

The is a parasite who
is sucking



The Religious Attacks Made By "Tartuffe" Moliere (whose real name was Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) rocked the 17th century French world with his comedy "Tartuffe" in 1664. Although, religious factions kept the play banned from theatres from 1664-1669, "Tartuffe" emerged from the controversy as one of the all-time great comedies. Tartuffe is a convincing religious hypocrite. He is a parasite who is sucking Orgon, the rich trusting father, for all he is worth.

Orgon does not realize that Tartuffe is a phony, and caters to his every whim. For instance, he reneges on his promise to let his daughter Mariane, marry Valere. Instead he demands that she wed Tartuffe, whom she despises. He also banishes his own son, Damis, from his house for speaking out against Tartuffe and all of his son's inheritance is promised to Tartuffe. Tartuffe is nothing more than a traveling confidence man who veils his true wickedness with a mask of piety. Orgon and his mother Madame Pernelle are completely taken in by this charade.

On the other hand, Cleante, Elmire, and Dorine see Tartuffe for the fake that he really is. Cleante is Orgon's wise brother who speaks elegantly about Tartuffe's hypocrisy. Through Cleante, Moliere most plainly reveals his theme. Spare me your warnings, Brother; I have no fear of speaking out, for you and Heaven to hear, Against affected zeal and pious knavery. There's true and false in piety, as in bravery, And just as those whose courage shines the most in battle, are least inclined to boast, So those whose hearts are truly pure and lowly Don't make a flashy show of being holy (Meyer 1466).

In speeches such as these, Moliere wanted to get across the fact that it was false piety he was condemning and not religion in general. In the preface to the play, which Moliere himself wrote, he bluntly states this. " If one takes the trouble to examine my comedy in good faith, he will surely see that my intentions are innocent throughout, and tend in no way to make fun of what men revere; that I have presented the subject with all the precautions that its delicacy imposes; and that I have used all the art and skill that I could to distinguish clearly the character of the hypocrite from that of the truly devout man." (Meyer 1509) The play successfully conveys this message because Tartuffe is a first-class villain. He is as manipulative as Lady Macbeth, as greedy as Prince John, as underhanded as Modred, and as clever as Darth Vader. Through his every word and deed it becomes more apparent that he is thoroughly bad. More specifically, he not only wants to marry Orgon's daughter, but wants to defile his wife as well.

He is not satisfied with living off of Orgon's wealth but wants to possess it. At no time in the play does Tartuffe resemble a truly pious man. The play never mocks God, but only those who use his name to prey on unsuspecting fools. The part of the fool is played to the hilt by Orgon. Throughout the first three acts he is such a domineering idiot that he is not even worth pitying. He, along with his mother, play the part of the blind zealot. What he chooses to call Christian love leads him to punish his family and himself because he takes away their freedom of choice and integrity and his own property. But, Orgon is not content to follow Tartuffe alone.

He demands that his family also follow. He becomes a threat to their happiness when the comedic scheming by the family begins. Dorine,

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Mariane's maid, uses her earthy wit to convince Mariane and Valere not to docilely accept Orgon's judgement. Damis, Orgon's son, testifies against Tartuffe's scandalous behavior with Elmire.

Cleante continues to offer Orgon sage advice and Elmire conspires to set a trap for Tartuffe where Orgon can witness firsthand the ungrateful hypocrite's actions. Dorine and Orgon almost come to blows, Damis is banished, and Cleante is ignored. Only Elmire succeeds. She hides Orgon under a table while pretending to play along with Tartuffe's advances. Even when Orgon witnesses Tartuffe's treachery firsthand it takes him a while to accept it. Elmire, by this time, has so little faith in her husband that she begins to think he is going to stay under the table and let Tartuffe ravish her. The turning point in the play is when Orgon comes out and confronts Tartuffe. Tartuffe, rather