

# Response to Corrections – Therese Down: PhD Thesis: Dreaming of God: A Critical Re-evaluation of Shakespeare’s Theological Context, with particular reference to Hamlet.

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## 1. Overview

Dear Drs Burdett and Edmondson,

Thank you for your encouraging comments in response to my thesis. Your Corrections presented me with considerable challenges, but have supported me to a keener and better-contextualised presentation of Shakespeare’s theological milieu, and so, enabled a more convincing evaluation of it – the whole point of the thesis. Further, I have developed, by studious application, a renewed appreciation for the importance of accurate referencing in academic writing, which can only be to my benefit. So, thank you.

I would argue that my treatment of what Dr Burdett identifies as marking the difference between Reformed and more ‘synergistic’ Reformation theology – **“predestination, human freedom, necessity, contingency and repentance”** – **is what makes** this thesis what you have termed “unquestionably original” and “ground-breaking.” But, I accept that my thesis benefits from a less ‘polemical’ and ‘prosecuted’ *delineation* of the differences between Luther’s and Melancthon’s, Hooker’s and Calvin’s theological approaches. I remain convinced that their soteriological differences are doctrinally ‘schismatic’, however, for which I have presented compelling and scholarly evidence. I acknowledge that neither Melancthon nor Luther would appreciate the impression of what Dr Burdett calls a “wedge” between them; more honouring of their life-long close relationship, I have endeavoured to highlight the irenicism of Melancthon’s theologising and the desire he shared with Hooker to heal, not widen rifts in the Church. I have also emphasised further the tolerant irenicism of Hooker, and, as advised, have striven to represent the theology of both theologians in their post-Reformation contexts and particularly, in the English post-Reformation context which both shaped significantly, contributing to Elizabeth’s establishment of a *via media* Anglican Church. In order to achieve this, I have re-ordered, and added, material to chapters 4 and 5 particularly, to contextualise more securely Melancthon’s and Hooker’s contribution to the *adiaphoristic* character of the early Elizabethan Church, while indicating how uncompromisingly committed both were to the Protestant tenet that works can never be *per se* meritorious in Salvation, yet that the human will is necessary for the receipt of God’s saving grace and obedience to his Laws, evident in external works. I am grateful for Dr Edmondson’s encouragement to look more closely at the *via media* nature of Elizabeth’s Church and the Administration and Institution of it, which evidence her Philippist sympathies and distaste for Calvin’s double-predestination theology.

As your recommendations were mainly for additions, not exclusions, I had to balance the necessary extra material with some ‘pruning’ of words. Chapter Two particularly benefitted from this. For example, I made more concise my Philippist analysis of *Julius Caesar* and

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restructured, while editing, the sections on Aristotelian evil. Elsewhere, I have sought to re-express ideas more concisely without altering substance. The net word-count stands at 103,045, including all quotations, footnotes, headings, from the Introduction to the end of the Bibliography.

I will now indicate how I have responded to your joint requirements, referencing where these meet specific requirements in your individual reports.

## **1. Tidy citation footnotes and bibliography by conforming to Chicago style (notes and bibliography).**

I have, to the best of my knowledge and endeavour:

- Conformed to Chicago referencing for Notes and Bibliography
- Included place of publication before the name of the publisher
- Inserted a break after colons
- Inserted inverted commas around abbreviated titles in reference Notes
- Italicised book titles
- Made sure first Notes references are in full
- Made all Bible refs Geneva, 1599.
- Ensured all referenced works are in the Bibliography

Re the ‘date accessed’ requirement, my understanding from the Chicago website is that, where website entries are dated, or last updates are indicated, the ‘accessed by’ information is unnecessary:

“If a source does not list a date of publication or revision, include an access date.” [Notes and Bibliography Style](#)

In any case, I cannot honestly provide original dates of access for all my website and encyclopedia sources. I have ensured to the best of my ability that they comply with the above website advice from Chicago.

## **2. Use critical editions of works as indicated in Dr Edmondson’s report.**

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Please see the separate grid attachment which indicates how I have done this for the authors specified by Dr Edmondson.

I have also, in response to Dr Burdett’s observation that there may be an over-reliance on secondary sources, PhD theses and an M.A Workbook:

- Removed all but one PhD reference (Gareth Owen). Notably, I have swapped Andrea Russell’s PhD on Hooker for her published book of the same name: *Beyond Certainty*.
- Removed the theology MAWorkbook reference
- Removed many secondary sources and made a concerted effort to indicate my own voice more assertively, by eliminating quotes from several secondary sources.
- Where I have quoted a source from a secondary source, I have indicated the primary source as well

I wish to point out, here, that I have used, for one page of the thesis, a second Aquinas text. My main one is the Davies and Leftow Cambridge *Summa – Questions on God*, and the second, briefly-referenced one is the Dominican Fathers, Benziger edition of the *Summa*, which I accessed online. The second text contains Parts of the *Summa* not contained in the edited Cambridge text, and which I needed for a specific section of my thesis, on how Thomism differs from Augustinian Original Sin doctrine re the depravity of humans. Please see page 115.

### **3. Provide more substantial ‘sign posting’ at the conclusion of each section that better condenses what the reader should be taking with them as it relates to your overall argument.**

I have endeavoured to improve signposting throughout the thesis, at section ends and in order to better segue Chapters, in order to develop and emphasise an overall argument. I offer as examples:

- The rhetorical restructuring of the latter part of **Chapter Two: Evil in Shakespearean Tragedy**, from **Re-contextualising Shakespeare’s evil (pg 85) to the end of the chapter (pg. 123)**
- The insertion of an extra heading in Chapter Six, **‘Dust to Dust’ ( p 256)** which better contextualises the point I make about how the ‘graveyard scene’ in *Hamlet* may reference common contextual knowledge about Alexander and Diogenes. I have more strongly linked the ideas herein to the preceding **‘And**

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**worms.’** section and particularly, the comments on *Romeo and Juliet*, *vis a vis* a burial, and then, onwards, to the following section on **‘Atomic Shakespeare’**. Please see pages 254 – 259.

- Another significant example of better signposting and linking is, I submit, the **revised conclusion to Chapter Three and the start of Chapter Four**. Please see pages 158 – 164.

#### **4. Better differentiate Calvin and Luther from their reception in Shakespearean England and moderate undue criticism but focusing more on the contribution via media theology makes to our understanding of the religious context rather than in contradistinction to Calvin and Luther (though it may be sufficient to levy such critique of Calvinism and Lutheranism).**

I have striven to accommodate Dr Burdett’s requirement for a more nuanced representation of the theological differences between Reformers, while focusing far more on the influence they had in a specifically-English post-Reformation context, *vis a vis* the argument I am making for a *via media* Anglican Church and a readily-accessible *via media* theological source for Shakespeare’s use, when producing his tragic plays. In the process, I have addressed Dr Edmondson’s questions/advice, as follows:

- How far may ‘via media’ be understood to be ‘Book-of-Common-Prayer Anglicanism’?
- What was the relationship between Calvinism and Puritanism?
- How far would an acknowledgement that Queen Elizabeth I was excommunicated in 1570 be useful to your argument?
- ‘How far would an acknowledgement that Queen Elizabeth I was excommunicated ... be helpful to your argument?’

Elizabeth I sought to encourage what I contend is an undoubted Philippist sympathy and influence in her day, and I am grateful to Dr Edmondson for his prompts to substantiate better that the early Anglican Church was characterised by a *via media* approach to Christianity favoured by the Queen. In effect, these required and substantial modifications have necessitated a rhetorical re-ordering of **both Chapters Four and Five**, the central theological chapters of the thesis, so I suggest a re-reading of them would assist appreciation of the corrections.

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## **5. Update thesis to address Dr Edmondson’s ‘Questions, suggestions, and further revisions’ section in his report**

Done – please see the second, separately attached document for responses to each point.

The following are specific references to suggested and incorporated additional material indicated or directed by Dr. Edmondson. I also cross- reference them in the separate document in which I address Dr. Edmondson’s specific correction points, listed in his report:

- **You do not mention Graham Holderness’s *The Faith of William Shakespeare* (2016) ... it would be good to insert a paragraph or two’**

Please see pages 133 – 134

- **‘... may be worth comparing Iago to Marlowe’s Dr Faustus**

Please see pages 80 – 81.

- **How would you characterize Machiavelli’s Christianity?’**

Please see pages 82 – 85.

- **How far may ‘*hamartia*’ be defined as a moral state that omits one or more of the four cardinal virtues (justice, fortitude, temperance, prudence)?’**

- **Would it be worth citing and comparing Lear’s ‘thou art the thing itself?’**

Please see page 92 and 135 – 137 for both points.

- **“what was the relationship between Calvinism and Puritanism”?**

I have added a more pointed section on ‘Elizabeth’s containment of Puritan Separatism’, 129 – 131.

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- **‘How far would an acknowledgement that Queen Elizabeth I was excommunicated ... be helpful to your argument?’**

Added – please see 210 – 212. Thank you.

- **You should mention that Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* and Iago in *Othello* do choose evil ‘per se’, in contradiction to Hooker.’**

This, like the differences in soteriology between Melancthon, Hooker and Reformed orthodoxy, is a seminal issue in my thesis. My conviction is that it is not possible, in an Aristotelian or Thomist teleological paradigm, to desire evil, and the contention that evil cannot ever be a substantial choice is key to my arguments. However, thank you for the prompt to greater clarity, and I have included some extra sentences to indicate why I think that *privatio boni* is an adequate description of evil, and how it is logical to argue that evil as a choice is not possible, and that opting for what is known to be evil is always a categorical error.

**Please see pages 86 – 89 and 98 - 104, and 223 – 224.**

I have also taken the opportunity, in Chapter Two, to define Kant’s radical evil. In the Viva, when you asked me what I might improve, this was an improvement I indicated I would make. It is done succinctly, and assists the aims of the Chapter, which is on evil as treated in Shakespeare, and the contextual fitness of Aristotle to describe it.

- **You should say that Sinfield’s question is an anti-Christian, question ... ignorance about Christianity’**

Please see pages 306 – 307.

- **When Hamlet says ‘Rest, rest perturbed spirit’ (1.5.183), may not this be understood to be a prayer for his father’s soul in purgatory ... You should probably make this point, and, if so, please attribute it to your external examiner.**

Please page 319.

- **State clearly that the secularizing view (of the New Historicists and Cultural Materialists) ... is neglectful of a much more complicated and richer understanding of Shakespeare’s socio-religious context than has, until your thesis, been appreciated.’**

Please see pages 337 - 338.

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