

Edited by Michael Scott, Michael J. Collins

Christian Shakespeare: Question Mark

A Collection of Essays on Shakespeare in his Christian Context

SERIES IN LITERARY STUDIES

Summary

Christian Shakespeare? The question was put to each contributor to this collection of essays. They received no further guidance about how to understand the question nor how to shape their responses. No particular theoretical approach, no shared definition of the question was required or encouraged. Rather, they were free to join, in whatever way they thought useful, the extensive discourse about the impact that the Christian faith and the religious controversies of Shakespeare's time had on his poems and plays. The range of responses points not only to openness of Shakespeare's work to interpretation, but to the seriousness with which the writers reflected on the question and to their careful and sensitive reading of the poems and plays. The heterogeneity of Shakespeare's world is reflected in the heterogeneity of the essays, each an individual response to the complex question they engage.

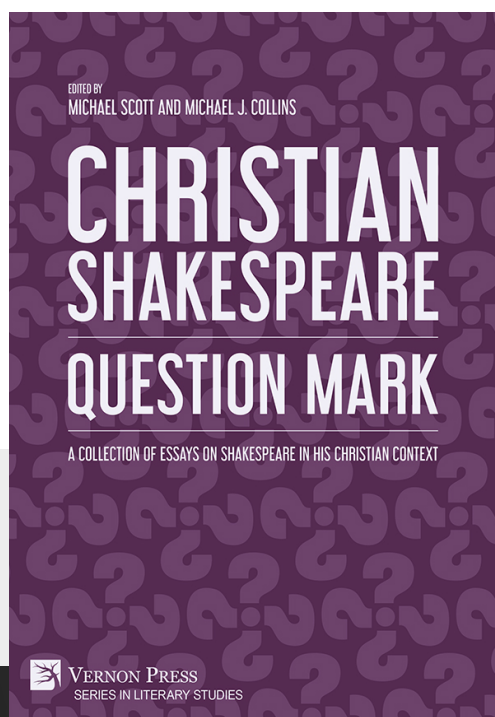
In the end, what the plays and poems reveal about Shakespeare's Christianity remains unclear, and that lack of clarity has also contributed to the variety of responses in the collection. All the essays recognize, to some degree or another, that the tension in Shakespeare's world between old and new, medieval and early modern, Catholic and Protestant, brought uncertainty (and in some cases anxiety) to the minds and hearts of Shakespeare's contemporaries. But what Shakespeare himself believed, how he responded in his work to the religious turmoil of his time remains uncertain. For some of the contributors Shakespeare's plays are inescapably indeterminate (even evasive) and open to a multiplicity of possible readings. For others, Shakespeare takes a stand and, through the careful patterning of

his plays, speaks more or less unambiguously to the religious and political issues of his time. Together the essays reflect the varied ways in which the question of Shakespeare's Christianity might be answered.

About the editors

Michael Scott is Fellow and Senior Dean at Blackfriars Hall Oxford. He is the author of books on Shakespeare, Elizabethan / Jacobean and Twentieth Century Theatre, including 'John's Marston's Plays: Theme, Structure and Performance'; 'Renaissance Drama and a Modern Audience'; 'Shakespeare and the Modern Dramatist'; 'Shakespeare's Tragedies: All that Matters'; 'Shakespeare's Comedies: All that Matters'; 'Shakespeare: A Complete Introduction'. He was founding and general editor of 'The Text and Performance' series and of 'The Critics Debate' series. He is also co-editor of the 'Casebook on Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker, The Homecoming'. With Deborah Cartmell, he co-edited 'Talking Shakespeare: Shakespeare into the Millennium'. He was on the editorial board, which relaunched 'Critical Survey' for O.U.P. He has lectured on Shakespeare in many countries around the world including India, China, U.S.A. as well as in the U.K., where he has given public lectures for the R.S.C. and the National Theatre. He also writes fiction under the name of Michael Kerr Scott.

Michael J. Collins is Teaching Professor of English and Dean Emeritus at Georgetown University. He is editor of 'Reading What's There: Essays on Shakespeare in Honor of Stephen Booth' (2014); 'Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies' (1997); and, with Francis J. Ambrosio, 'Text and Teaching: The Search for Human Excellence' (1991). He has published essays on teaching Shakespeare and Shakespeare in performance in 'Shakespeare Quarterly', 'Shakespeare Yearbook', and 'Critical Survey' among other publications. He regularly reviews productions of Shakespeare for 'Shakespeare Bulletin'. He has been a member of the faculty on courses for secondary school teachers at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington and Shakespeare's Globe in London.



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