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FOREWORD BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

Shakespeare'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.

Our present age, alas, has lost the ability to read this symbolism which is not an arbitrary system of labelling. It is specific to the very nature of things and has the capacity to heighten our awareness of the unity

to be found in all of creation. That is to say the Divine: "In all external grace you have some part," as Shakespeare puts it in Sonnet 53. Such a symbol is like a shadow. It reveals to us a fleeting image of the object that casts it. But it is only in the hands of a great and universal artist like Shakespeare, whose vision of the inner, spiritual realm is so direct and whose practical skill with words so acute, that such symbols enchant us so completely. The shadows, as it were, become sharp and outstanding so that we become more profoundly aware of the inner knowledge of the heart.

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 endeavours here will help convey that secret to a world which is desperately in need of a much more sensitive response to the inner reality of things for, as Shakespeare and his truly enlightened contemporaries clearly understood, all of our external endeavours depend upon it absolutely.

"*Foreword to Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible*"
by HRH The Prince of Wales

Features in
Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible:
A Spiritual Interpretation with Christian Sources
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