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Grace and Redemption in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale

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These starred papers submitted by Kerry J. Andrusko in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at St. Cloud State University are hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

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GRACE AND REDEMPTION IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE WINTER'S TALE*

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CHARACTER NAMES IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*: WHY THE SLAVES LOST THEIR NATIVE NAMES AND HOW THIS LOSS AFFECTED THEIR LIVES

by

Kerry J. Andrusko

B. A., Bethel College, 1993

Starred Papers

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

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For nearly four-hundred years, Shakespeare's language has been credited with being among the best that humans have ever used. People expect eloquent, beautiful, witty, insightful, and revealing words to emerge from his art. Shakespeare also has the ability to pack unusual amounts of meaning into very few words, which Shakespeare's audience perceives and accepts on various levels. Shakespeare often incorporated overtly Christian themes into his plays by using subliminal, subtle, and literal techniques. *The Winter's Tale* is a play which contains these techniques.

Christian and Biblical ideas were common themes that formed the fabric for Renaissance thought. Nearly everybody in the early seventeenth century, from the commoners to the nobility, was Biblically literate. Because his audience knew the Bible so well, Shakespeare was able to subtly incorporate Christian themes and truths into *The Winter's Tale*, which he does through the pattern of sin, repentance, faith, and redemption. Shakespeare repeats these ideas throughout the play, particularly through the characters Leontes and Polixenes. Biblical allusions are also incorporated into the play which aid and support these underlying Christian themes.

To ignore these Christian elements is to limit Shakespeare's body of meaning and to lose a whole body of human experience.

It is evident that Shakespeare intentionally chose to base his play on Christian themes as *The Winter's Tale* differs greatly from the source story, Robert Greene's novel *Pandosto.* In a comparison of *The Winter's Tale* to *Pandosto*, it is necessary to acknowledge that Shakespeare, in re-dramatizing the original script, intentionally wanted to make some changes to ensure that his play followed the Christian theme of grace and redemption. Not surprisingly, all of the changes he made aid in supporting these Christian themes.

Shakespeare took a tragedy and turned it into a romance, mainly by eliminating overtly negative actions and by replacing them with positive, redemptive ones. A noticeable addition of Shakespeare's is the creation of the character Paulina, whose sole purpose in the play is to lead Leontes through his repentance process to his final redemption. Another change in Shakespeare's plot is that in *The Winter's Tale* Hermione is "resurrected," whereas in *Pandosto* she dies. J. A. Bryant in *Hippolyta's View: Some Christian aspects of Shakespeare's plays* states:

> In Greene's novel the character who corresponds to Shakespeare's Hermione actually dies, and the narrative moves on without impediment to a climactic meeting between father and daughter. Greene, of course, represented this meeting as something considerably less than happy, having the aging but lustful king, ignorant of the girl's identity, first woo his daughter with unbecoming ardor and then kill himself out of remorse . . . We can be grateful to him [Shakespeare] for deciding to spare the lovely thing he himself made of Hermione; but our gratitude need not blind us to the fact that nothing in the plot required him to spare her. (208)

Shakespeare resurrects Hermione because he wanted *The Winter's Tale* to be a play about faith, grace, and redemption. By allowing Hermione to live, the themes come around full circle and the act of repentance leads to redemption.

Shakespeare also intentionally left some of Greene's original tragedy in the play, including the deaths of both Mamillius and Antigonus. These losses enable Leontes to feel true remorse, which in turn starts Leontes on his long journey toward redemption. By resurrecting Hermione, Shakespeare ends *The Winter's Tale* in a very plausible way according to the Christian understanding of grace and redemption. Through repentance, salvation occurs.

Modern-day students of Shakespearean plays are coming out of a period when most critics found it necessary to reject Christian thought. As a result, modern readers have a difficult time

perceiving and accepting the Christian elements in the plays--elements that Shakespeare's original audience would have easily recognized. This fact is unfortunate in that if Shakespeare's audience recognized overt Christian themes in his plays, modern readers should as well. The function of this paper is to illuminate Shakespeare's use of Biblical ideas and thought as a way of reinforcing the primary theme of redemption in *The Winter's Tale*.

It is time to recognize the benefits of acknowledging and accepting the Christian aspects of Shakespeare's dramas, because knowledge of these themes can only intensify the meaning of the plays. To perceive Shakespeare's art fully one must understand and accept the tradition from which they were written--in this case, from a relatively strong religious tradition.

For Christians, Shakespeare's plays reveal answers about their common faith. For those who do not accept the Christian religion, recognizing the Christian aspects of Shakespeare's plays gives insights into the realities of the vast world of shared human experience found in Christian thought.

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

The Winter's Tale is divided into two sections; the first three acts deal with sin, alienation, and destruction while the last two focus on forgiveness, reconciliation, and rebirth. The first section is also marked by the exploration of the concepts of knowledge and belief. A number of passages focus on the basic human ability to find meaning in something that is meaningless--to make something out of nothing. One is in Act I, scene ii, where Polixenes tells Leontes, "like a cipher, / Yet standing in rich place, I multiply / With one 'We thank you' many thousands moe / That go before it" (6-9). This statement is important to *The Winter's Tale* in that it quickly sets up a theme which will continue to develop in the next two acts. A cipher is a zero, a nothing. Yet, by adding something in front of it, such as a one, it quickly becomes a something--a ten. If another zero is added to the ten it becomes a hundred, and so on.

The same concept is true with belief. A "nothing" can quickly become a major "something" if one little idea or piece of information is added to it. Like the cipher, a belief can multiply and grow if given the opportunity. The same idea can be linked back to

creation. Genesis I: 1-3 states:

> In the Beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . .
> And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

A chaotic "nothing" instantaneously became a solid "something"--the world and all we know to exist came from a vacant, formless cipher. Sin entered the world in the same way. Before Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, sin never existed--only innocence. In a like manner, salvation came about through the death of Christ. Life comes from death; something comes from nothing. In *The Winter's Tale*, destruction and sin comes from the belief in something false.

When Camillo tells Polixenes of Leontes' belief in the affair and his consequential plan to have his friend killed, he says, "[Leontes'] foundation is piled upon his faith and will continue / The standing of his body" (I, ii, 427-429). Polixenes then asks Camillo, "How should this grow?" to which Camillo responds, "I know not. But I am sure 'tis safer to / Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born" (I, ii, 430-432). Camillo has no explanation as to why

Leontes suspects such an outlandish affair, but that is not the primary problem to be thinking about at such a time. It is not the genesis of the jealousy that matters, but rather the consequence of the sin. Leontes' firmly rooted belief cannot be easily swayed or explained. Again, this whole passage recalls the concepts of creation, sin, and salvation. It's impossible to really comprehend or understand them, but according to Christian truth they do, in fact, exist.

Shakespeare explains Leontes' mental situation by incorporating an analogy into the play, one which echoes Adam and Eve's torment after eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Leontes says:

> Alack, for lesser knowledge! how accursed
> In being so blest! There may be in the cup
> A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
> and yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
> Is not infected; but if one present
> Th' abhorred ingredient to his eye, make known
> How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
> With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.
> (II, i, 38-45)

What is within the mind is more important than what is outside of it. If people drink from cups that contain spiders and they do not realize it, they will go away from the experience unaffected.

If people drink from cups which contain spiders, and they know that the spiders are there, those people will most likely become sick. It is the knowledge of the spiders that causes the poisoning. A final possibility that can be drawn from Leontes' analogy, which Leontes does not mention, is that people can drink from spider-free cups and imagine that there are, in fact, spiders in them. This, too, will most likely cause the drinkers to become sick. It is the knowledge, or the belief in the reality of the spiders, that causes the sickness. It is this final possibility which Leontes falls victim to concerning the alleged affair.

Leontes' sin is his belief in something which is false. S. L. Bethell in *The Winter's Tale: A Study* comments:

> Leontes' sin is that he mistakes Hermione's graciousness for unlawful love. So long as he harbors this belief it governs his experience and distorts his vision; his sense of order and proportion is gone, so that his universe is no longer the common universe in which the others live but a dream world which he and he alone takes for reality. (236-237)

In a like manner, it is only when Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge that they become aware of their sin and their nakedness. Before they acquire knowledge from the tree they are innocent and

are ignorant of the sin that awaits them. It is the knowledge which they acquire that directly leads to their doom.

Innocence and Sin

Like Adam and Eve before the Fall, Leontes and Polixenes are associated with innocence at the beginning of *The Winter's Tale*. In Act I, scene ii, Polixenes talks about his and Leontes' childhood, saying:

> what we chang'd
> Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
> The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
> That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,
> And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
> With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
> Boldly 'Not guilty,' the imposition cleared
> Hereditary ours. (68-75)

This childhood reminiscence of purity and innocence sets up the future fall of both Leontes and Polixenes. Just as Adam and Eve fall from innocence when they disobediently eat from the Tree of Knowledge, the two kings fall from grace as the result of sin. Consequently, both Leontes and Polixenes must undergo a redemptive process in the course of the play.

Polixenes' sin is that he allows his anger at his son to overpower his reason. Darryl Grantley in "*The Winter's Tale* and

Early Religious Drama" comments that the falls of Leontes and Polixenes are clearly paralleled in that much use is made of sudden, dramatic revelation, both men threaten to murder the accused, both kings try to use Camillo to serve their ends, in both cases the audience is aware of their states of mind before they are revealed to the other characters, and both plot lines include the "timely flight of intended victims" (22). Grantley goes on to suggest that the parallels between Leontes' and Polixenes' falls are reminiscent of the repetitive actions of fall and repentance in the morality plays (22). While the pattern is apparent in the lives of both kings, it is most easily shown in the character Leontes.

Leontes' first sin is that he misinterprets Hermione's kindness to Polixenes as being an indication of an adulterous love affair. In an act of rage, Leontes tells Camillo to murder Polixenes and he sends his wife to jail to await her sentencing. Later, Leontes orders his infant daughter to be killed or sent away and he commands his friend Antigonus to do the horrific deed. Leontes' final sin is blasphemy. When the Oracle at Delphi declares that Hermione is chaste, Leontes declares, "There is not truth at all i' th' Oracle. /

The sessions shall proceed; this is mere falsehood" (III, ii, 138-139).

Leontes belief in the affair not only brings woe to himself, but also to his family and his kingdom. Polixenes flees to Bohemia, Camillo is estranged from his country, Hermione is sent to jail to await her trial, Mamillius dies of grief, the infant Perdita is sent away alone--left to fate, Antigonus dies because of the sinful situation he is put in, and the kingdom is left without an heir.

When Leontes realizes his sins, it is too late. However, the tragedy which results from Leontes' sins is important to the theme of redemption. Though salvation will take place, there still are serious consequences to his sins--as real redemption comes about from true loss.

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Although *The Winter's Tale* has tragic elements, the drama is a romance. The deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus are indeed tragic, but the pain and suffering that results from their deaths lay the foundation for the possibility of future happiness and salvation, the renewal that follows loss. This, too, is a Biblical theme. The sins

of Adam and Eve bring about the fall of humanity. Their sins introduce pain, suffering, and alienation to the world. Yet, because of humanity's fall, God sends His Son into the world to bring about salvation. Although tragic, the fall from grace enabled God to demonstrate His love by coming to earth in the form of a man, Jesus Christ--as a way of bringing about humanity's redemption.

Repentance

Leontes begins his repentance when his son, Mamillius, dies. It is Mamillius' death that make Leontes realize for the first time how much he has sinned. He states:

> Apollo, pardon
> My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!
> I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
> New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
> Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy;
> For, being transported by my jealousies
> To bloody thoughts and to revenge, I chose
> Camillo for the minister to poison
> My friend Polixenes, which had been done. (III, ii, 154-162)

Alan R. Velie in *Shakespeare's Repentance Plays* comments that Leontes, in his confession, "states his intention to follow the Homily's four steps to redemption: contrition, confession, faith, and amendment of life" (98). Velie states, "Leontes' confession is

evident. To use the language of the Homily, he is earnestly sorry for his sins, and laments and bewails that he has offended God" (98). The Homily states:

> the faithful ought to acknowledge their offenses, whereby some hatred, rancor, ground or malice, having risen or grown among them one to another that a brotherly reconciliation may be had; without the which nothing that we do can be acceptable unto God. (*Certain* 538)

Leontes follows the guidelines of the Homily as he openly admits his sins and mentions attempting a reconciliation with Hermione, Camillo, and Polixenes. Velie goes on to suggest that Leontes also follows the third and fourth requirements for repentance (faith and amendment), as he states his intention to amend his sins. Velie states:

> Implicit in his words seems to be the faith that Apollo, Hermione, and his friends will forgive him. Even at his lowest point, when he believes Hermione dead, Leontes does not despair. Rather, out of mourning. . . he hopes to make a new life. (99)

THE REDEMPTION PROCESS

Sixteen years pass between Acts III and IV. Just as spring follows autumn after winter, forgiveness can only follow sin after a period of repentance. The sin and tragedy found in the first part of

the play are dependent on time for the reconciliation and salvation found in the last part. The sixteen years are therefore necessary to connect the first three acts with the final two. Acts IV and V belong to Perdita, the abandoned daughter of Leontes and Hermione. In the final two acts of the play, Perdita brings everybody back together again in peace and through faith. She acts as savior--one sent to reconcile the world, not to condemn it.

Perdita as a Christ Figure

As the play progresses, Perdita is able to "redeem" all who suffer as a result of the tragedy which took place sixteen years before. Through Perdita, Sicilia and Bohemia are reconciled and her family is reunited. The sixteen years of repentance on Leontes' part are matched by sixteen years of development on Perdita's. She is ready to fulfill her purpose in the play: the reconciliation of alienated friendships and relationships through the process of faith. One correlation between Perdita's and Christ's lives is that both are born in the winter and both are reunited with their fathers in the spring. Francois Laroque in "Pagan Ritual, Christian Liturgy, and Folk Customs in *The Winter's Tale*" writes:

> Christ's birth in the winter is followed by his death and resurrection in the spring, thirty-three years later, when he is reunited with the Father in Heaven. Perdita, also born in winter-time, spends sixteen years in another world before she is allowed to recover her true parents in the most miraculous way (an equivalent of resurrection). . . The flight from Israel into Egypt and the navigation from Sicilia to Bohemia are also comparable ordeals for the infant Christ and the newly-born Perdita. (28-29)

Another reason Perdita is considered to be a Christ figure is that her actions and character traits strongly resemble Christ's. Darryll Grantley states:

> The portrayal of Perdita as an adult gives her the purity, humility, and dramatic presence to make her consistently Christ-like. . . She [Perdita] speaks with an authority which belies her years and position when speaking to both Polixenes and Florizel in Act IV, scene iv, and even after Polixenes' threats of torture she manifests the same sort of fearlessness in the face of overwhelming opposition and tenacity of moral purpose that make Christ a powerful dramatic hero in the Passion Plays. (34-35)

Grantley also suggests that when Polixenes tells Perdita "I'll have thy beauty scratched with briers, and made / More homely than thy state" (418-419), we are to recall the crown of thorns that Jesus Christ was made to wear during His crucifixion (35).

In addition to her Christ-like qualities, Perdita is associated with Grace throughout her life, indicating that she will play a considerable role in the redemptive process found within the play.

Time refers to Perdita in Act IV as 'now grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring' (IV, i, 24-25), which is an allusion to both her beauty and to something greater. Grantley suggests that there is a sense of "other-worldliness which sets her apart from others from the time of her birth" (24). For example, the Shepherd finds Perdita and believes that she was sent to him as a gift from Heaven. In addition to Perdita's growing up in grace among shepherds, she also bestows flowers of grace at the festival in Act IV, scene iv. Furthermore, when Perdita first greets Camillo and Polixenes, her words are 'Grace and remembrance be to you both' (IV, iv 76). The repetition of the word "grace" serves as a reminder of Perdita's function in the play as one who saves through Divine Grace.

Polixenes, upon first seeing the grown Perdita, says, "This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever / Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems / But smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place" (156-158). Camillo agrees with Polixenes as he calls her "The queen of curds an cream" (160). Comments such as these suggest strong parallels to Christ. Perdita seems "greater than herself," just as Christ is described as being more than man--as He is God in man. Also, Perdita's title of being

the "queen of curds an cream" faintly recalls Christ's crucifixion sign which bore the title "King of the Jews" (Matthew 29).

Perdita as Representative of the Christian Church

Some critics, such as J. A. Bryant, suggest that Perdita represents the Christian Church. Bryant states:

> Perdita, who is consistently referred to as the 'heir' in the play, suggests the true Church, rejected, 'hal'd out to murder' even in infancy, yet destined to survive, be grafted on to alien stock, and provide the occasion of that general reconciliation which precedes the general outpouring of grace at the end. (212-213)

The redeemer and heir motifs in *The Winter's Tale* are ever-present in the play, serving as a reminder to the audience that Perdita represents something divine.

Hermione as Saint

Julia Gasper and Carolyn Williams found that in the seventeenth century, the word "Herma" was used to refer to a statue of a saint in a church. According to this definition, the name "Hermione" refers to a stone statue which contains implications of mourning, sanctity, and the working of miracles (367). Darryll Grantley's interpretation of the character Hermione reflects this

understanding. He states:

> The revelation by oracle of her innocence, her subsequent 'death,' and her apparition in a dream to Antigonus help to transform her from a human character to a saintly symbol of wronged innocence and thus to prepare us for her role in the final scene as a figure of grace and forgiveness. (23)

Seeing Hermione as a saintly symbol carries implications of her similarity to the Virgin Mary, who is also a symbol of Grace. Not only does Hermione represent many of the same qualities that Mary does, such as patience, obedience, and faithfulness, but her life also corresponds with that of the Virgin Mary. Just as Joseph unjustly accuses Mary of having an affair with another man, Leontes irrationally suspects Hermione of cheating on him. Like Mary, Hermione bears a child in unfortunate circumstances. Christ is born in a stable, while Perdita is born in prison. What's more, the children that are born to the women act as mediums to bring about redemption. Perdita's return to Sicilia reunites and heals the broken family and kingdom in the same manner that Christ's life and death reconcile sinners to God.

Hermione as Symbol of
Divine Grace

Another interpretation of Hermione is that she, like Perdita, is a symbol of Divine Grace, necessary for the theme of redemption. Roy Battenhouse in *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension* comments that the frequently uttered word "grace" in the play refers to a social graciousness that is infused with Divine Grace. For example, in Act I, scene ii, Hermione shows grace when she aids her husband, Leontes, in his desire to persuade Polixenes to remain in Sicilia longer. Polixenes attempts flattering Hermione by calling her a "sacred lady" who arouses temptations--to which she responds, "Grace to boot," meaning, her gift of grace "permeates her ladyship to correct any temptations he may have (232).

Later in the same scene, Hermione identifies herself with Grace, as she says:

> My last good deed was to entreat his stay.
> What was my first? It has an elder sister,
> Or I mistake you. O, would her name were *Grace*!
> But once before I spoke to th' purpose; when?
> Nay, let me have't; I long. (97-101)

Leontes responds to Hermione, "Why, that was when / Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death, / Ere I could make thee open

thy white hand / And clap thyself my love, then didst thou utter, / 'I am yours for ever," to which Hermione says, "'Tis *Grace* indeed" (101-105). This identification between Hermione and Grace is carried throughout the entirety of the play. J. A. Bryant comments:

> If it was as grace that she came to Leontes in his innocent youth and so remained with him until he, blinded by his own willful error, cast her off, it was certainly as divine grace that she returned at last to take him up again when his hope of justification had completely melted away. (209)

Hermione and Other Christian Virtues

Hermione also possesses Christian virtues, displayed best in the trial scene. In a reflection of the way in which Christ responds to his accusers, Hermione answers the charges against her in a patient, dignified manner. When Pilate and Herod ask Jesus if he is the Messiah, Christ answers, "If I tell you, ye / will not believe: / And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me" (Luke 22: 67-68). The elders and priests continue to ask Him, "Art thou then / the Son of God?" to which Jesus replies, "Ye say that I am" (Luke 22: 70). This is the same manner in which Hermione responds to her

accusers. She says:

> Since what I am to say, must be but that
> Which contradicts my accusation, and
> The testimony on my part, no other
> But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
> To say 'not guilty': mine integrity,
> Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
> Be so reciev'd. (III, ii, 22-28)

Just as Christ accepts his death, Hermione accepts the punishment given to her. What's more, she goes to prison for her "better grace" (II, I, 122).

Darryll Grantley suggests that Christ's final prayer to God, His father, upon the cross, resembles Hermione's wish that her father were alive to pity her situation. She says:

> The Emperor of Russia was my father:
> O that he were alive, and here beholding
> His daughter's trial! that he did but see
> The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
> Of pity, not revenge! (III, ii, 119-123)

In a similar manner to Christ, Hermione asks for pity from her father--but without vengeance on her prosecutors. Hermione's father is mentioned in the play only this one time, and the reference to him is insignificant to the plot. Because there is no logical reason for Hermione to refer to the King of Russia, the Christian echoes and implications take up substantial force.

Hermione's Resurrection

In the final scene of the play we learn that Hermione is alive. This occurrence is unique to *The Winter's Tale* in that it is the only instance in all of Shakespeare's plays where he lies to the audience in this way. Usually, Shakespeare takes his audience into his confidence and reveals to them that which the other characters may not know. For example, in *Much Ado About Nothing* many of the characters are told that Hero is dead; however, Shakespeare allows the audience to know the truth--that she is alive. In contrast, in Act III of *The Winter's Tale*, we are bluntly told that the queen is dead, which we find to be false at the end of the play.

The Biblical implications of this resurrection, following the interpretation which asserts that Perdita is a Christ-figure, suggest that Hermione either rises from the grave as a result of the faith she places in the oracle or appears again when the oracle's promise is fulfilled. All of this comes about when Perdita returns to Sicilia to bring about salvation and reconciliation.

Following the theme of redemption, Shakespeare has Hermione live as a result of her faith in the oracle. S. L. Bethell comments that at the beginning of Act III, the oracle of Apollo is "built up into

a symbol of God's overruling providence" (237). He writes:

> We have (in lines 3-8) a number of epithets evocative of religious awe: 'celestial,' 'grave' and especially 'ceremonious, solemn and unearthy' . . . The rest of the scene, in which the oracle is discussed in relation to Hermione, further establishes this religious awe ('rare, pleasant, speedy . . . Great Apollo Turn all to the best! . . . Apollo's great divine . . . gracious be the issue!' (237)

At the trial, Hermione states, "Your honours all, / I do refer me to the oracle: / Apollo be my judge" (III, II, 113-115). She devotes her life to follow the Oracle's rules, and it is through her undying faith in God that Hermione patiently awaits reconciliation. Her sixteen years separation from her husband is a voluntary sacrifice and is in obedience to the oracle--as the king must live without a heir until Perdita returns. Hermione states, "I, / Knowing by Paulina that the oracle / Gave hope thou [Perdita] wast in being, have preserved / Myself to see the issue" (V, iii, 125-127). Hermione never doubts the oracle and lives her life the way she must, until the redemptive process is completed.

If this is, indeed, what happened, it fits in nicely with the first three acts of the play which deal with belief and faith. Whereas Leontes suffers because of his ability to make something

out of nothing, Hermione is able to create something good through her undying faith and belief in what the oracle promises.

Leontes' Faith

In a like manner, Leontes' redemption comes about because of his faith. Sometimes the act of faith is tragic, as is seen in the first three acts when Leontes believes in the reality of the affair. Yet, not all acts of faith are negative; in fact, some are necessary for salvation. Before Leontes can be saved, he must acknowledge his sins and put his faith in God that He will restore to him what he, himself, can never bring back. Leontes has no reason to believe that his daughter, Perdita, is alive, and like us, he is told that his wife, Hermione, is dead. Without faith, he has no reason to believe otherwise.

Indeed, Leontes' faith proves strong. He agrees to Paulina's command that he shall never marry again until his "first queen's again in breath" (V, i, 83), even though his official counselors advise him to remarry so that another heir can be born. Paulina again requires that Leontes exercise his faith before Hermione steps down from her statue-like pose. Paulina tells Leontes, "It is

required / You do awake your faith" (V, iii, 94-95). It is through his repentance and faith that Leontes receives his salvation. Both daughter and wife are returned to him, against all human logic. With repentance, undying faith is attainable; and through faith, all things are possible.

Paulina as Spiritual Guide

Paulina is the character who helps Leontes on his road to salvation. Her main concern is to lead Leontes through repentance and to redemption, which she does by serving as the king's conscience. She continually lists Leontes' sins and, through the use of reverse psychology, makes Leontes understand the crimes which he has committed. J. A. Bryant comments:

> Paulina slips quietly into the role of comforter, confessor, and guide . . . and when we see them, sixteen years later, Leontes is painfully penitent and completely prepared to accept Paulina's judgment on Hermione . . . He is also quite willing to reject the advice of his official counselors, who would have him marry and get another heir, and take instead that of Paulina. (216-217)

The final lines of Act III, scene ii have Leontes asking Paulina to "Come, and lead me / To these sorrows" (240-241). Paulina sets the rules and guidelines, and Leontes follows her lead obediently. In

this respect, Paulina closely resembles her New Testament namesake, St. Paul, who also dedicates his life to leading people in faith.

The importance of Paulina's role in the play is established by the fact that without her guidance, Leontes would not have gained redemption--as is shown in *Pandosto,* where Paulina's character does not exist and Leontes manages to self-destruct. Shakespeare created Paulina for the sole purpose of acting as Leontes' medium towards faith and redemption. She serves no other function. Darryll Grantley writes: "It is indicative of Paulina's importance in the story, derived entirely from the scheme of repentance, that she has the penultimate speech in the play and that Leontes' final words are addressed to her" (26).

ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL THEMES AND IMAGERY

The Resurrection

The images presented in the resurrection scene and the feelings generated by the witnesses of Hermione's resurrection correspond with those found in Biblical accounts of Christ's resurrection. For example, Hermione's loved ones gather at her

"statue" in the same manner that Christ's followers approach his tomb. Also, Leontes' sadness and remorse quickly turns to joy when Hermione is "resurrected," in much the same way that Mary Magdalene's weeping turns into exaltation when she discovers that Jesus Christ had risen from the tomb (Grantley 32-33).

Hermione and Leontes / Mary and Joseph

Just as Hermione's innocent plight resembles Mary's, Leontes' false and condemning accusations recall Joseph's. Leontes suspects that his pregnant wife is having an affair and that the child is not his. Similarly, Joseph doubts his intended's faithfulness to him when he learns that she is with child. In both stories, it takes a great amount of repentance and faith for the men to be assured of their loved ones' innocence. What's more, as in the New Testament account of Christ's life, Perdita ends up acting as savior in *The Winter's Tale.*

Leontes and Herod

Leontes possesses qualities similar to those of the historical ruler and tyrant King Herod. Herod is famous for his widespread,

merciless slaughter of children and innocents. It is he who ordered the massacre of all male children under the age of two soon after Christ's birth, with the intention of eliminating the threatening Christ-child's life. In *The Winter's Tale,* Leontes is the raging ruler who orders that the baby Perdita, his own child, be thrown into the fire. He also threatens to murder her with his own hands. His other child, Mamillius, is another innocent child who, in the end, suffers and dies as a result of Leontes' brutality.

Darryll Grantley suggests that Leontes shares another quality with Herod, that being the tendency to bully and intimidate inferiors. He states:

> Herod frequently threatens messenger, counselors, and his soldiers in his rage in much the same way that Leontes coerces Camillo and Antigonus with threats of torture and tries to terrify Paulina. As with Herod, Leontes' wrath is exacerbated by the revelation that his plans have been foiled by the non-cooperation of others. . . . And Leontes, especially in the encounter with Paulina in II, ii, descends into hurling insults at her ('mankind witch,' 'dame Partlet,' 'callat,' 'gross hag'), at the baby ('bastard,' 'brat'), and at Antigonus, whose beard he pulls ('dotard,' 'lozel,' 'traitor'). The general cry 'Traitors!' (II, iii, 72) to all those around him particularly recalls the paranoia of Herod. (30)

Judas Imagery

Another example of Biblical imagery occurs in Act I, scene ii, when Camillo contemplates betraying the innocent Polixenes because of the possibility of personal gain. At first he does not want to follow Leontes' orders because he would be betraying two innocents, Polixenes and Hermione. Shortly after, however, he is filled with self-importance and thoughts of personal gain. He says, "I must be the poisoner . . . To do this deed, / Promotion follows" (354). This scene seems to recall the New Testament's account of Judas Iscariot's decision to turn the innocent Jesus Christ over to the Jewish officers after they offered him thirty silver coins to do so. In *The Winter's Tale*, however, Camillo decides not to murder Polixenes, which serves as the first step in the long process of reconciliation found at the end of the play.

The "Good" Samaritan

The Winter's Tale also contains images reminiscent of the New Testament Parable of the Good Samaritan. G. Wilson Knight, in *The Crown of Life* calls Act IV, scene iii "a clear parody of the good Samaritan" (101). In the scene, the Clown notices a man who has

apparently been beaten, robbed, and left to die in rags. When he bends down to help the man, his purse is stolen. Roy Battenhouse comments, "the real thief is the fraudulent Autolycus, a scapegrace prodigal whom Shakespeare has brought into his drama to serve as a low-comedy parallel to Leontes in the main plot" (233). As Battenhouse points out, Leontes also calls out to Hermione for help in convincing his friend to extend his visit. When Hermione comes to his rescue, Leontes robs her of her reputation and her children (233). In this respect, the Good Samaritan motif is continued throughout the play.

The Good Shepherd

A similar Biblical motif in the play is that of the Good Shepherd. The Shepherd enters the stage in search of his lost sheep. Immediately, two Biblical stories come to mind. The presence of the baby and the Shepherd echoes the Christ child's birth. We also recall the parable of the Good Shepherd in search of lost sheep. In *The Winter's Tale,* the Shepherd finds the deserted infant rather than lost sheep. During his opening monologue, the Shepherd mentions four numbers: ten, twenty-three, nineteen, and twenty-two. It's not

really clear why he does this, as it is not crucial to the plot. In fact, he appears to be speaking gibberish to himself. Quite possibly, Shakespeare incorporated the numbers as a way of subtly directing the audiences' minds to the *Book of Psalms,* in which Psalms 10, 19, 22, and 23 all contain themes that are significant to *The Winter's Tale.* The Twenty-third Psalm is probably the best known:

> The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. . .
> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me . . .
> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

In comparing the scene in *The Winter's Tale* with Psalm 23, the Shepherd, who has already been associated with the Good Shepherd, becomes the comforter and savior to the needy and abandoned baby, Perdita.

The significance continues in Psalm 10, which emphasizes justice for orphans. Psalm 10: 17-18 states:

> Lord, thou hast heard the desire
> of the humble: thou wilt prepare their
> heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to
> hear:
> To judge the fatherless and the
> oppressed, that the man of the earth
> may no more oppress.

This, too, goes along with the action in the play--that the baby needs justice.

Similarly, Psalm 22 emphasizes those who are forsaken. Psalm 22 begins: "My God, my God, why hast thou / forsaken me?" (Psalm 22: 1). This is same Psalm that Jesus Christ quoted at the time of His crucifixion, which emphasizes the link between Perdita and Christ. Psalm 22: 19 states: "But be not thou far from me, O / Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me." These two verses fit in perfectly with Perdita's situation. She is orphaned and forsaken, and the Shepherd is sent to rescue her.

The final verse the Shepherd mentions is Psalm 19, which begins, "The heavens declare the glory of / God; and the firmament sheweth / his handywork" (Psalm 19: 1). This verse serves dual functions as it echoes what is taking place in the play regarding the storm and it marks the celebration of the Shepherd in finding the abandoned baby girl. Immediately prior to the Shepherd's entrance in

Act III, scene iii, the doomed Antigonus comments on the sky and weather, saying: "The day frowns more and more. Thou'rt like to have / a lullaby too rough. I never saw / The heavens so dim by day" (III, ii, 53-55). While the threatening weather correlates with Antigonus's punishment and death, it also declares "the glory of God," meaning, the innocent Perdita will be saved. Shortly after, the Shepherd stumbles upon the baby and saves her from impending doom. Justice prevails, and the heavens rejoice.

CONCLUSION

The Biblical allusions in *The Winter's Tale* reinforce the Christian themes of grace and redemption by repeatedly pointing out that the drama is centered on a religious idea--an idea that Shakespeare's original, extremely Biblically literate audience would have recognized and understood quite easily. Not only would his audience have noticed the Biblical themes, but they would also have acknowledged and accepted them as guideposts for understanding the play.

Although modern students of Shakespeare may have a difficult time hearing the Biblical references, it is important for us to try to

recognize the overtly Christian allusions and themes found within the plays. The reason for this necessity lies in the fact that there is a vast dimension of religious knowledge and thought incorporated into many of the plays. Shakespeare is obviously using a pattern of Biblical references in *The Winter's Tale* that constitute an important part of the experience of the play. To ignore these references is to diminish the play and to miss an important portion of the artistic experience Shakespeare has created.

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