



The Gospel according to Shakespeare

Piero Boitani

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In this slim, poetically powerful volume, Piero Boitani develops his earlier work in *The Bible and Its Rewritings*, focusing on Shakespeare's "rescripturing" of the Gospels. Boitani persuasively urges that Shakespeare read the New Testament with great care and an overall sense of affirmation and participation, and that many of his plays constitute their own original testament, insofar as they translate the good news into human terms. In *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, he suggests, Shakespeare's "New Testament" is merely hinted at, and faith, salvation, and peace are only glimpsed from far away. But in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*, the themes of compassion and forgiveness, transcendence, immanence, the role of the deity, resurrection, and epiphany are openly, if often obliquely, staged. The Christian Gospels and the Christian Bible are the signposts of this itinerary.

Originally published in 2009, Boitani's *Il Vangelo Secondo Shakespeare* was awarded the 2010 De Sanctis Prize, a prestigious Italian literary award. Now available for the first time in an English translation, *The Gospel according to Shakespeare* brings to a broad scholarly and nonscholarly audience Boitani's insights into the current themes dominating the study of Shakespeare's literary theology. It will be of special interest to general readers interested in Shakespeare's originality and religious perspective.

"This is an incredible book, written by one of the most learned and, at the same time, passionately elegant Italian scholars. I enjoyed reading it in Italian; it is a pleasure for eyes and soul to savor it in English. And you don't need to be a theologian to appreciate it and keep it on your desk." —**Edmondo F. Lupieri, Loyola University, Chicago**

"This volume displays to the full that unique combination of comprehensive reference and precise application that we have happily come to expect of Piero Boitani's writings. There is, however, an especial urgency at work in these pages and a confidence not merely in the ways that theology can illuminate Shakespeare's texts but also in the ways that Shakespeare's plays can lead to a fresh understanding of what the Gospel is. The sheer energy of Boitani's vision, argument, and phrase (made accessible by an excellent translation) immediately engages the attention of the reader, who will surely return to Shakespeare's original work with a sharpened appetite for its poetry as well as for its Christian meaning." —**Robin Kirkpatrick, University of Cambridge**

"This brilliant, beautiful book unfolds the unique theological vision of Shakespeare's late plays. The gospel according to Shakespeare, the 'good news,' is immanent: on earth, in historical time, and achieved through the recognition of love. Boitani's vision weaves Shakespeare's imagery among the plays, the Bible, and the classics, producing a reading experience of such plenitude that it is akin to the world he describes."

—**Regina Schwartz, Northwestern University**

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