.

6) For the details of Shakespeare's differences with the Homilies, see Appendix 2 in David Beauregard, *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Plays*.

7) Virtue and human dignity are not extolled in sixteenth-century Protestant theology,

as Paul Oskar Kristeller has observed (169). Calvin, for example, says that “if it is right to declare that man, because of his vitiated nature, is naturally abominable to God, it is also proper to say that man is naturally depraved and faulty.” For Calvin’s full discussion, see *Institutes* 2.1.8-11. Richard Hooker follows suit: “Freedom of operation we have by nature, but the ability of virtuous operation by grace; because through sin our nature hath taken that disease and weakness, whereby of itself it inclineth only unto evil”; *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 5, Appendix 1, no. 2.

8) *The Canons and Decrees Of the Council of Trent*, 4-41.

9) Miola 42-44.

10) On this point, see especially the important essay by Walsham.

11) Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* 221-23. See also Patrick Collinson, “William Shakespeare’s Religious Inheritance and Environment” in *Elizabethan Essays*, 251, citing Boulton. Whether Shakespeare’s Catholicism can be determined is still an open question, of course, but I have offered evidence in “Shakespeare’s Catholic Mind at Work: The Bard’s Choices, Additions, and Projections,” 942-54.

12) With some slight additions, this table is reprinted from my *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare’s Plays*, 165-69, with permission of the publisher.

WORKS CITED

- Beauregard, David. *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare’s Plays*. Newark: U Delaware P, 2008.
- . “Shakespeare’s Catholic Mind at Work: The Bard’s Choices, Additions, and Projections.” *The Heythrop Journal* 54 (2013): 942-54.
- Boulton, Jeremy. “The Limits of Formal Religion: The Administration of Holy Communion in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart London.” *London Journal* 10 (1984): 135-54.
- Breckinridge, John et al., eds. *The New Testament . . . First Published by the English College of Rheims, Anno 1582*. New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1834.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. Ford Battles. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1960.
- Collinson, Patrick. “William Shakespeare’s Religious Inheritance and Environment.” *Elizabethan Essays*. London: Hambleton P, 1994.
- Daniell, Daniel. “Reading the Bible.” *A Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. David Kastan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999: 158-71.
- . “Shakespeare’s Protestant Mind.” *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001): 8, 12.
- DeCook, Travis and Alan Galey, eds. *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Donne, John. *The Sermons of John Donne*. Ed Geroige Potter and Evelyn Simpson. 10 vols. Berkeley: U California P, 1959.
- The Elizabethan Homilies (1623)*. *Renaissance Electronic Texts*. Ed. Ian Lancashire. University of Toronto Library, 1997. Web. <<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/ret/homilies/elizhom.html>>.
- Fulke, William. *The Text of the New Testament, with a Confutation*. London, 1589; STC 2888. Web. <<https://archive.org/details/FulkeNewTestamentConfutation1589>>.
- Hamlin, Hannibal. “Shakespeare.” *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*. Ed. Rebecca Lemon et al. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012: 225-38.

RENAISSANCE

- Hooker, Richard. *Laws of Ecclesiological Polity*. Ed. W. Speed Hill. 5 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1977-82.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*. New York: Columbia UP, 1979.
- Miola, Robert. "'An Alien People Clutching Their Gods'?: Shakespeare's Ancient Religions." *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001): 42-44.
- Mowatt, Barbara. "Shakespeare Reads the Geneva Bible." *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book*. Ed. Travis DeCook and Alan Galey. New York: Routledge, 2011: 25-39.
- Noble, Richmond. *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge*. New York: Octagon, 1970.
- Schoenbaum, Samuel. *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*. New York: Oxford, 1987.
- Schroeder, H. J., ed. *The Canons and Decrees Of the Council of Trent*. New York: Herder, 1941.
- Shaheen, Naseeb. *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*. Newark: U Delaware P, 1999, rpt. 2011.
- Sheppard, Gerald, ed. *The Geneva Bible: The Annotated New Testament, 1602 Edition*. New York: Pilgrim, 1989.
- Spevack, Marvin. *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1970.
- Walsham, Alexandra. "Unclasping the Book? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Vernacular Bible." *Journal of British Studies* 42 (2003): 141-66.
- Weigle, Luther, ed. *The New Testament Octapla: Eight English Versions of the New Testament in the Tyndale-King James Tradition*. New York: Thomas Nelson, 1962.
- Whiting, Robert. *Local Responses to the English Reformation*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998.