

Fascination with Monarchy: Characteristics of Divine Monarchy as Depicted in the British Literary Canon and the Significance of Those Characteristics to Political Theology

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One Friday in 2011, from 6AM to 7:15AM ET, almost 23 million viewers in the United States watched the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. In 1981, 17 million people in the U. S. watched the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Diana. In 2018, an estimated 29.2 million U. S. citizens viewed the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.¹ Indeed, it is intriguing that, over 200 years after a nation declared its independence from a monarchical empire to establish a democracy, the citizens of that democracy would care enough about a royal wedding to watch in these numbers, particularly—in the case of Prince William and Kate Middleton—to tune in at six in the morning on a Friday. Perhaps more shocking, in 1953, outnumbering the 27 million-person viewership in the United Kingdom, 85 million citizens in the U. S. watched the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.² Throughout decades, United States citizens in

large numbers have taken interest in the monarchical events of Britain, and one cannot help but wonder why.

The American colonists of the 18th century went to great lengths to divorce themselves from monarchy, and they established what is today the oldest constitutional democracy in the world. The United States, especially since the Vietnam War, has been engaged in an effort to promote democracy around the globe. Why then does U.S. society devote such great interest in the royal family of the United Kingdom? Furthermore, U. S. interest does not end with viewership of major royal events but also includes British literature, the canon of which remains a staple in secondary and post-secondary education in the United States.

Very few things can be traced to only one factor, and the United States' fascination with the royal family and British literature is no different. That fascination is due in part to the fact that Great Britain is the kingdom from which the United States was born. Also, that the United Kingdom is one of the United States' closest and oldest allies is undoubtedly a second contributor. However, beside these factors, which are more obvious, another factor—one that has theological import and arises from a subconscious desire in at least much of humanity—is the inherent beauty, attractiveness, and splendor one finds in monarchy.

On the surface, such a claim appears to contradict “American values,” and perhaps the claim does that very thing. However, if it is a contradiction, is it not possible that the claim, though conflicting with “American,” democratic values, is yet true? Democracies—especially the

¹ Sonia Rao, “Analysis | Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's Wedding Attracted More American Viewers than Prince William's,” *The Washington Post*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/05/21/prince-harry-and-meghan>

[markles-wedding-attracted-more-american-viewers-than-prince-williams/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/05/21/prince-harry-and-meghan).

² “The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II - History of the BBC,” BBC News, BBC, Accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/june/coronation-of-queen-elizabeth-ii>.

United States—pride themselves for aspects of freedom and individualism that are inherent to this form of governance, and certainly, these values are not normally associated with monarchy. However, what monarchy lacks in freedom—or at least a western, democratic understanding of freedom—it over-compensates with other ideals such as purity of a people and perpetuity of government. It is obvious that no human, political state can wholly fulfill these two ideals no matter the system of government chosen, but the images of purity, perpetuity, and majesty are highlighted more in the coronation of a king or queen than in the inauguration of a democratically-elected President.

There is something majestic, something in which a nation can take pride, about a government whose head is the product of a 1,000-year bloodline succession that can be traced. Due to the preservation of the line of succession, the monarch represents a sense of purity and perpetuity for his or her people.

It is a difficult thing to prove that monarchy is the most *beautiful* and *majestic* form of government on earth. How does one quantify beauty, and how does one prove that humans are more attracted to monarchy? In support thereof, one could argue that the consummating government, which will be established at the end of time by the divine, will be a monarchy with Christ as king. The Christian worldview certainly affirms that the “kingdom of heaven” will be the consummating government over which God shall reign as king. However, the idea that humans desire this kingdom assumes that despite the fallen condition of humankind, we still desire God’s ultimate perfection in our deepest of hearts. If this assumption is true, that would serve as some proof that monarchy, though all its human forms be flawed, still affords us at least a picture of the perfect, eternal state. These presuppositions withstanding, if *beauty* were defined as that which is naturally attractive, then yes, monarchy could be considered most *beautiful*. Yet, there is another way to gauge

humans’ attractiveness toward monarchy; that way is through creative literature. God gave us creative writing to do something that is difficult to do with any other form of writing, that is to observe and express beauty. Fiction, folktale, myth, poetry, and the like give us the opportunity to focus on those abstract elements of life we find most beautiful.

Beauty, as they say, is “in the eye of the beholder,” meaning it is difficult to prove and or identify empirically. One would have a difficult time proving the beauty of monarchy, but what is clear is that there is no other form of government that claims more attention in creative literature. Non-artistic forms of writing have been used to explain, defend, and promote other forms of government. Thomas Paine, for example, in *Common Sense*, thoroughly explained the moral and philosophical reasoning for the independence of the thirteen American colonies and their establishment of a republic. This piece of writing influenced another political piece, the *Declaration of Independence*. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, defended the novel ideas at the time of communism. These works and others epitomize and or exemplify political theorizing and application of forms of government other than monarchy. However, these are treatises, declarations, and academic pamphlets. Why do so few writers praise or defend these other forms of government with the use of poetry, myth, folktale and other creative genres? Historically, the form of government that has inspired the most creative writing is monarchy.

This study shall contemplate this question: why does one find in creative writing the glorification of divine monarchical society more than that of any other governing framework, and what elements of the divine monarchical society can one find in creative literature? This study shall consider research on several pieces of creative writing from British literature. The attention given to a monarch shall take priority, but this study shall not overlook the societal and

religious aspects that a monarchical system prefers. Therefore, this study shall observe the attention given to kingship in the British literary canon by primarily focusing on the Arthurian legend, as well as the attention British literature lends to the societal aspect of community and the religious aspect of Christianity.

Scope of Research

This study shall focus on the English monarchical mythology certainly not because the English monarch or English society is the most beautiful, for world history accounts for a number of monarchical traditions besides that of Britain. However, this research shall focus on the British tradition for two reasons. First, the English tradition offers the most accessible literature. The literature of other cultures simply has not survived to the same extent as literature of British culture. It should be noted here that though Britain's empire has ceased as many empires before it, England has one advantage that other empires did not have, and that is other empires did not benefit from their revolutionaries perpetuating the culture of the empire. The United States, however, one of other revolting nations to the British empire, did this exact thing whereas British literature is taught in high schools and universities throughout the United States today. One exception to this historical pattern may be the Romans, who perpetuated the language and philosophies of the Greeks, but one difference is that the Roman empire was not born out of the Greek empire as the United States was born out of the British Empire.

The second reason this study shall focus on the English tradition is that British literature exemplifies not only an appreciation for monarchy but that of a Christianized monarchy. This is vital because all monarchies do not resemble the government of the eternal state but only divine monarchies, and the British monarchy that is portrayed and glorified in the British literary canon was a divine monarchy. This study

shall focus on canonical pieces whose context is embedded in an intersection between monarchy and Christianity. Even those pieces of literature that do not explicitly mention a monarch are helpful to this research because the focus of this research is not only monarchy but the entire monarchical culture and its elements that promote ideals of purity and perpetuity.

Finally, this study shall not favor British culture or government or portray them as Christian models to be imitated, nor is its purpose to suggest divine monarchy as a better governmental option. Earthly, divine monarchies may resemble something perfect, but nations should select their governmental systems based on how well those systems function for their respective societies, not by what those systems imitate. The literature this study shall examine are all fiction and mostly present the ideals of monarchical society. Also, this study seeks not to prove that imperial England was Christian in faith, but it does presuppose that it was Christian in culture. In this regard, the reporting of this research is limited to literary observations that suggest how Christianity was utilized to validate community, to bolster the public disposition—that of community over individualism—which is required to preserve a monarchy. In other words, Christianity was a convenient religion for the British monarchical society to adopt, not only for the religion's doctrines on unity—which English society utilized to promote societal uniformity—but also for the religion's doctrines surrounding the legitimacy of government in the eyes of God. The concept that the monarch is chosen by God is codified particularly in the Arthurian legend. For the sake of the king or queen's legitimacy, monarchy prefers a theistic—perhaps even an involved theistic—tradition, in contrast to democracy, which assumes a distant theistic tradition—or deism—and, quite honestly, can function even within an atheistic tradition.

The following eight literary works shall be examined: *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander

Pope, *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Roman de Brut* by Maitre Wace, *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White, and *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory. All of these important works are included in the British canon.

Christian Community Promoted in the British Literary Canon

Monarchy receives no benefit from individuality but requires uniformity. Thus, in British literature, community is stressed, particularly Christian community. Whereas democracy's priority is the advancement of the individual, a monarchical system is more concerned about the advancement of the state. The individual exists to the benefit of the state while in a democracy, the state exists to preserve the individual's "pursuit of happiness." The effects of community, as shown in the following works, are community's advantage to humans to avoid sin, its ability to bring humans to a desired and more perfect destination, and its benefit to the salvation and or progression of society.

Many notable literary scholars observe the motif of Christian community in creative British literature, and that theme of community is vital to the form of Christianity that creative writers such as Chaucer, Pope, Milton, and others knew in the British culture.

David Aers of Duke University, in his article titled "Faith, Ethics, and Community: Reflections on Reading Late Medieval English Writing," compares the communal themes of *The Canterbury Tales* to the society of England during Chaucer's time, writing, "in late-fourteenth-century England the relevant pressures included new conflicts that were political, economic, and religious . . . [and] forms of dissent became classified as heresy,"³ and

"opposition to the priests and orders of the actually existing Church is defined as opposition to God."⁴ In medieval England, community was stressed in the name of Christianity.

David Aers dissents with contemporary "Chaucerians," literary students of Chaucer, who, he says, in their attempt to relate Chaucer's work with Christianity, fail to give an accurate depiction of Christianity in English form of Chaucer's time.⁵ With his own research of medieval Christianity, he asserts his summation thereof, highlighting two main values of Christianity as in that form. One value he says was the incorporation of intelligence with faith. He asserts that contemporary "Chaucerians" describe the two as incompatible. The other value, which is of importance to this research, was that of community opposed to solitude.

The Canterbury Tales is replete with the theme of community and its effectiveness to avoid sin. Readers can find the pedagogical theme within the individual tales that a lack of community incubates sin. This is evident in *The Miller's Tale*, in which the two characters, Alisoun and Nicholas are seeking separation from Alisoun's husband, John, the carpenter, in the effort to commit adultery. The same principle is in *The Merchant's Tale*, in which May and Damian are seeking separation from May's husband, January, in the effort to commit adultery.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Sir Gawain is heaved into temptation each day when his host is away from the castle and Gawain is left alone with his host's wife. The first day of Gawain's game with his host is the perfect example.

So the lord in the linden-wood leads the hunt
And Gawain the good knight in gay bed

³ David Aers, "Faith, Ethics, and Community: Reflections on Reading Late Medieval English Writing," *Journal Of Medieval & Early Modern Studies*, 28.2 (1998): 350.

⁴ Aers, "Faith, Ethics, and Community," 354.

⁵ Aers, "Faith, Ethics, and Community," 342.

lies,
 Lingered late alone, till daylight gleamed,
 Under coverlet costly, curtained about.
 And as he slips into slumber, slyly there
 comes
 A little din at his door, and the latch lifted,
 And he holds up his heavy head out of the
 clothes;
 A corner of the curtain he caught back a
 little And waited there warily, to see what
 befell.
 Lo! it was the lady, loveliest to behold
 (lines 1178-87).⁶

The theme is present in *Paradise Lost*
 when Eve eats of the forbidden tree while away
 from Adam and alone with Satan, who says,

Then let me not let pass
 Occasion which now smiles, behold alone
 The woman, opportune to all attempts,
 Her husband, for I view far round, not nigh"
 (Book 9, lines 479-82).⁷

Momentary separation increases Adam and Eve's
 proclivity to sin, but after the lapse, Milton
 solidifies that separation in the characters' more
 frequent time apart from one another and in the
 overabundance of lines, following the lapse, that
 reveal the two characters' retreat to their inner
 thoughts. Before the temptation and fall, the
 couple's dialogue reveals little to no tension.
 After the lapse, the reader sees each character
 wrestle with his and her tension alone.
 Prelapsarian, however, the perfect couple is
 depicted holding hands, praying and working
 together every day in the garden. It seems,
 therefore, that Milton, like other canonical
 authors, reflects the medieval preference of his
 day and time for community, which, in *Paradise*

Lost, is one aspect of perfection while separation
 is a result of sin.

Another effect of community is its ability
 to transport the protagonist to his or her desired
 destination. In *The Canterbury Tales*, the stories
 that the pilgrims share are for the purpose of
 community while on their way to a destination.
 The narrator's goal in proposing story-telling is
 "to make things slip / By telling two stories on
 the outward trip / To Canterbury" (lines 793-5).⁸
 In *The Faerie Queene*, despite the strength of the
 protagonist, the Red Cross Knight, he cannot
 reach his destination without his community. In
 fact, because his goal is to reunite Una with her
 parents, the Red Cross Knight would fail in his
 mission if he were to reach the castle alone. For
 success, at least one person must accompany him,
 that person being Una.

John N. Wall, Jr. interprets the *The Faerie*
Queene as an exemplification of Christian
 community. With textual support mostly of the
 Red Cross Knight's view, from a mountain, of the
 "heavenly Jerusalem," which he deems better
 than Cleopolis, city of the Faerie Queene, Wall
 interprets his journey as the journey of a
 Christian, who serves his earthly community well
 in hopes of being a part of a heavenly
 community, saying, "For Red Cross, service to
 the Faerie Queene and thus to her city of
 Cleopolis is a necessary prerequisite for
 beginning the journey to the New Jerusalem . . .
 citizenship in the earthly city is a requirement for
 eventual citizenship in the City of God."⁹ Wall
 also points out other inferences to community: the
 marriages and or potential marriages of Prince
 Arthur to Gloriana and the Red Cross Knight to
 Una. After the hero of the poem achieves
 community, Wall asserts, he then becomes the
 undisputed hero for his city. His loyalty to his
 earthly community is a "prerequisite" to his

⁶ M. H. Abrams, ed., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 182-3.

⁷ M. H. Abrams, ed., *Paradise Lost* (New York: W. W.
 Norton & Company, 2000), 1971-2.

⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill
 Coghill (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960), 23.

⁹ John N. Wall. "The English Reformation and the Recovery
 of Christian Community in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*."
Studies In Philology 80.2 (1983): 144.

portion in the heavenly community, and “Christian community on earth lived in anticipation of eternal communion with God is therefore the goal of all actions in Spenser’s poem.”¹⁰ These examples suggest the ability of community to transport individuals to a holier state of existence.

A third effect of community seen in the canon is its advantage of salvation and progression for the individual. In other words, the community plays a major role in the progression or even sanctification of the individual. Sir Gawain, who is not a subtle metaphor of a Christian but is in fact a Christian in the poem, seeks community in order to worship on his journey to find the Green Knight. He prays, “I beseech of Thee, Lord, / And Mary, thou mildest mother so dear, / Some harborage where haply I might hear mass” (753–55).¹¹ The inference in Gawain’s prayer is that there is an appropriate and inappropriate, or undesirable, method to worship. The preferred method is in a community.

David Aers incorporates thoughts on Christian community from medieval theologians, Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, and he suggests that the salvation of man through community was not first introduced in these literary works but was a prominent belief of the medieval church. Thomas Aquinas held confidence in the community of the church for the salvation of the human soul. From Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, Aers gathers that “the body of Christ is that mystical body, the Church, the one ark outside of which, he writes, there is no salvation.”¹² St. Augustine, too, is quoted by Aers as saying, “I would not believe in the Gospel, did not the authority of the Catholic Church compel me.”¹³ Not only are humans stronger as members of a community, but they are also protected from

destruction when they are guarded by a community. In at least two of these works, *Paradise Lost* and *The Rape of the Lock*, the human characters have enemies seeking their destruction and therefore have need of even non-human communities for their salvation. In *Paradise Lost*, that community of protectors is angels. For Adam’s benefit, “Raphael, / The affable Archangel, had forewarned / Adam by dire example to beware / Apostasy” (7.40-3).¹⁴ In *The Rape of the Lock*, though Belinda’s trivial treasure to be protected is her hair, the community that protects her beauty is composed of magical beings, one of which, “her guardian Sylph,” who whispers to her “Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care / of thousand bright inhabitants of air!” (Canto 1. lines 20, 27-28).¹⁵ The sylph continues, saying,

Know, then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
The light militia of the lower sky:
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o’er the box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in air
(1.41-5).¹⁶

These two works relate in the way that those two non-human communities are responsible for maintaining human beauty or perfection. In *Paradise Lost*, the perfection that the angels labor together to maintain are the humans themselves as well as their blissful habitation, and in *The Rape of the Lock*, that perfection to be guarded is the beautiful Belinda. The argument could be made that general benefits of community are not Christian in origin, which is true; nevertheless, because the authors of these works lived within the influence of England, which did value Christian thought at least

¹⁰ Wall, “The English Reformation and the Recovery of Christian Community in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*,” 145.

¹¹ Abrams, ed., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 174.

¹² Aers, “Faith, Ethics, and Community,” 344.

¹³ Aers, “Faith, Ethics, and Community,” 350.

¹⁴ Abrams, ed., *Paradise Lost*, 1935.

¹⁵ M. H. Abrams, ed., *The Rape of the Lock* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 2528.

¹⁶ Abrams, ed., *The Rape of the Lock*, 2528.

culturally, the argument can be made that *Christian* community did in fact influence their works. Especially when considering these specific benefits of community, which are religious in nature—community’s ability to guard humans from sin, to transport to a holier state, and its advantages of salvation—they are inextricably bound in Christian thought. A divine monarchy depends on such glorification of community.

The Ideal King: The Arthurian Legend

Now, to turn to the ideal monarch presented in the British literary canon: a major theme of the Arthurian legend, which is relevant to this research, is the legitimacy of a king. Many factors make Arthur the great king he is in literature, but Arthurian authors focus on different factors in relation to Arthur’s preparation and or legitimacy to be king. Thus, though the Arthurian legend necessitates certain character and plot components, the difference between renditions tend to be different emphases on preparatory and legitimacy factors. One scholar suggests that “the figure of Arthur and the legend of Camelot have inspired an unusual degree of political proselytizing, as Arthur is recreated in each version in the image of the storyteller’s ideal leader.”¹⁷ Further, each time another author takes up the legend, “the artist must make good a claim to veracity—that *this* Arthur, out of all the possible Arthurs past and present, is, indeed, the *authentic* Arthur.”¹⁸

Because of the great number of versions, this paper shall only analyze three prominent works—Maitre Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, T. H. White’s *The Once and Future King*, and Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*. The way Arthur is developed in these works prior to his coronation

should give insight into what the author considers important to not only Arthur’s preparation for leadership, but for any monarch. Because Wace focuses a great deal on Arthur’s heritage, this paper suggests that Wace considered Arthur’s bloodline most important for Arthur’s preparation for the throne. Because White works so much with education, it seems that he placed Arthur’s education as the most important prerequisite. Thirdly, because Malory’s work emphasizes the need for Arthur to have advice, it appears that he prioritized a king’s willingness to accept advice above all other kingly characteristics.

Véronique Zara, in an article titled “The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*,” summarizes the twelfth century text in one line, writing, “From Brutus, a long line of kings would descend, the most prestigious of whom would be Arthur.”¹⁹ In this observation, the importance of Arthur’s ancestry is implied. The fact that Wace spends more pages on Arthur’s place among the line of the kings of Britain than later Arthurian writers should come as no surprise. *Roman de Brut* was written in 1155, a time when the philosophy, theology, and ideology of the Great Chain of Being ruled in England. Though *Roman de Brut* does not offer a clear picture of the young Arthur before he becomes king—as does *The Once and Future King* and *Le Morte d’Arthur*—it does offer information on a long period of time before the great king.

“Whoever wishes to hear and to know about the successive kings and their heirs who once upon a time were the rulers of England—who they were, whence they came, what was their sequence, who came earlier and who later—Master Wace has translated it and tells it truthfully.”²⁰

In this credibility-establishing introduction, not only does Wace take ownership of the legend

¹⁷ Roberta Davidson. “The “Reel” Arthur: Politics and Truth Claims in “Camelot, Excalibur, and King Arthur.”” *Arthuriana* 17, no. 2 (2007): 62.

¹⁸ Davidson, “The “Reel” Arthur: Politics and Truth Claims in “Camelot, Excalibur, and King Arthur,”” 63.

¹⁹ Véronique Zara, “The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*.” *Arthuriana* 18, no. 2 (2008): 17.

²⁰ Zara, “The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*,” 18.

by suggesting that he has the “real story,” but he also establishes that his work will rely heavily on blood relations—“heirs” and “whence they came.” Arthur came from not only a line of kings, but a respectable line, beginning with Brutus of Troy, who, according to legend, founded Britain. From where and from whom a monarch comes is vital whereas much of monarchy’s legitimacy is not rooted in the present but in the past. What is so *beautiful* and majestic about a woman in her mid-twenties being coronated in 1953 is not that particular woman as an individual—as though she were a conqueror—but that she shares traceable blood with the conqueror who established a state for his people centuries prior and that the state he established still stands.

Zara notes in Wace the “long stretches of text where seemingly unremarkable monarchs follow one another in quick succession. Most often, we learn only their names and the relationship between them and their predecessors. Despite their rather dry nature, these passages are not without a purpose.”²¹ Zara further writes, “Their reigns serve a dual purpose. Their rules stand in contrast to Arthur’s since the latter’s deeds set him apart from all others. . . they also foreshadow his arrival by building up expectations of greatness.”²²

A third possible reason of including “dry” information about these kings: in preparing the stage for Arthur, it is not only important that Wace establishes the great stock Arthur is from—Brutus—but also show how that line from Brutus to Arthur was unbroken.

This was not an uncommon practice when establishing the legitimacy of a king. A catalog fulfills a common part of the traditional epic, and it demonstrates that when attempting to prove something as important as a person’s right to kingship, it is imperative to be meticulous and not leave out any detail—in this case, any king, even

if he was mediocre.

Cataloging is used in the gospels when proving the connection between Jesus and David, and even further back to Abraham. In the Gospel of Matthew, one finds in the prologue a text written to legitimize Jesus as the “King of the Jews.” The gospel writer is careful to include forty-two generations in the Christ’s genealogical account. Why? Because bloodline is important when concerning right to kingship.

It is widely accepted among biblical scholars that Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience to present to his people their promised messiah, the son of David. According to Old Testament prophecy, Jesus is legitimized as king through his descent from David. To assert this Davidic descent, Matthew goes beyond simple explication of this fact; he does it using a device known in Hebrew as the gematria, which is “the sum of the numerical equivalents of the [Hebrew] consonants in a word.”²³ Jews attached numerical value to the Hebrew letters according to their order. דוד (David) is comprised of ד, the fourth letter, ו, the sixth letter, and ד again. The gematria of David, then, is 4+6+4=14. Thus, Matthew signals to Jewish people of Jesus’ legitimacy to the throne of David by arranging the names of Jesus’ genealogy in three groups of fourteen, and, without coincidence, Matthew resolves this section, writing, “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations” (Mt. 1:17 CSB).

Now, it may be argued that use of this device is not compelling and does not legitimate a person as king, and that argument would be valid in non-Jewish contexts. However, one must remember that Matthew is confirming Jesus’ legitimacy as the king *of the Jews*, and he poses

²¹ Zara, “The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*,” 19.

²² Zara, “The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*,” 19.

²³ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 233.

this argument *to* Jews. Therefore, it is not necessary for any other people to acknowledge the legitimacy of this device; Jewish people appreciated the device. When it comes to the legitimacy of a king or queen, different peoples have different components in which they place confidence.

Democracies pride themselves for paying little to no attention to their leaders' pedigrees. The "American myth" holds to the idea that one can come from nothing and become President of the United States. While this is true in exceptional cases, the fact that multiple U. S. presidents have come from the same families hints to the idea that even U. S. citizens attach value to bloodline. To name a few examples: the 6th president was the son of the 2nd president. The 23rd president was the grandson of the ninth. The 32nd president was a cousin of the 26th president. The 43rd president is the son of the 41st president. This is not to mention candidates who almost became president: Robert F. Kennedy, Edward Kennedy (who rejected the Democratic nomination after his brother's assassination), Hilary Clinton, and others. Even a democracy such as the United States has an appreciation for elements of royal society. Even for a popular President like Jack Kennedy, his administration was famously nicknamed "Camelot."

Concerning the Arthurian legend, according to Zara, Wace also places much confidence in heritage by using Merlin as an example. "The prestige of one's ancestors is highly valued in Wace's worldview. Merlin's case perhaps best illustrates the importance of filial relationships. As a boy who does not have a father, Merlin is taunted by Dinabus."²⁴ Zara refers to the portion of the text that reads:

*"Hold your tongue, Merlin!" said
Dinabus. "Be still. I am from a much nobler line*

*than you. Don't you know who you are, you evil thing? You shouldn't argue with me or degrade my lineage! I was born of kings and counts; and if you tried to account for your parents, you couldn't name your father even, because you don't know who he is, and you never will. You don't know his name because you never had one."*²⁵

Zara concludes that "kings are necessarily defined by their ancestry and acquire a special prestige as a result."²⁶ Thus, for Wace, the ideal king is foremost king by blood.

In T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, the author's intent to model a boyhood fitting for a future king is explicit. Book one, *The Sword in the Stone*, is an archetypal "Bildungsroman," literally meaning in German "a boy's book," which tells of a young male's process to maturity. In the first chapter, the boys' education—the Wart and Kay—is the subject of conversation between Sir Ector and Sir Grummore, and from then on, the subject of education, even after the Wart becomes king, is never moved from out of view.

It should be noted here that T. H. White lived and wrote in the 20th century long after the height of the British empire; however, his work is helpful to this research because it adds to the Arthurian legend perhaps the greatest detail surrounding King Arthur's boyhood and education. White is not simply suggesting a model of education for any male but for one who is destined to rule over a monarchy.

"White has for the first time created childhoods for pre-existing adult characters."²⁷ This was necessary if White indeed believed that Arthur's prior education was vital to his success as a king. The time of childhood is the most impressionable stage of any person's life, and White's creation of a detailed childhood for

²⁴ Zara, "The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace's *Roman de Brut*," 23.

²⁵ Wace, Maitre Wace, *Roman de Brut. The Romance of Arthur* ed. Norris J. Lacy and James J. Wilhelm (New York: Routledge, 2013), 89-90.

²⁶ Zara, "The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace's *Roman de Brut*," 23.

²⁷ Jake La Jeunesse. "T.H. White, "The Once and Future King", and the Scientific Method." *Arthuriana* 22, no. 2 (2012): 23.

Arthur must have been for the purpose of stressing his education because this portion of the book is so infused with references to education. In White's version of education for a king, it is most necessary that he learn peace instead of war. In the Wart's education, it is necessary that he be a witness to the horrors of war and conflict on its most basic level. Perhaps this is the cause of the Wart being transformed into animals during his training period with Merlyn, for in literature, animals are often used in fables to stress basic human experiences. At an early age, as the Wart is being educated, the responsibility to solve the problem of war is incumbent upon him, but in his education, is he ever given a solution or only given the responsibility to find the solution? Jake La Jeunesse, professor of English at the University of Minnesota Duluth, writes, "White's question is simple: what place does violence have in the human world, and is there a way to stop human beings from making war. . . he [Merlyn] draws no conclusions for the boy."²⁸ (La Jeunesse and other scholars believe that *The Once and Future King* is an anti-war text.) White places the Wart in a process form of education wherein he is figuring it out for himself but still has not quite found a solution. What is certain is that war and love for war has to be taught out of him from an early age. The following passage shows what the young Arthur thought of war:

*"I should have had a splendid suit of armour and dozens of spears and a black horse . . . and I should have called myself The Black Knight. . . and made all true knights that came that way to joust with me for the honour of their ladies."*²⁹

At the beginning of his education, he romanticizes war, and so, he must be taught better. Such preparation was important because White's ideal king would not love war if White's purpose was to find a solution to war.

Standing as a complete opposite to Arthur in this regard is Mordred. "Mordred aims to destroy Camelot—but only out of a legitimate grievance he bears toward his father and the love he has for his mother."³⁰ When Mordred is introduced into the myth, he inevitably diminishes the importance of bloodline as being necessary for right to the throne for the fact that he is Arthur's closest heir by blood but does not become king. Though Mordred perhaps should have become king, he did not have the same education and preparation as his father Arthur. Unlike Arthur, Mordred was encouraged in war, particularly against his father. Though Arthur was prepared for war in his education, he was encouraged to defuse it. This training to shun conflict was a vital part to Arthur's preparation. White is not the only writer who presents a King Arthur of peace, but White does emphasize this Arthurian characteristic more than other writers. In *The Once and Future King*, the main character is meticulously trained in the avoidance of war in a very philosophical fashion. Indeed, White offers an anti-war philosophy.

A king of peace, which the Arthurian legend presents—even beyond T. H. White—is a monarchical concept. Peace is an objective of all forms of government; however, monarchy is the only form in which peace is intended to be realized in and through a person. King Arthur is a symbol of peace. Camelot and the Round Table are symbols of peace, particularly for the fact that at the Round Table—in most renditions of the legend—there is a sense of equality between all knights and even the king. One may argue that this concept of a king who brings peace is not unique to the Arthurian legend, and that would be correct, and that is the point. Legends of kings across cultures and time share this commonality. Those legends glorify not a state that brings peace, or, in the case of democracy, a people who

²⁸ La Jeunesse, "T.H. White, 'The Once and Future King', and the Scientific Method," 24.

²⁹ T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Flamingo, 1984), 58

³⁰ La Jeunesse, "T.H. White, 'The Once and Future King', and the Scientific Method," 22.

govern and bring peace, but those legends glorify a *person* who brings peace and embodies peace. Even in legends in which the king wages war, he does so in order to establish peace. Because monarchy, which means “government by one,” totally depends on the *one*. The peace of society totally depends on the king.

To restate the purpose of this research: it is not to suggest that monarchy is humans’ best governmental option, and this is why. Societies have mostly moved away from government by one because history demonstrates the fragility of this form of government. It only works and is beneficial if the *one* is righteous and is able to bring peace. It appears, therefore, that monarchy does not fail systematically, fundamentally, or theoretically, but it fails due to human fallenness. What monarchy does offer, however, regardless of its brokenness, is a picture. Only in this form of government can the concept of peace-through-one be exhibited. Though the picture has been unclear throughout history, it is clearer in literature, and our appreciation of that literature is proof.

Finally, to turn to Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*: Laura K. Bedwell, professor of English at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, credits Malory as “the author who, more than any other, shaped the King Arthur legend that we now know.”³¹ Malory explores the kingly concept of loneliness and the burdens of leadership. Though this concept is present in most versions of the legend, in *Le Morte d’Arthur*, Malory highlights the loneliness of kingship in exponential proportion to other Arthurian authors, almost as if loneliness were a requirement to kingship. Arthur becomes king by being the only one capable of drawing the sword from the stone. The inevitability and even divine right of his kingship is hailed in this act. As king, Arthur has inevitable responsibilities and burdens, and some of both—

more so the burdens of leadership—are placed on him before the consummation of his rule. The defining line in Malory’s work, or the shifting point, when Arthur begins to feel this weight of leadership is in the following: “When Arthur easily withdrew the sword once again, Sir Ector and Sir Kay immediately knelt before him.”³² Immediately after, the young man Arthur is plunged into at least two aspects of leadership: advice, which this paper has already highlighted, and secondly, loneliness. Yet, even in the king’s loneliness, a profound component of divine monarchy stands out.

Arthur must sacrifice his family, past, present, and future. While still a youth, in the same moment he discovers his right to be king, it is through Sir Ector’s and Kay’s humble recognition of this that Arthur loses the only family he ever knew; this is the past family he sacrificed when becoming king. Immediately after drawing the sword from the stone, Sir Ector reveals to him that he is not Arthur’s biological father. This revelation seems to be a random occurrence, even interrupting the flow in the book, unless it is viewed in light of the writer’s intent to legitimize Arthur as king. If Sir Ector were his biological father, who still lives, Arthur could not be king but a prince and heir apparent at best, but even that would not be likely since Kay, Sir Ector’s son, is older than Arthur. However, that Arthur is not the biological son of Sir Ector leaves open the possibility that Arthur’s biological father was in fact a king. However, therein lies the problem as it relates to Arthur’s family: he learns here that his biological father is dead. Arthur’s response to this revelation is “You have suddenly made me feel all alone. . . I feel as if I have lost my father, and my mother, and my brother! You are the only family I have ever known.”³³

Later in Arthur’s life, the opportunity to

³¹ Laura K. Bedwell. “The Failure of Justice, the Failure of Arthur.” *Arthuriana* 21, no. 3 (2011): 3.

³² Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d’Arthur*. *World Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myths and Epics* 3rd ed. Donna Rosenberg (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1999), 425.

³³ Malory, *Le Morte d’Arthur*, 425.

have a faithful wife is never allowed the king; this is his present family. Perhaps not emphasized in most versions of the Arthurian legend, but in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the king has to sacrifice intimacy with his wife for government. This is made evident in the fact that Arthur is aware of his queen's alleged unfaithfulness with Lancelot but does not care to sacrifice Lancelot to know the truth. He desires to spare Lancelot along with the brotherhood between himself and his knights. Arthurian students often ponder why punishment for Arthur's queen, Guinevere, is worse than Lancelot's—Guinevere is to be burned while Lancelot is banished—as well as the reason Lancelot is excused for his adulterous act. However, because Lancelot is a knight—most valuable, perhaps this is why Arthur does not want to sacrifice him. Though this sacrifice is emphasized a great deal in the climax of *Le Morte d'Arthur* and perhaps not emphasized in other works, what is present in most accounts of Arthur—or not present—is a female who genuinely loves Arthur romantically. This lack of romance could possibly suggest that kings, because of their civil duties, are not entitled to romance.

It is only a theory, but a plausible one: especially considering the monarchical government of Arthur's Britain, a person's value is contingent upon his value to the state. Therefore, despite Lancelot's misconduct with the queen, he is a good knight of the Round Table and valuable to the state. Laura K. Bedwell mentions that "centuries after the composition of the King Arthur stories, most people *know* that Arthur ruled a kingdom governed by justice and chivalry, where people lived in safety because of their strong king and his mighty Round Table."³⁴ Thus, the knights of the Round Table are vital to the peace and security of Britain, and Lancelot is notoriously the best knight of the group. Because Arthur is the king, who is most responsible for the government of Britain, he cannot afford to

give more respect to his affections—the purpose of his wife—than to his government. In the end, loneliness is required of the leader.

Thirdly, though Malory allows him a son, he, along with other Arthurian authors, never allows Arthur an heir since his son, Mordred, dies. The death of his son eliminates any future family for Arthur. His lack of an heir, which the production thereof takes priority for any monarch for the sake of perpetuity of government, surely suggests an incompleteness in Arthur in a familial sense. Under normal circumstances, these valuable familial pieces are also valuable to the state. Using language and categories that pertain to the wellbeing of the state, a king does not need a *wife*, per se, but a queen, and he does not need a *son* but an heir. Nevertheless, these state *positions/roles* are equivalent to familial relations. They would be necessary for a king under "normal circumstances." However, in the King Arthur legend, they are not necessary because King Arthur represents the perfect monarch who, if perfect, can be replaced by none, including his own son. Herein is the fascinating and profound component of divine monarchy that stands out even in Arthur's loneliness: it is his divine chosen-ness that alienates him, the idea that no one can take his place.

In a real monarchy, set in time and space, queens and heirs are necessary because no king can live forever. However, in literature, a queen and an heir are not vital because through literature, writers can create the scenario that is unattainable for all real, earthly monarchies, and that is true perpetuity of government through one who cannot be replaced. This concept, I term "eternal sovereignty." Arthur is alone by divine intention, and, as portrayed in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, he feels that loneliness, yet that loneliness that Arthur experiences is a byproduct of his uniquely divine-appointed position. He is the king for whom there is no replacement. This concept, I term "unique appointment."

³⁴ Bedwell, "The Failure of Justice, the Failure of Arthur," 3.

This desire of “eternal sovereignty” is expressed in the greeting, “Long live the king” and “Oh, King, live forever.” So, if throughout all history, there has never been a monarch who truly lived and reigned forever—hence the necessity to marry and produce an heir for the “next-best thing”—then from where did these ideas of “eternal sovereignty” and “unique appointment” come? When authors write gloriously of kings, from where do such fantastical concepts arise? This paper shall not put forth any dogmatic answer to this question but only research gleaned from literature.

Conclusion

Popular works from the British literary canon offer theological insights that may be telling of the type of government humans find most beautiful and perhaps subconsciously look forward to in the eternal state. Concerning a

sovereign, this literature glorifies a king who is divinely appointed and establishes perpetuity. The Arthurian legend, more than any other category within British literature, highlights these concepts, and these characteristics are idiosyncratic of divine monarchy. Also, a sense of community based in religious tradition, especially Christianity, is suited for a divine monarchical society, as shown in these literary works. Particularly with the aid of Christianity, a monarchical society can emphasize the perfecting benefit of communal life. The focus of this research has been primarily on selective, popular literature of a single divine monarchical society. This literature highlights the vestiges of that society’s monarchy, and for some reason, the literature of that society is still appealing to many today.