

A SHUFFLING THEOLOGY

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During the late Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries there lived in England a man whose genius towered above his fellows and still towers above all uninspired writers. Without any doubt this man, William Shakespeare by name, had a deeper and clearer insight into human behavior than any other writer outside of the Inspired Penmen themselves.

In one of his great tragedies, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Shakespeare makes bare the soul of Claudius, King of Denmark, who had murdered his brother, stolen his queen and crown. The prayer that this King utters in the effort to re-insight. After vainly praying and deploring his sin he wildly exclaims, "May one be pardoned and retain the offence?" He answers his own question in the negative as follows.

"In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by Justice
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In its true nature; and we ourselves compelled,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence."

Thus we see that whatever may have been the weakness of Shakespeare's character, his vision of man's responsibility to God was crystal clear. His moral sense told him beyond the peradventure of a doubt that pardon was out of the question as long as the offence was retained.

The Tragedy Modernized

The comparison that brings this discussion startlingly up-to-date is that the theater-goers of the rough Elizabethan Age received a clearer exposition of prayer and a higher standard of ethics than does many a modern who gives attendance upon, and attention to, a "gospel of grace" which often hints—and sometimes unabashedly states—that one may be pardoned and "retain the offence." A sad case in point is the history of a preacher who deserted his wife for his secretary, who often deplored his sin but died as the paramour of this woman. One of his Eternal Security brethren then attempted to preach his guilty soul through the "Pearly Gates" while outraged Truth looked on and wept.

A theology of this sort is "shuffling" in that it will not come to the point but attempts to circumvent it in various devious ways which outrage alike Scripture and logic. A scheme of doctrine that would declare that a state of justification obtains in the presence of known sin savors strongly of "the corrupted currents of this world." Many preachers of note need to heed the rough old Elizabethan playwright who says, "But 'tis not so above, there is no shuffling, There the action lies in its true nature."

Let every enlightened heart cry,
"Away with a doctrine of imputation so false
that it will not stand the moral outcry of a Seventeenth Century Drama." Of far more tragic significance than any of the tragedies of this great writer is the sad spectacle of a reputedly enlightened Fundamentalist ministry falling below the worldly playwright in clear moral teaching.

In a sublime passage Hamlet pleads with his erring mother to repent of and forsake her illicit union with her husband's slayer,

"Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks,
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,

While rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker."

Nullifying the Gospel

The King and Queen do not repent but continue on in their sin until the curtain is rung down in a welter of blood. While we do not by this comparison recommend theater-going nor defend Shakespeare's uncouth expressions on occasion, yet we do say that this tragedy sets forth the wages of sin in a clearer light than a so-called "gospel of grace" that would find place in Heaven for those who live and die in sin. It is to be feared that the "compost" of a profession but makes sin the ranker. In this play Shakespeare sends the sinning couple out into darkness while the "Eternity Security" preacher bids his adulterous colleague depart in peace. If "the wages of sin is death," then this "shuffling theology" will utterly and eternally damn every soul who continues in sin while professing that grace abounds. It is to be feared that folk do not "repent of what is past if they do not avoid what is to come."

May the Lord God of Heaven help us of the Wesleyan message and heritage to take our stand against the "shuffling" theology which is over-spreading the Fundamentalist world like Egypt's frogs. Certainly there is death in this pot which will kill the souls of all who partake. If such items on the theological menu as "Sinning Saints," "Sinners Yet Saints," "Holy in Christ, but vile in myself"; and "Standing and state may widely differ," do not have that within them that will bring "rigor mortis" to the soul then white is black and black is white. We of the "holiness" Churches who have had a clear light must be careful not to indulge in a "holier-than-thou" spirit; and yet we must also be careful that we do not allow this "shuffling" style of Bible interpretation to sway our thinking one little bit. If, when Ephraim joined himself to idols, God commanded the other tribes to "let him alone" it would follow that we as a people must not join forces with those whose ethical teachings often fall below the standard of the Shakespearean stage.—*Wesleyan Methodist*.

CHRISTIANITY A YOUTH MOVEMENT

By Harry C. Allen

Jesus was a young man himself, and it must have thrilled Him to find young men coming to Him. For the most part comrades and disciples of Jesus were young men. Thirty years after the ascension Paul says, in a letter to the Church at Corinth, that of the more than five hundred men who at one time saw the risen Lord the greater part of them were still alive. In all likelihood, then, they were young when they became followers of Jesus. He had drawn to Him young men. In its beginnings Christianity was a youth movement.

The Greeks have given to us in the Parthenon the most beautiful building in the world. From Palestine the only perfect character has come to us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It is impossible to imagine a life more beautiful than His. As our comprehension of Him increases our appreciation of Him grows. Dr. T. R. Glover has recently said: "Why is it that there never seems risk in overestimating Jesus? I see all sorts of ill consequences follow underestimating Him, but who has been hurt by overestimation?"

Youth may be apathetic to many of the problems that are shaking the world. In fact, it has

been stated that youth is an unreasoning age. If religion is presented to youth in the form of doctrines or a creed, he will turn aside from theology. But personality ever attracts. The call of chivalry, the call of loyalty, the call of courage, the call of adventure, these are the things which fire a young man's soul. When approached from such coign of vantage, Christianity has its appeal. As the late President Fraunce declared: "The characteristic of Christianity is that its ideal is not embodied in verbal statement, but in a life. The Christian ideal is Christ." You cannot separate Him at any point from His teaching. Christianity is devotion to the person of Christ.

Not only during the first century, but throughout the centuries, has Christ drawn young men to Himself. Again and again youth in their twenties have been outstanding leaders in the Christian cause. C. F. Adams, in his book, "What I Owe to Christ," proclaims the great truth of the attractiveness of Christ in these words: "More than any other figure in human history Jesus represents, for all time, the youth of man confronting, undismayed, obstacles inconceivably great and conquering them by the daring of His Spirit!" Now, call up in imagination from that great galaxy of youthful Christian leaders a few representatives: John Wesley founded the Holy Club, at Oxford, at the age of twenty-six. Martin Luther climbed the Santa Scala at Rome at twenty-seven. Jeremy Taylor was holding men spellbound at St. Paul's, London, at eighteen. Dwight L. Moody was doing the work of an evangelist at twenty-three. Charles H. Spurgeon was preaching at the great London Tabernacle at twenty. Francis E. Clark founded Christian Endeavor at twenty-nine. George Williams founded the Y. M. C. A. at twenty-three. And David Livingstone was witnessing for Christ in the heart of the Dark Continent at twenty-three.—*Selected*.

THE IMMINENCY OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

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liness, but denying the power thereof." Domestically, it is to be a time when the home shall go to pieces and people shall be marked as "without natural affection." Spiritually, it is a time when because iniquity shall abound "the love of many shall wax cold." Judiciously, the times will be marked by the fact that men are "truce-breakers." And yet, over against all these evil things, the times of the end are to be marked for the progress made in the preaching of the gospel "among all nations," and there will be a remnant of true and holy people who will keep "faith on the earth." And any who know and think will, I think, agree with the statement that all the conditions involved are with us now. This being true, "Jesus may come today!"

Those who inject certain factors as being necessary yet before Jesus can come are making gratuitous guesses and doing the cause of God and the souls of men a disservice, for they are practically saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and this false announcement, now as in the past, serves to make God's people careless, and to give up the instant watch for the lighting up of the heavens with the glory of His blessed advent. Every dependable voice declares, "His coming draweth nigh," and all His loyal people say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." May this day be that glad day when He shall appear! —*By General Superintendent Chapman*.

There must be a twist in that soul that does not enjoy music; harmony is heaven born, and heaven sustained.