

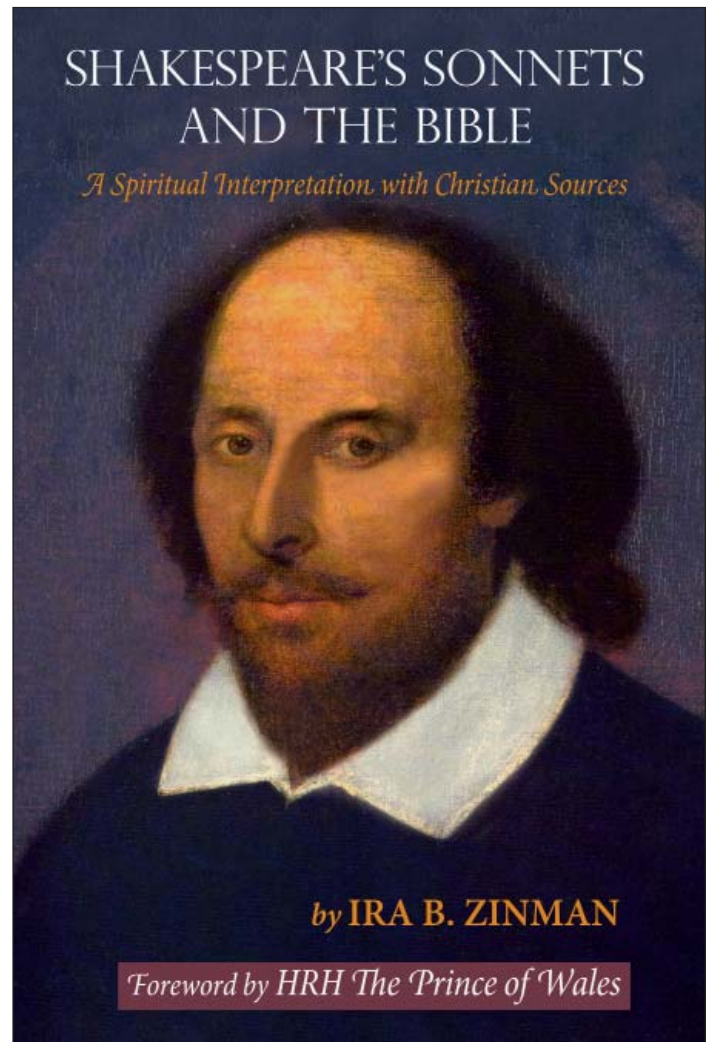
# Uncover the Hidden Inspiration behind Shakespeare's Sonnets



**2**009 marks the 400th anniversary of the publishing of Shakespeare's Sonnets. For centuries there has been a raging debate about whether or not Shakespeare was a spiritual person and the extent to which he used the Bible as a source and inspiration in his work. While Shakespeare's plays have garnered much of the attention, these discussions seldom present a complete exploration of his Sonnets.

This book gives a detailed examination of Shakespeare's Sonnets, identifying their underlying themes at the religious and scriptural levels of interpretation.

Christian readers and admirers of Shakespeare will be fascinated to learn the extent to which the most widely read author in the English-speaking world relied upon the Bible as an inspiration for his work.



## *Praise for the Book:*

**S**hakespeare's poetry is surely miraculous. Each of his lines instantly reveals multiple layers of meaning.... This is a book that makes leafing compulsive. It demonstrates on every page Shakespeare's deeper meaning. As Ira Zinman puts it in his commentary on perhaps the best known of Shakespeare's Sonnets, 18, "the secret is for man to live in tune with timeless spiritual values". I hope that his meticulous endeavor here will help convey that secret to a world which is desperately in need of a much more sensitive response to the inner reality for, as Shakespeare and his truly enlightened contemporaries clearly understood, all of our external endeavors depend upon it absolutely.

—*HRH Charles The Prince of Wales*

**T**he genius of this book is its scope. Every Shakespearean sonnet is systematically covered. The methodology, moreover, is comprehensive: the content of each sonnet is illuminated, the moral and religious vision is identified, and biblical parallels are provided. There is something here for anyone who loves Shakespeare's Sonnets.

—*Leland Ryken*, Professor of English, Wheaton College



## Publication Details

*Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible* is available in both paperback (978-1-933316-74-1, Trim Size 8x10, 552 pages, \$26.95) and hardback editions (978-1-933316-75-8, Trim Size 8x10, 552 pages, \$34.95) and has a publication date of October 1, 2009.

## About the Life and Works of William Shakespeare



Shakespeare in 1610. The painting was recently discovered after being 'lost' for over 400 years. The inscription reads *Principum amicitias!* ("The Friendships of Princes!") quoted from Horace's *Odes*, book 2, ode 1

were from known Catholic families, and four of the six teachers at King's New School were Catholic sympathizers. In 1606, William's daughter Susannah was listed as one of the residents of Stratford refusing to take Holy Communion in a Protestant service, which may suggest Catholic sympathies. Although the exact nature of Shakespeare's beliefs might be in dispute, in the words of Dr. Martin Lings, one of the most important interpreters of the spiritual meaning in Shakespeare's work, "What is obvious, however, is that his plays far transcend the idea of salvation in its more limited sense; and it may be remarked in passing that this does suggest that their author was following a spiritual path."

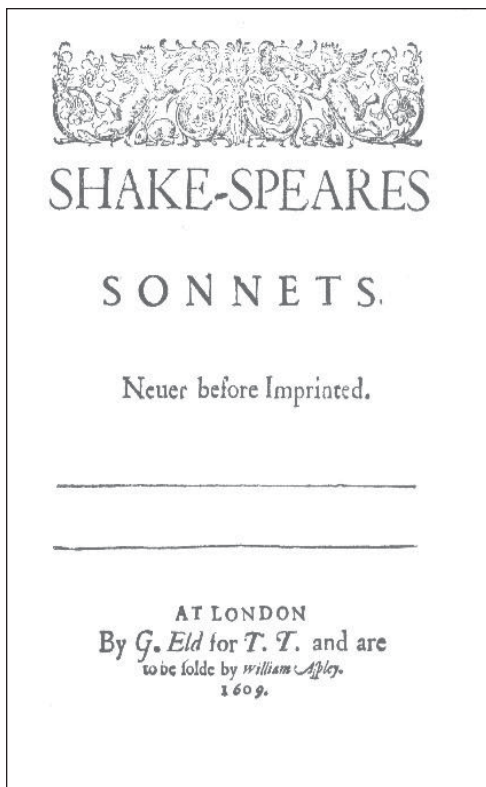
Shakespeare is thought to have died on his birthday, April 25th 1623.

**W**illiam Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and leather merchant, and his mother, Mary Arden, a landed local heiress. William was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household—three of whom died in childhood. Whilst no definitive information exists about Shakespeare's schooling, most biographers agree that Shakespeare was educated at the King's New School in Stratford, which at the time had a reputation to rival that of Eton. His education would have provided an intensive focus in Latin grammar and the classics.

At age 18 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children. Around 1588 Shakespeare moved to London and began his career as a playwright and an actor with the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1590 and 1613, which includes 38 known plays, 154 sonnets, and two long-form narrative poems.

Because of the importance of his work, and the fact that few records survive from Shakespeare's lifetime, his life and work have been the focus of intense speculation. His religious beliefs are often pointed out as one of the primary influences of his later works. It is speculated that Shakespeare was a practicing Catholic (which was illegal under English law at the time). Both of Shakespeare's parents



Original title page to the 1609 first edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets

## Extract from the Text

### SONNET 18

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.  
So long as man can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

### COMMENTARY

In Sonnet 18, Shakespeare considers the possibility of comparing the Spirit to a “summer's day.” As the soul of man is made in the image of the Creator, it also contains all the perfection of an idyllic “summer's day.” While the Spirit, however, is changeless and perfect, man must live upon this “fuge stage [which] presenteth nought but shows.” (Sonnet 15.3) Life is full of changing fortunes (“rough winds”) and our days are few as “summer's lease hath all too short a date.” Even when all seems to be flourishing, misfortune and the vagaries of life pursue man's footsteps. “And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd.” A “summer's day” fades, but the Spirit, an innate reflection in man's soul, manifests Beauty which does not diminish—“But thy eternal summer shall not fade.”

### BIBLICAL PASSAGES SUGGESTED BY SONNET 18

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.” **Ps. 8:3-5**

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” **1 Cor. 15:46-49**

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” **1 Cor. 15:26**

## *About the Author, Ira B. Zinman:*

**I**ra Zinman is a writer, filmmaker, and independent scholar who specializes in the Biblical and spiritual elements in Shakespeare's Sonnets. He has taught and lectured on Shakespeare, and was a presenter on Shakespeare's Sonnets at the Ohio Shakespeare Conference. Zinman has also produced and directed a documentary film, entitled *Shakespeare's Spirituality: A Perspective*, on the life and work of Dr. Martin Lings, one of the foremost authorities on the spiritual influences in Shakespeare's work. Zinman has practiced law since 1970 and lives in Bloomington, IN.



## *About the Author of the Foreword, HRH The Prince of Wales*

**H**RH Charles The Prince of Wales is the heir apparent to the throne of the United Kingdom. He is the eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Besides his central role of supporting The Queen in her various functions, The Prince of Wales is very active in charitable work, having founded eighteen charities himself. "The Prince's Charities" are active in many areas, including opportunity and enterprise, education, health, the built environment, responsible business, the natural environment, and the arts. In addition, The Prince works to promote and protect the UK's "enduring traditions, virtues and excellence." This includes "highlighting achievements or issues that,

without his support might otherwise receive little exposure, supporting Britain's rural communities, and promoting tolerance and greater understanding between different faiths and communities." The Prince is actively interested in traditional thought and its applications to the problems of the modern world and is the Patron of the Temenos Academy.

## *Extract from the Foreword*

**S**hakespeare's poetry is surely miraculous. Each of his lines instantly reveals multiple layers of meaning. In his own day they would not just have served those in his audience who were there simply for the action and the apparent drama of his plays but also those, like him, who were steeped in the esoteric learning of the Platonic tradition. These people would have discerned the far deeper meaning of his words, recognising, no doubt, what it was in Shakespeare's art "giving invention light". As Ira Zinman so clearly demonstrates in this admirable work of scholarship, when Shakespeare was away from the theatre he was able in his more private sonnets to speak directly to this particular audience by stripping away apparent narrative and getting to the very heart of things.

By enchanting us with his poetry, Shakespeare opens our minds to the Divine. He, more than any other poet I can think of, understood the importance of symbolism. The constant allusions in his sonnets to the beloved are all references to the Divine spirit for which the human soul longs and this, for me, makes him a figure of universal importance, for he shows us in language so easy to understand that, whichever tradition we may be born into, it is only by attending to the spiritual dimension of our being that we may properly know what it is to be alive.