

# The Christian & Literature

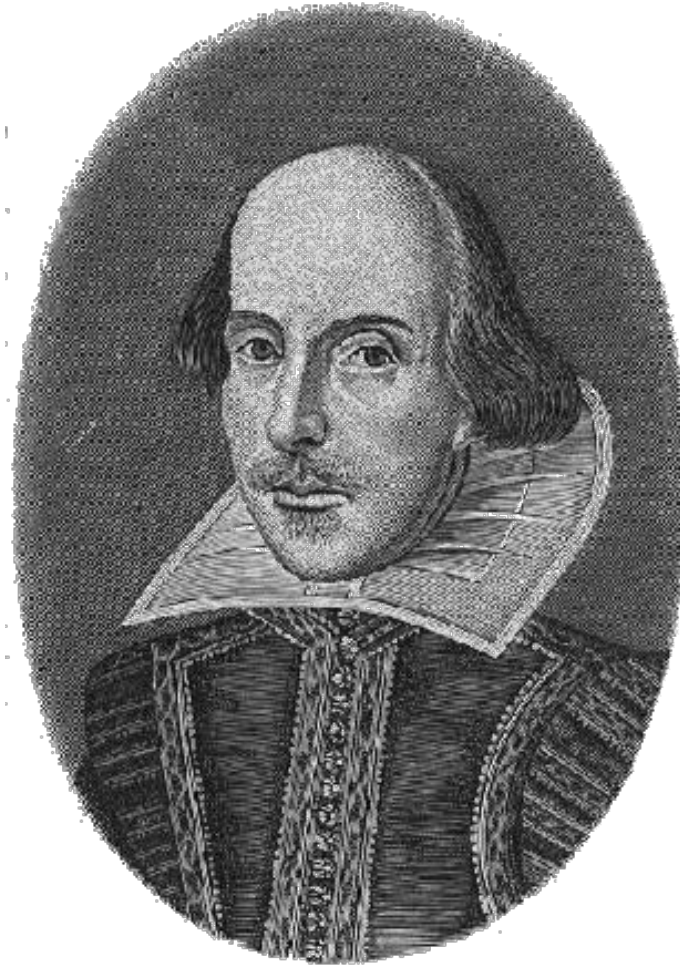
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## Session 3: Shakespeare—*The Gifted Observer*



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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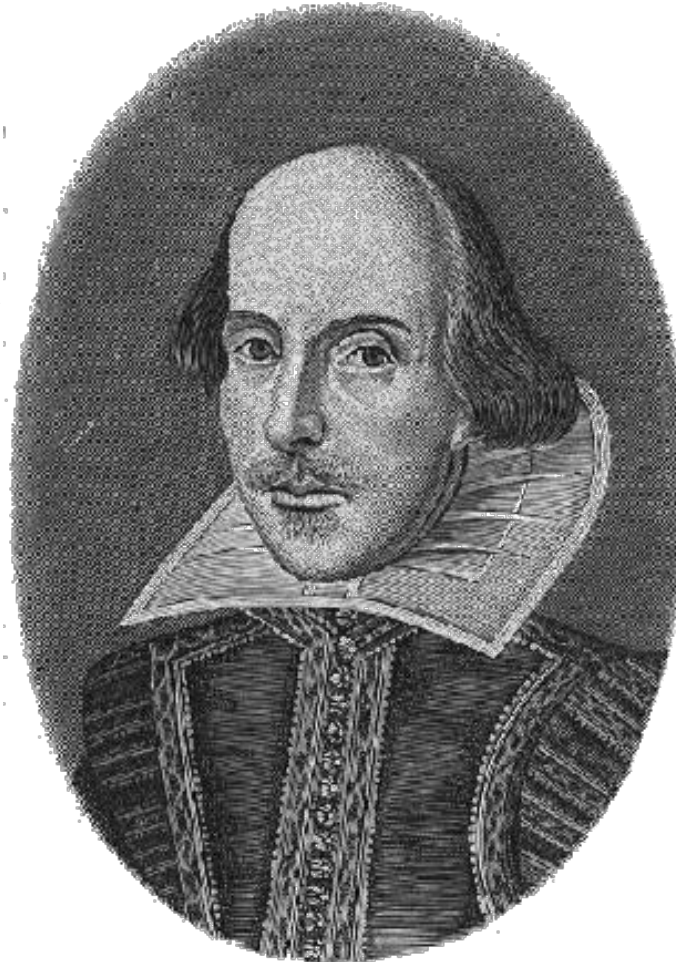


# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Old English?



Modern English?

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



Ne thæt se aglæca yldon thohte,  
ac he gefeng hrathe forman sithe  
slæpendne rinc, slat unwearnum,  
that ban-locan, blod edrum dranc.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



Ne thæt se aglæca yldon thohte,  
ac he gefeng hrathe forman siþe  
slæpendne rinc, slat unwearnum,  
that ban-locan, blod edrum dranc.

Old English—*Beowulf* c.A.D. 900

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour...





# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour...



Middle English—*Canterbury Tales*  
Geoffrey Chaucer c.A.D. 1380

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
When that April with its showers fresh



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

When that April with its showers fresh

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,

The draft of March has pierced to the root,

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
When that April with its showers fresh  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
The draft of March has pierced to the root,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour...  
And bathed every vine in such liquid...

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Is this a dagger, which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand?  
Come let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not and yet I see thee still.



*Macbeth*—Shakespeare: c. A.D. 1600

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Now crack a noble heart.

Good night sweet prince.

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

*Hamlet*—Shakespeare: c. A.D. 1600

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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Both Shakespeare (c.1600) and the  
King James Version (c. 1611) use  
“Modern English”

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?
  - some scholars argue that he was a Puritan
  - others suggest he was Anglican
  - some put forward the idea he was Catholic
  - others further propose he was an unbeliever



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?
  - we don't really know...

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?
  - we don't really know...
  - the mystery about Shakespeare's personal spirituality remains a mystery simply because we know very little about the “man” behind the works.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Was Shakespeare a Christian?
  - Our focus will *not* be the “spirituality of Shakespeare,” but the “spirituality of his works.”

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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□ Was Shakespeare a Christian?

“Truth is truth, whether it's spoken by the lips of Jesus or Balaam's donkey.”

~George Macdonald

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## □ Was Shakespeare a Christian?

“In reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator.”

~John Calvin

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our culture

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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    - Impact on language and idioms

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    - Taught in most English speaking schools in the world

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    - Plays constantly performed; cp. Stratford Festival

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our culture
    - Impact on language and idioms
    - Taught in most English speaking schools in the world
    - Plays constantly performed; cp. Stratford Festival
    - Films/TV/novels/lyrics/pop culture

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our culture
    - E.g., *Hamlet*

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our culture
    - E.g., *Hamlet*
      - Performed more than any other play in the world
      - More than forty-five film versions
      - “To be or not to be” is the most quoted phrase in the English language
      - Inspired twenty-six ballets, six operas, dozens of musical works from Tchaikovsky and Liszt to Shostakovich



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our culture
    - E.g., *Hamlet*
      - “There have been Hamlet cigars, bicycles, beer and laundry mats, Hamlet jewelry, games, paper dolls, and maps of the world abound with towns, streets, and business establishments called Hamlet” (Ib Melchior)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of ourselves
    - Shakespeare is a **keen observer** of God's creation
    - in particular, the human being and the human experience.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## □ Why study Shakespeare?

“...the good poet is the keenest observer of detail. He notices patterns in people and nature which we easily overlook. He gives us metaphors which bring disparate items together in a way that delights and reminds us of the important things in life.”

~Doug Jones, “Men Hate Poetry”

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## □ Why study Shakespeare?

“But poetry isn't just for the expert elite. Everyone should take part in this expression of the cultural mandate. Everyone, especially leaders, should seek to be keen observers of creation and the image of God. We can't be good stewards if we don't know the patterns around us. Wisdom demands it. If so, then it takes discipline to pursue beauty. Don't let a day go wasting by without engaging beauty, especially poetry.”

~Doug Jones, “Men Hate Poetry”

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Widen our perspective of the world (i.e., foster a poetic imagination)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Widen our perspective of the world (i.e., foster a poetic imagination)
    - “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” *Hamlet* (I.v.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our faith



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Deepen our understanding of our faith
    - the events in Shakespeare's plays unfold in a world baptized by the Christian imagination, taking place in a universe ruled by a Sovereign God.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## □ Why study Shakespeare?

“Christianity has a major and a minor theme. The minor is that men are lost and can never attain perfection in this life. The major dominant theme is that there is a purpose to life because God is there and man is made in his image...Real Christian art should show both the minor and major themes.”

**~Francis Schaeffer**

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## **Biblical Themes:**

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

“God shall be my hope, my stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet.” —*Henry VI*, (Act II, Sc.iii)

“In the great hand of God I stand”—*Macbeth* (II.iii)

“We are in God’s hand, brother.”—*Henry V* (III.vi)

“But this lies within the will of God,  
To whom I do appeal.”—*Henry V* (I.ii)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



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# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## **Biblical Themes:**

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

“Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet  
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd  
For our advantage on the bitter cross...”

*Henry IV, Part 1 (I.i.)*

“Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.”

*Henry IV, Part 2 (III.iii.)*

“O, if men were to be saved by merit, what  
hole in hell were hot enough for him?”

*Henry IV Pt 1 (II.i.)*

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## **Biblical Themes:** Salvation

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

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# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## **Biblical Themes:**

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

“And He that doth the ravens feed,  
Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,  
Be comfort to my age!” *As You Like It*, (II.iii.)

“A double blessing is a double grace.” *Hamlet*,  
(I.iii.)

“So grace and mercy at your most need help  
you.” *Hamlet*, (I.v.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## **Biblical Themes:** Providence & Grace .

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

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# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:**

Salvation, Sovereignty, Thanksgiving, Providence & Grace, Prayer

“But He, that hath the steerage of my course, direct my sail!” *Romeo and Juliet*, (I.iv.)

“I commit you to the tuition of God.” *Tempest*, (I.ii.)

“The will of Heaven be done in this and all things!”  
*Henry VIII*, (I.i.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:** Soveriegnity .

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# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:** Salvation .

“God be praised, that to believing souls Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair!” *Henry VI, Part 2* (II.i.)

“Win straying souls....cast none away.” *Henry VIII*, (V.iii.)

“God's goodness hath been great to thee: Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass, But still remember what the Lord hath done.” *Henry VI Part 2* (II.i.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:** Prayer.

“Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers—What is your name?” *Tempest*, (III.i.)

“He has my heart yet, and shall have my prayers while I shall have my life.” *Henry VIII*, (III.i.)

“Down on your knees, and thank Heaven, Fasting, for a good man's love.” *As You Like It*, (III.v.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:** Prayer.

“He is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.” *Much Ado about Nothing*, (I.i.).

“But my prayers forever and forever shall be yours.”  
*Henry VIII*, (III.ii.)

“A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion, To pray for them that have done scathe to us.” *Richard III*, (I.iii.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:** Prayer.

“My ending is despair, Unless I be relieved by prayer, Which pierces so that it assaults Mercy itself, and frees all faults.” *Tempest*, Epilogue.

“Ah, countrymen! if when you make your prayers God should be so obdurate as yourselves, How would it fare with your departed souls?” *Second Part of Henry VI*, (IV.vii.).

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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## **Biblical Themes:**

- Holiness
- Purity
- Obedience
- Thanksgiving
- Truth
- Virtues
- Etc.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Not all Shakespeare's work deal specifically with Christian themes... nor should they.



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



- Why study Shakespeare?
  - Not all Shakespeare's work deal specifically with Christian themes... nor should they.
  - "Christian art is by no means always religious art, that is, art which deals with religious themes. Consider God the Creator. Is God's creation totally involved with religious subjects? What about the universe? the birds? the trees? What about the bird's song? and the sound of the wind in the trees?"  
~**Francis Schaeffer**

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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  - Deepen our understanding of our culture
  - Deepen our understanding of ourselves
  - Widen our perspective of the world (i.e., foster a poetic imagination)
  - Deepen our understanding of our faith

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:
  - Archaic and obsolete words

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:
  - Archaic and obsolete words
    - alack, anon, forsooth, methinks, prithee
    - “**Alack**, I am afraid they have awaked, and 'tis not done”  
(*Macbeth*, II.ii.)
    - “Up, gentlemen: you shall see sport **anon**.” (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.iii.)
    - “Yes, **forsooth**, I will hold my tongue” (*King Lear*, I.iv.)
    - “**Methinks** I hear hither your husband's drum” (*Coriolanus*, I.iii.)
    - “I **prithee**, take thy fingers from my throat...” (*Hamlet* V.i.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



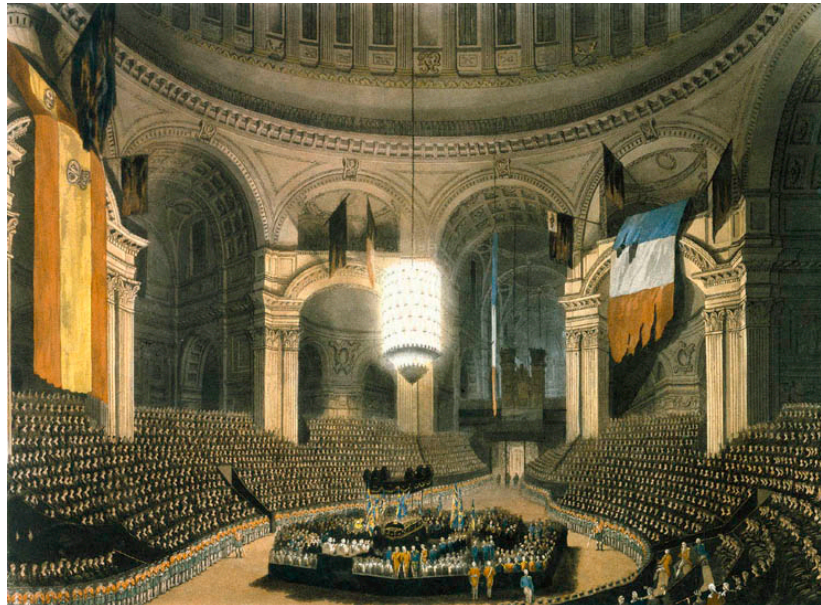
Upon viewing St. Paul's Cathedral in the 1600s, King Charles II says to the architect, Christopher Wren, “It is amusing, artificial, and awful.”



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



Christopher Wren replies, “The King likes it!”



Lord Nelson's funeral inside St. Paul's Cathedral



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



What the King really meant was, “It makes me ‘muse’, that is, to gaze in astonishment (amusing); it is the work of an artist (artificial), and it fills me with awe (awful).”



KING CHARLES II © WALKER ART GALLERY





# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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  - Obscure allusions

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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    - Classical

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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    - Classical—“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?” (*Hamlet* II.ii.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



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    - Classical—“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?” (*Hamlet* II.ii.)
    - Historical

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



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    - Historical
    - Elizabethan culture

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



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    - Historical
    - Elizabethan culture
    - Biblical

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



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  - Archaic and obsolete words
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    - Classical—“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?” (*Hamlet* II.ii.)
    - Historical
    - Elizabethan culture
    - Biblical—out of the 66 books of the Bible, Shakespeare quotes 57

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:
  - Archaic and obsolete words
  - Obscure allusions
  - Poetic language



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:
  - Archaic and obsolete words
  - Obscure allusions
  - Poetic language
  - Invented words

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



- Four reasons that make Shakespeare difficult to understand:
  - Archaic and obsolete words
  - Obscure allusions
  - Poetic language
  - Invented words
    - In all of his works—the plays, the sonnets and the narrative poems—Shakespeare uses 17,677 words: Of those, 1,700 were “coined” by Shakespeare.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## □ Lessons from *Hamlet*



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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“How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!” Hamlet (I.ii.)

“What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither...” Hamlet (II.ii.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



“To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause...” Hamlet (III.i.)

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



HAMLET : Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your jests now? your dances? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? ...Dost thou think Alexander looked of this fashion in the earth? ...To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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...To follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel? Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away: O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe, Should patch a wall to expel the winter flaw!

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## □ Lessons from *Hamlet*

- *Ecclesiastes 2:1-11*
- *Job 6:14-20* (“wadis”)
- *Ephesians 2:10* “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
- *1 Corinthians 10:31* “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God”



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## □ Lessons from *Macbeth*



# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*



## Act 5 Scene 5

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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“Unrepented evil can only lead to despair and nothingness: no friends, no companions, no love, no sleep.”

~Peter Leithart, *Brightest Heaven of Invention*

# Shakespeare: *The Gifted Observer*

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- Lessons from *Macbeth*
  - Daniel 4:30-32
  - Ezekiel 28:2, 8-10
  - Luke 9:23-25
  - 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (“ambition”)

# The Christian & Literature

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## **Session 4:** C.S. Lewis & *The Christian Imagination*

