

**Paul Edmondson**

# **Spiritual Reflections on the Work of Shakespeare and Dickens**

A text's theological or spiritual significance is not limited to the intent of its author. Here Paul Edmondson argues that a doctrine of incarnation enables the works of great authors, like Shakespeare and Dickens, to become useful as contemporary sources for spiritual direction. This paper has in view, not only the spirituality of the authors themselves, but also the way in which the creative act of writing connects the written word to the divine. Imaginative engagement with literature, therefore, can become a resource for spiritual growth and communion with God.

## **Introduction**

My starting point is that of a Spiritual Director for the Coventry Diocese who is also a Minister in Secular Employment at The Shakespeare Centre, serving his first title curacy at St Andrew's, Shottery. I write primarily as Shakespeare scholar with an interest in Dickens, who is interested in entering more deeply into theological conversations.

Two years ago I conducted a spiritual experiment. As part of my pre-ordination training, and my deepening commitment to Spiritual Direction as an important strand of ministry, I wanted to find out whether Shakespeare could be used as a resource for spiritual reflection. If so, how, and what would this mean? I was less interested in claiming a mainstream Protestantism or secretive Roman Catholicism for Shakespeare (I explain how and why later), and more concerned with the kind of spirituality that The Church of England as a Catholic and Reformed church made available for the world in which Shakespeare was formed, lived, and worked. Christianity makes two highly distinctive and unique truth claims among world religions: the Resurrection and the Incarnation. It also has two major central points of focus, the Cross and the Word made flesh. Theologically and spiritually the truth claims and the signs through which they are expressed and made real to believers are inextricably connected. But, as I shall demonstrate, it is the emphatic worldliness of the doctrine of the Incarnation by which Shakespeare and Dickens seem more spiritually sustained.

It should be noted that this article is mainly about Shakespeare, but that in focusing on him in the ways I do what emerges is a strong sense of how the theological poetics I establish might then be applied to other 'incarnational' writers (George Herbert, William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins readily spring to mind). Why Charles Dickens? Perhaps the main reason is that Dickens felt a great affinity to Shakespeare and that this bicentenary year of the birth of Dickens offers an opportunity to recognise both writers' wide appeal around the world. In fact, Shakespeare's influence on Dickens runs deeply. There are around a thousand allusions to Shakespeare across Dickens's works. <sup>1</sup> Dickens certainly used Shakespeare as a major literary resource and point of reference even if he did not fully think through him. The writer from Shakespeare's time with whom Dickens can most readily be compared, at least stylistically, is Ben Jonson. Both Dickens and Jonson share the same interest in portraying heightened and exaggerated qualities in their characters which for both writers are shot

through with an irrepressibly absurd and comic energy. The importance of both writers to Dickens is perfectly illustrated by Dickens himself directing and performing in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (as Robert Shallow) and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (as Captain Bobadil) to help recoup the monies he and other members of the Stratford-upon-Avon and London Shakespeare committees contributed towards the public purchase of Shakespeare's Birthplace in 1847. Putting Dickens alongside Shakespeare in a spiritual context, though, allows for a further and contrasting illustration of incarnational poetics.

First, I shall outline how it is possible to construct an incarnational theology from the works of Shakespeare. After an overview of incarnational moments in Shakespeare, I then go on to release Shakespeare from the current dichotomy in Shakespeare Studies which construes his spirituality as either secretly Roman Catholic or Protestant. Second, I shall explain what I mean by an incarnational poetics in the context of Spiritual Direction. Third, having identified, defined and established what I mean by an incarnational spirituality for Shakespeare, I turn my attention to Dickens, where I also find an incarnational poetics conspicuously at work.

## Shakespeare's Incarnational World

The frail and confused old King Lear, whose country is torn apart by war, enters carrying the body of his favourite daughter:

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones.  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack. 2

An exiled Duke commends living in the Forest of Arden rather than in the royal court:

This our life, exempt from public haunt,  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. 3

Princess Innogen has just awoken next to a headless corpse whom she believes to be her husband and prays:

Good faith,  
I tremble still with fear; but if there be  
Yet left in heaven as small a drop of pity  
As a wren's eye, feared gods, a part of it! 4

Hamlet confides in Horatio just moments before the duel that will bring his death:

There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be. 5

These four examples enable different ways of thinking about spirituality in Shakespeare. King Lear's relationship with 'the gods' is one of anger and despair. Duke Senior and

Innogen find the infinite and the divine in the natural world: trees, stones, the running brooks, and something as small and specific as a 'wren's eye'. As Edith Sitwell observes 'Shakespeare knew that there is no fragment of clay, however little worth, that is not entirely composed of inexplicable qualities.' <sup>6</sup> In the examples from *As You Like It* and *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare presents the natural world through the lens of the incarnation, the created order in which a presence of the divine can be felt because God becomes flesh and interacts with God's world, drawing everything to God through the person and spirit of Jesus. <sup>7</sup> In the fourth example, from *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's referring to the natural world coincides with Matthew's gospel to convey Hamlet's feelings: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father?' <sup>8</sup> From a spiritual perspective, Hamlet's speech is one of Shakespeare's best articulations of grace, both in content and phrasing. There is acceptance and resignation in the shape and structure of Shakespeare's language, as well as a quiet, confident and calm affirmation of a universal truth and question. The truth is that we shall all die; the question is how ready will we be when the time comes? Hamlet's trust in God, whom he does not need to name because of the gospel allusion, suggests a self, which for all its struggle thus far, now sits calmly with a sense of judgement: 'Let be.' It is a detached, holy and grace-full perspective.

## Shakespeare's Religious Context

That Christian narrative patterns can be discerned in Shakespeare's plays is not in any way surprising. He was living, working, imagining, and writing at a time when the Christian faith was part of the cultural air that Europe breathed and was fed by. The kind of Christianity that Shakespeare exemplifies is the area which has been most contested, especially in recent years: was he Roman Catholic (with his work crackling with secret Roman Catholic encoding <sup>9</sup>) or Protestant? How useful is this debate and what bearing does it have on an attempt to characterise Shakespeare's spirituality?

Shakespeare was living during an immense social, cultural and spiritual upheaval. Reformation historians enjoy debating just how immense that upheaval was. There is the view of Christopher Haigh: that reforming parishes were in the minority, that people were simply bewildered, 'baffled by the sudden changes made to their religion by their political masters, quite unable to follow what was going on or what they ought to think or do.' <sup>10</sup> Eamon Duffy is more extreme and presents a picture of total destruction by the government of all things Roman Catholic which left the people grieving and bewildered, whilst at the same time forcing an underground, anti-establishment 'continuity of Catholicism'. <sup>11</sup> In this kind of context Shakespeare can be identified as producing plays for the Roman Catholic cause.

By contrast, Robert Bearman has taken pains characteristically to demystify any claims that Shakespeare was Roman Catholic. Instead, from Bearman's perspective, Shakespeare emerges as a wealthy, rather boring gentleman of Stratford, and one who was no other than a mainstream protestant. Bearman observes:

William Shakespeare's religious beliefs have long been a source of speculation and necessarily so, as there is no surviving documentary evidence to suggest anything but conformity with the state's requirements. <sup>12</sup>

Bearman dismisses any suggestion that John Shakespeare adhered to what biographers and historians writing in this field like affectionately to refer to as 'the old faith' and explains that 'to establish religious belief as a factor, we must have firm evidence of nonconformity. Without such evidence, views on John's religious beliefs will remain speculative.' 13 I wonder whether we are missing something in this either Roman Catholic or Protestant approach in our quest to understand Shakespeare's religious preferences?

Broadly established by Elizabeth I's Acts of Settlement and Uniformity of Religion, The Church of England continues to be broad. But Uniformity and Settlement did not come easily. The Shakespearian scholar Barbara Everett reminds us that 'the poet was born in 1564; five years earlier, in 1559, the Act of Uniformity was passed (though only barely, by *three* votes).' 14 The Church of England was made possible only by protestant thought and action: an emphasis on the Bible in the vernacular, the preaching of that word, the printing and wide dissemination of it, and a removal of papal authority. Quoting from T S Eliot's poem 'Burnt Norton', Everett goes on to identify Shakespearian theatre with the newly established religion as being a 'draughty church', 'draughty' because of its breadth and its ability to hold in tension a variety of religious expressions. She writes:

T S Eliot's "Burnt Norton", naming the private places where insight takes place, calls one of them "the draughty church at smoke fall". At its highest and most serious moments, its most searching inquiries into the human, the Renaissance theatre in England itself became a "draughty church": a place never securely justified by power or authority but released into a new utterance by the secession of the churches trapped in political conflict. 15

The Church of England was established to be a Catholic church, but a reformed and 'draughty' Catholic church, rather than a Roman Catholic one. It was established professing the three Catholic creeds, as well as being sacramental in its worship. Provided that you did not proactively break the law, a variety of spiritual expressions were possible in the world at large, and especially within the imagined worlds depicted on stage. Shakespeare's artistic range, which we are often quick to ascribe to his genius, was in part made possible by the times in which he lived. He was able to engage with and present conflict of all kinds, articulate doubt and despair, and to share joy and fear in equal measure. Philip Sheldrake's critique of the Roman Catholic and Protestant dichotomy is useful here:

Histories of western spirituality have often made a sharp distinction between the Protestant and Catholic traditions as a whole, and some writers have consequently adopted this distinction as an explicit typology. The concepts 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' were born of a separation of communities which gave birth to a sectarian mentality that persists even today. The two parts of western Christianity developed distinctive forms of religious consciousness and this, in turn, led to an *assumption* that the differences were fundamental... The thought of the reformers was much closer to their medieval predecessors than it is to some, at least, of the contemporary brands of Protestantism. 16

In the light of Sheldrake's comments, only to ask whether Shakespeare was Roman Catholic or Protestant is primarily a political quest which does not reveal anything about Shakespeare's spirituality. We do our understanding of Shakespeare's spirituality a disservice if we try to make him fit too firmly into one camp or the other. He had no choice but to belong to The Church of England, and it is the complexion of that then new English Catholic church which we need to bear in mind, rather than the dichotomy of an imaginary staunch

and closeted papist Shakespeare or a resolutely non-Catholic, protestant (if not Puritan) Shakespeare.

Elsewhere, Sheldrake characterises the then emerging Anglican spirituality in the context of *The Book of Common Prayer*:

Personal spirituality was shaped by living and worshipping as part of a community both ecclesial and civic. Equally the notion of "common" countered those who sought a purified community of right believers... Other important themes were God revealed in creation and a residual Christian humanism reflected in valuing everyday human existence as well as music and the arts. 17

In short, there emerges a picture of the then newly established Church of England as helping to form and encourage the 'draughty' notion of being Catholic in a Protestant context. Little wonder that Shakespeare scholar Maurice Hunt finds 'a surprising extent of Shakespeare's amalgamation of Protestant and Catholic motifs and ideas in single images, concepts, and characterisations.' 18

Placing Shakespeare's work in this historical context reveals it to be richly spiritual in its presentation of human life and of humanity's interaction with the natural world. The inclusivity and range of Shakespeare's imagination suggests the kind of spirituality exemplified by the great canticle 'Benedicite, Omnia Opera', 'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord' found in the liturgy for 'Morning Prayer' in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Here one finds a spirituality which seeks to bless the whole of creation, from 'ice and snow' and 'mountains and hills' to 'wells', 'fowls of the air', 'all that move in the waters', 'children of men' and 'spirits and souls'. 19 The 'Benedicite' is formed from thirty-one of the sixty-six verses in Daniel, the songs of Abed-nego, Shadrach, and Meshach in the fiery furnace. 20 The canticle is very definitely not Protestant in its source and can only be found in Roman Catholic bibles which include these additional verses to the Hebrew from the later Greek text. The range of Shakespeare's work suggests a perspective which seeks to include the whole of creation. There is nothing too small, nothing too grand which Shakespeare cannot work into a poetic image. He is a deeply sensual writer, rich in image, sound, and texture, who seems to be writing from within a Catholic spirituality made possible by the newly settling 'draughty', Catholic and reformed Church of England.

## **Incarnation and Imagination**

Creative imagination can easily be regarded as one expression of a person's spirituality. Dorothy L. Sayers, writing in 1941 from a Trinitarian perspective, describes the act of creative writing like this:

What happens in a writer's mind is something like this. When making a character he in a manner of speaking separates and incarnates a part of his own living mind. He recognises in himself a powerful emotion – let us say, jealousy. His activity then takes this form: Supposing this emotion were to become so strong as to dominate my whole personality, how should I feel and how should I behave? In imagination he becomes the jealous person and thinks and feels within that frame of experience, so that the jealousy of Othello is the true creative expression of the jealousy of Shakespeare... Or perhaps it would be more in

accordance with reality to say that all these characters "are" Shakespeare – externalisations of some part of the writer's self and self-experience. 21

Her description, far from making crude, transparent biographical claims from Shakespeare's work, is far more about a writer's creative output being part of their spirituality.

George Steiner is another philosopher / theologian for whom the aesthetic encounter holds within it divine potential: art, literature and music are 'a wager on transcendence.' 22 Steiner cites several examples:

[D H Lawrence:] "I always feel as if I stood naked for the fire of Almighty God to go through me – and it's rather an awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious to be an artist." And there is Yeats: "No man can create as Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, who does not believe with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal." 23

To engage with Shakespeare's imagination through his work, then, is to be engaged, from an incarnational perspective, with his spirituality; to read and reflect on Shakespeare's work closely is to bring his spirituality close to our own. In describing spirituality in relation to the poetic imagination, L. William Countryman observes that,

every human individual also has a uniqueness, a particular experience, a particular perspective, a particular will and memory, a particular way of performing the common human realities that no other being shares in exactly the same way. In that concrete particularity, spirituality works its work. 24

From this spiritual perspective of the particular – grounded in experience *and* materiality *and* word – Shakespeare's spirituality reveals what George Herbert (1593-1633) called 'Heaven in ordinary'. 25

The following account by David Lonsdale sets the scene for the study of Shakespeare being just one of an infinite number of ways through which the Ignatian tradition encourages spiritual reflection:

God is most clearly mediated to us through easily recognised religious images such as biblical writings and stories, accepted religious symbols and rituals and people whose lives obviously speak to us of God. But it is characteristic of Ignatian contemplations to extend the range of images in which God is to be found so as to recognise and contemplate "God in all things." This is based upon a particular understanding of created reality by which the whole created world is seen as an image which mediates the presence of God to us in various forms, and as the arena in which God is continuously at work, if God is also really present and active in the world at every level of being, if the world is a sacrament of God, who is Lord of creation, and Lord of history, then any reality in the world, person, event or object can become an image of God in the beauty of the universe itself. 26

Lonsdale's description makes palpable a theology of the incarnation within the tradition of Ignatian spirituality; Sheldrake offers a further definition of spirituality which becomes very appropriate to this practical context:

Spirituality is, therefore, concerned with a conjunction of theology, prayer and practical Christianity. A central feature is that spirituality derives its identity from the Christian belief that as human beings we are capable of entering into a relationship with God who is both transcendent and, at the same time, indwelling in the heart of all created things. 27

A biblical point of origin for these theoretical and practical approaches to spirituality can be found in St John's gospel of the incarnation, and especially in Jesus' words 'Abide in me, and I in you. 28 In the Ignatian tradition anything can be a touchstone for divine contemplation, a piece of music, some clay, a painting, a poem, a stone, or '[books in the] running brooks.' Myriad perspectives can be perceived in Shakespeare and Dickens and used as a spiritual resource. Lonsdale explains how:

We explore the stories and images with the mind, respond to them with our feelings, interact with them in imagination, reflect on them in solitude and calm and allow these varied activities ultimately to influence our choices and commitments... [There is] a special place to imagination and to the different levels of feeling and commitment which can be touched and moved through the imagination. Ignatius is particularly concerned that through the imagination a person should be drawn to God in love. 29

Of course, it is important for a Spiritual Director to select and recommend certain passages from Shakespeare or Dickens as being especially appropriate. The directee might take the extract away and reflect upon it during the weeks before the next Direction session. Not every speech or moment works well out of context. A Shakespearian or a Dickensian will be able to bring a deep knowledge of context (historical, critical, theatrical) to bear on an extract which a non-Shakespearian or a non-Dickensian would not. In conducting the experiment with volunteer spiritual directees, I was able to select passages from Shakespeare which worked well out of their dramatic context. My volunteers reflected on three passages over three weeks and we met to reflect on them, led by the personal and spiritual perspective of the directee.

The kinds of experience that Shakespeare and Dickens make available to which a Spiritual Director might wish to point his or her directee include: descriptions of the natural world and our relationship to it, some of them pastoral; expressions of deep emotion; invocations of absolute truths; moments of crisis, revelation, joy, and articulations of love; descriptions of the imagination, the power of storytelling and the theatrical; and any moments when one perceives a heightening of the ordinary through a celebration of the particular.

## **Dickens's Incarnational Perspective**

My identification and definition of Shakespeare's incarnational poetics help to emphasise the qualities which in part characterise Shakespeare: openness, non-judgemental, non-proselytising, an ability to consider things from multiple perspectives, an embracing and yielding humanity which accommodates all sorts of conditions of men and women.

It is not surprising that similar words are used to describe Dickens's spirituality. Perhaps the most obvious expression of Dickens's own kind of faith was his own version of the gospels (mainly Luke) which he wrote over three years and called *The Life of Our Lord*. It was written for and ultimately bequeathed to his children. He himself read it to them when they

were very young, and once a year at Christmas time. It was eventually published in 1934 and is still in print. 30 Peter Ackroyd notes Dickens saying of his own work:

one of my most constant and most earnest endeavours has been to exhibit in all my good people some faint reflections of the teachings of our great Master. All my strongest illustrations are derived from the New Testament; all my social abuses are shown as departures from its spirit. 31

Dickens's religious belief might be described as protestant humanist; Ackroyd describes his religious sensibility being 'of the broadest kind', and Dickens himself had the following inscribed on a cup for a Unitarian minister: 'for his labours in the cause of that religion which has sympathy for men of every creed and ventures to pass judgement on none.' 32 Ackroyd goes on to note that Dickens' religion has been largely ignored by critics and biographers, or characterised 'as some vague Pickwickian attitude of universal benevolence.' 33 In fact, Ackroyd notes, Dickens disliked Catholicism, Anglo-Catholicism, Dissenters, Nonconformists, and, ultimately, The Church of England, 'he remained appalled by the concentration upon what he called the minutiae of faith when God's own creatures were dying of disease and malnutrition on the slums of England.' He was a Unitarian for about four years. Dickens' religion was one of 'natural love and moral feeling, therefore, and was in spirit not remarkably different from the rational "cult of sensibility" which was part of his eighteenth-century inheritance.' 34 It is interesting to note, too, that in publishing his novels by monthly and sometimes weekly instalments, Dickens was effectively allowing space and time for his readers to reflect on his work (whether consciously or not) in rather the same way that a Spiritual Director might his or her directees.

A few examples from *Dombey and Son* will suffice to illustrate the incarnational sensibility which is alive and kicking throughout Dickens. I choose *Dombey and Son* almost randomly, as it happened to be the novel I was reading while preparing to write this article. I do not doubt that Dickens's other novels, and indeed works of non-fiction, would yield hundreds of appropriate, incarnational moments among them. I have selected the following passages because of their themes, because of the incarnational qualities of the writing (immediate, particular, suggestive of an entire world going on in the background, alive), and because they work well out of context.

Think for a moment about the way in which Dickens combines the intimidating newness of Doctor Blimber's school for the young Paul Dombey with the sense of Paul's own interior life, and here the implied anxiety of his heart-beat, mapped onto the moment in the sound of the ticking clock:

The Doctor was sitting in his portentous study, with a globe at each knee, books all around him, Homer over the door, and Minerva on the mantel-shelf. "And how do you do, Sir?" he said to Mr Dombey; "and how is my little friend?" Grave as an organ was the Doctor's speech; and when he ceased, the great clock in the hall seemed (to Paul at least) to take him up, and to go on saying, "how, is, my, lit, tle, friend? how, is, my, lit, tle, friend?" over and over again. 35

This passage bristles with life and multiple perspectives. There are the resonant images of knowledge and power which surround Doctor Blimber, there is the quiet expectation of Mr Dombey, and there is the sound of the clock filling up the silence instead of Paul's reply. If



Shakespeare's Duke Senior imagines 'tongues in trees' in *As You Like It*, here Dickens imagines a tongue in a clock. But the clock, in filling the silence, suggests that the atmosphere is strained, as well as being evocative of the sound of the room itself and how young Paul himself feels within it.

The following example from chapter 18 also serves to illustrate how Dickens brings together multiple perspectives and moods which he sets against the appalling absence of Paul Dombey, who dies at the end of chapter 16. This scene comes just after Paul's funeral:

There is sounder sleep and deeper rest in Mr Dombey's house tonight, than there has been for many nights. The morning sun awakens the old household, settled down once more in their old ways. The rosy children opposite run past with hoops. There is a splendid wedding in the church. The juggler's wife is active with the money-box in another quarter of the town. The mason sings and whistles as he chips out P-A-U-L in the marble slab before him. 36

The prose here works like poetry; it could almost be the prose description of a poem, except Dickens was no writer of verse. Set against the comforting 'old' ways of the household, ways which have no doubt contributed to the better night of sleep for those who mourn, are the new cries of children playing in the street. In the church, the sacrament of marriage seems to bless the community in which it is taking place, and there is implied laughter, certainly entertainment with the mention of the 'juggler's wife'. Dickens himself is juggling in this passage, juggling perspective and juggling emotion, since the chipping of Paul's name on the tombstone echoes the tinkling of the coins in the juggler's wife's money-box. Death is being etched into the present moment, emphasised by the present tense, and Paul's new, dead identity is being conjured as something fresh but frozen in time, even as life itself continues towards the grave.

Finally comes Dickens's own description of someone meditating whilst looking upon the natural world: a lark, perhaps evoking Shakespeare's own famous 'lark at break of day arising' in Sonnet 29, which itself forms an important turning point in the meditation of the sonnet's imagined speaker. I quote the passage from the beginning of chapter 27 in full for in doing so I can illustrate Dickens at full incarnational stride and revelling in the particularity of detail which makes the moment he is describing fully alive and palpable:

Mr Carker the Manager rose with the lark, and went out, walking in the summer day. His meditations – and he meditated with contracted brows while he strolled along – hardly seemed to soar as high as the lark, or to mount in that direction; rather they kept close to their nest upon the earth, and looked about among the dust and worms. But there was not a bird in the air, singing unseen, farther beyond the reach of human eye than Mr. Carker's thoughts. He had his face so perfectly under control, that few could say more, in distinct terms, of its expression, than that it smiled or that it pondered. It pondered now, intently. As the lark rose higher, he sank deeper in thought. As the lark poured out her melody clearer and stronger, he fell into a graver and profounder silence. At length, when the lark came headlong down, with an accumulating stream of song, and dropped among the green wheat near him, rippling in the breath of the morning like the river, he sprang up from his reverie, and looked round with a sudden smile, as courteous and as soft as if he had had numerous observers to propitiate; nor did he relapse, after being thus awakened; but clearing his face, like one who bethought himself that it might otherwise wrinkle and tell tales, went smiling on, as if for practice.

The lark, as for the imagined speaker of Shakespeare's Sonnet 29, helps to illustrate the lightening of a mood, at least momentarily. The passage itself might even be read as Dickens's own imaginative response and re-appropriation of Shakespeare's sonnet. Dickens's lyricism – 'rippling in the breath of the morning like the river' – serves to heighten the moment. As far as Spiritual Direction is concerned, the passage might work well as way in for the directee to discuss how he or she notices and describes changes of feeling or perception.

## Conclusion

I hope my discussion has demonstrated that to engage imaginatively with Shakespeare and Dickens from a spiritual perspective, one which recognises a poetics of the incarnation in their work, is no less than to realise, through the God incarnate in Jesus Christ, God's Kingdom which is to be found in ourselves and in the creation all around us. The literary works themselves become touchstones within that creation. Jesus said: 'the kingdom of God is within you.' <sup>37</sup> Shakespeare's and Dickens's generous, expansive, particularising, and inclusive imaginations, as expressed through their work, is one way of engaging with that Kingdom. Our creative and spiritual engagement with their words in the world – our imaginations and Shakespeare's and Dickens's – are what make that Kingdom realisable, taking us closer to the Word made flesh.



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## Endnotes

1 These are traced by Gager 1996

2 *The Tragedy of King Lear* 5.3.232-4. Unless otherwise stated, Shakespeare's works are cited from Wells *et al* 2005

3 *As You Like It* 2.1.15-17

4 *Cymbeline* 4.2.304-7

5 *Hamlet* 5.2.213-18 in Spencer: 1980

6 Sitwell: 1948:1

7 Colossians 1:15-20

8 Matthew 10:29. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotations are cited from *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1599 edition* 1990. *The Geneva Bible* is thought to be the translation which Shakespeare himself used. The spelling has been modernised in the quotations

9 The work of Richard Wilson takes the lead in this field of study, perhaps best exemplified by Wilson 2004. The dynamic that Shakespeare was a 'closet' Roman Catholic informs Michael Wood's biography (Wood 2003) which was itself a successful television series

10 Daniell, 2001:1

11 This is how Daniell summarises Duffy's approach. Daniell 2001: 1

12 Bearman 2005: 411

- 13 Bearman 2005: 413
- 14 Everett 2010: 32-34 emphasis mine
- 15 Everett 2010: 33
- 16 Sheldrake 1991: 198, 204
- 17 Sheldrake 2007: 117
- 18 Hunt 2004: ix
- 19 The Church of England, 1968: 8-9
- 20 Daniel 3:24-90, especially vv. 57-88. This Biblical reference only applies to Roman Catholic versions of scripture and is based on *The New Jerusalem Bible* 1990
- 21 Sayers, 1994: 40
- 22 Steiner 1989: 4
- 23 Steiner 1989: 228
- 24 Countryman 1999: 18
- 25 George Herbert, 'Prayer (1)', in Slater 1995: 49
- 26 Lonsdale 2000: 114
- 27 Sheldrake 1991: 52
- 28 John 15:4
- 29 Lonsdale 2000: 115, 116
- 30 Dickens 2011
- 31 Ackroyd 1990: 504
- 32 Ackroyd 1990: 504
- 33 Ackroyd 1990: 505
- 34 Ackroyd 1990: 507
- 35 Dickens 1950: 145
- 36 Dickens 1950: 242
- 37 Luke 17:21