Themes Of Religion And Sin In Tartuffe

In this essay, I aim to effectively analyze both texts and uncover some of the ways they explore religion and sin concerning their theatrical, historical and cultural contexts. Highlighted within the plays and performances are some ways in which religion was used to abuse those around, and on a larger scale oppress millions of followers.

In Tartuffe, outstanding connections to this topic can be found throughout the play as a whole, as it is based on the subject of sin and religion. Whilst Moliere wrote it as a form of farce comedy, many speculate that there is an underlying message that even those who enforce the doctrine might just exhibit the same hypocritical behavior. This is made clear in the title of the play which translates to the imposter, and that this is also the name of the character who expresses extreme piety. In the 1983 televised version by RSC, the character Tartuffe can be heard praying in the background. On-screen emerges the family in the dining room. Tartuffe's chanting is then met by the sounds of them laughing as they enjoy their meal. It could indicate a stark contrast between Tartuffe's religiosity and the family's lax way of being according to Madame Pernelle, as she voices her worries that the neighborhood may be gossiping about the family. Mme Pernelle, Orgon's mother continuously berates them, even the housemaids. She claims her 'instructions are all contradicted'. She goes on to judge them, stating about Dorine 'you butt into everything to speak your mind'[1.1] There is irony that comes with such statement, 'Whoever restrains his words has knowledge' [Provervs 17:27] Mme P. reveals her lack of empathy towards others and is by her own words a bigot, intolerant of listening to others opinions all the while she offers up hers. That yet she is offended by Dorine's behavior, she is blinded by her impertinence. Mme P. refuses to see that she is doing the very thing she condemned Dorine for, interrupting everyone who talks to say what is on her mind. Madame Pernelle speaks carelessly, calling her grandson a 'fool' her granddaughter a 'prude' and 'sly', even going so far as to slap her maid and call her 'slut'. 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks' This is the opposite of what is asked for in religion, Christianity especially. Her actions serve as an example of the underlying hypocrisy that happens not just within the play but a reflection on the state of the world. It can also be said that Mme Pernelles judgemental nature is a direct contradiction of her strongly held ideals. She contradicts herself again saying 'That to accuse a man you need just cause'[5.3] The religion she believes in highly condemns the judgment of others and without looking at oneself first even calling one who does so a hypocrite 'First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.' When you examine this compared to her behavior it is clear to see that she is not showing herself in the best light and that criticizing others does not make her the better, or right, person.