

*Grief and Consolation in Early Modern Lutheran Devotion: The Case of Johannes Christoph Oelhafen's Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement (1619)*¹

RONALD K. RITTGERS

This article seeks to make an original contribution to the study of early modern Christian devotion by examining a source that has received no scholarly attention of any kind: Johannes Christoph Oelhafen's Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement (1619). Oelhafen, a prominent Nuremberg lawyer, composed the Pious Meditations shortly after his wife, Anna Maria, died. He did so in order to console himself and his eight children in the midst of their considerable grief. Drawing on well-known rhetorical devices and consolatory remedies, Oelhafen produced a work of private devotion that is remarkable in terms of its rich affectivity and considerable artistic skill. The Pious Meditations was never published, rather Oelhafen intended it for a private circle of intimates, especially his children and their posterity. The work illustrates especially well the theme of spiritual self-care that was so prominent in early modern Lutheran devotion. The Pious Meditations also demonstrates how creative and resourceful early modern Christians could be as they sought to contend with mortality, loss, despair, the obligations of parenthood, and the frequently mysterious workings of providence.

NOT long after midnight on February 13, 1619, Dr. Johannes Christoph Oelhafen,² a celebrated jurist and legal advisor to the Nuremberg city council, held his wife, Anna Maria,³ in his arms as she passed from this

¹This article began as a conference paper that I delivered at the March 2008 meeting of the Frühe Neuzeit Interdisziplinär: The Conference Group for Interdisciplinary Early Modern German Studies. It also draws on a portion of chapter ten in my forthcoming book, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). I am grateful to Jill Bepler for reading and commenting on a draft of this article.

²For biographical information on Oelhafen, see the relevant articles in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (hereafter ADB), 56 vols., Historische Kommission bei der Königlichen Akademie der

Ronald K. Rittgers is the Erich Markel Chair in German Reformation Studies and Professor of History and Theology at Valparaiso University.

life to the next. The couple had been married for almost eighteen years and had eight surviving children.⁴ According to Johannes Christoph and later Oelhafen sources, the two had enjoyed an exceptionally rich life together and therefore he was especially aggrieved by the death of Anna Maria.⁵ In order to help himself and his children cope with their collective grief, the forty-four-year-old Oelhafen immediately began composing prayers, hymns, confessions, and other devotional reflections that expressed both his great sadness and his resolve to find comfort for himself and his children in their Christian faith. At some point Oelhafen gathered these musings together and had the vellum pages gilded and bound as a book in red leather; he titled the work *Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement*.⁶ The work is not listed in any of the summaries of Oelhafen's life, whether early modern or modern; his few writings on jurisprudence appear in these summaries, but not his

Wissenschaften (München/Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1875–1912), 24:296–298 and *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (hereafter NDB), 24 vols., Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1953–), 19:438. Both of these articles are available online at <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz72939.html>. (The ADB is also available in a second unchanged print edition: Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften [Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1967–1971].) See also Georg Andreas Will, *Nürnbergisches Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Altdorf, 1802–1808; repr. Neustadt an der Aisch: C. Schmidt, 1997–1998), Band 3: 61–3; *Deutsches biographisches Archiv: Eine Kumulation aus 254 der wichtigsten biographischen Nachschlagwerke für den deutschen Bereich bis zum Ausgang des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, microfiche edition (München and New York: Saur, 1982), vol. I, 911: 218–224; Sigismundus Jacobus Apinus, *Vitae et Effigies Procancellariorum Academiae Altorfinae* (Nürnberg: Tauber, 1721), 10–19; Sigmund Christoph von Oelhafen, ed. and trans., *Zwei Reden zum Gedächtnis an die Prokanzler der Universität Altdorf: Dr. Johannes Christoph und Dr. Tobias Oelhafen von Schölnbach* (Nürnberg, 1891), Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Historisches Archiv (hereafter GNM-HA), Familienarchiv von Oelhafen, Rep. II/80, Nr. 120; *Familienbuch, welches z. Zt. noch fortgesetzt wird*, GNM-HA, Familienarchiv von Oelhafen, Rep. II/80, Nr. 22, fols. 313–330; and Johann Gottfried Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister des Hochadelichen Patriciats zu Nürnberg* (Bayreuth, 1748), Tabvla CCCLVII.

³See Biedermann *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvla CXLIX. No further information is available about Anna Maria aside from the brief family history provided below.

⁴The couple married on May 25, 1601. See ADB 24:298, and Biedermann *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvla CCCLVII. Anna Maria bore thirteen children in almost eighteen years of marriage. For the names of the children, see idem, tables CCCLVII–CCCLVIII. Eight survived into adulthood. At the time of Anna Maria's death their ages ranged from fifteen to two-and-a-half years old.

⁵According to Apinus, Oelhafen lived with Anne Maria “octodecim annos suavissime.” See *Vitae et Effigies*, 16. The Oelhafen *Familienbuch* similarly records that Johannes Christoph enjoyed a “gantz liebreichte und gesegnete ehe” with Anna Maria. See fol. 327. We do not know if Anna Maria held the same lofty opinion of their marriage, as we have no sources from her own hand.

⁶The Latin title is *Piae mediationes vidvitis, ehev moestissimae*. The majority of the work is in German. An alternative translation of the title would be *Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Widowhood* (or, less elegantly, *Widowerhood*). “Vidvitas” carries both the general meaning of bereavement and the more specific meaning of widowhood. Because widowhood almost always refers to a woman in American English, and because the masculine alternative, widowerhood, is a rather awkward and seldom used word, I have opted for the more common and more elegant bereavement.

Pious Meditations, which was never published.⁷ The work was also not included in Oelhafen's personal library, which made its way to the University of Altdorf library after his death.⁸ He obviously intended the *Pious Meditations* for the private use of a very close circle of friends and family members, and then for subsequent generations of Oelhafens. It therefore wound up in the Oelhafen family archive, which is currently housed at the German National Museum in Nuremberg.⁹ The work has never received scholarly attention of any kind.

Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations* provides a remarkably eloquent and moving example of a theme in early modern Lutheran devotion that, unlike the work itself, has received scholarly attention: the duty of self-consolation. Johann Anselm Steiger, a leading scholar of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Lutheran theology and piety, has maintained that one of the hallmarks of the evangelical care of souls in this period was an emphasis on the obligation of laypeople to prepare themselves for difficult times through sustained meditation on scripture. The clergy sought to teach the laity to become their own pastors by providing them with the "spiritual weapons" (*geistliche Waffen*) they would need for their inevitable duels with adversity.¹⁰ Thus, a number of the period's most popular works of devotion invoke the image of the spiritual knight in their titles and texts. To mention but two, there is Caspar Huberinus's *Concerning the Christian Knight* (1545; Nuremberg, 1570)¹¹ and Johann Spangenberg's *On the Christian Knight*

⁷The entry on Johannes Christoph in the Oelhafen *Familienbuch* mentions his "hinderlassene Volumina und Diaria, worinnen er in einer vortrefflichen Ordnung unzehliche Locos communes tam juridicos quam Theologicos et Philosophicos, und sonst viel merckwürdiges aus täglicher Erfahrung eigenhändig eingetragen," but there is no specific reference to his *Piae Memoriae*. See fol. 327.

⁸See discussion of Oelhafen's personal library below.

⁹The work is cataloged in the GNM-HA as the *Gebetbuch des Hans Christoph Oelhafen*, Familienarchiv von Oelhafen, Rep. II/80, Nr. 32. This title is somewhat misleading, for the work is much more than a prayerbook, as the title that Oelhafen gave it clearly indicates.

¹⁰See Johann Anselm Steiger, "Die Gesichts- und Theologie-Vergessenheit der heutigen Seelsorgelehre: Anlaß für einen Rückblick in den Schatz reformatorischer und orthodoxer Seelsorgeliteratur," *Kerygma und Dogma* 39 (Jahrgang, 1993/1, Januar/März): 64–87, here pp. 75–76. Steiger's larger project has been to revitalize interest in Lutheran Orthodoxy by providing fresh editions of some of the period's most important sources, and, especially, by seeking to demonstrate that this period in Lutheran history was not marked by a divide between theology and piety, as has been traditionally maintained. According to Steiger, the period emphasized sophisticated theological formulation *and* heartfelt devotion to Christ; both intellect and affect were highly valued in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Lutheranism. See the relevant notes below. On the importance of self-consolation in this period, see also Anna Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement in Early Modern Lutheran Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43–45.

¹¹For the Nuremberg edition, see *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* (hereafter VD 16), 25 vols. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1983–2000), here item H 5461. The VD 16 can be accessed at http://gateway-bayern.bib-bvb.de/aleph-cgi/bvb_suche?sid=VD16.

(1541; Nuremberg, 1598). The latter work was frequently published with another treatise by Spangenberg, *The Booklet of Comfort for the Sick* (1542), in which the Lutheran pastor and superintendent discusses the importance of arming oneself spiritually for death and suffering before they arrive: “You should impress (*einbilden*) some comforting passages from Scripture and the gospel on your memory, passages to use against all temptations. Collect them as provisions [for the journey] and always carry them with you in your heart, just as a soldier carries his arrows in the quiver and has them ready to use whenever he needs them.”¹² An edition of this work appeared in Nuremberg in 1598 along with *On the Christian Knight*.¹³ This emphasis on spiritual self-preparation may also be seen in Lutheran funeral sermons, including those that appeared in and around Nuremberg during Oelhafen’s lifetime. The sermons are full of references to how the deceased memorized or copied down consoling sayings from the Bible or devotional works to provide themselves with solace as they suffered and faced their end; the sermons urge survivors to do the same.¹⁴

Steiger links this emphasis on spiritual self-care with the stress on physical self-care in the medical literature of the period; doctors of souls and doctors of bodies both urged their patients to become their own (and each other’s) physicians.¹⁵ Of course, both the image of the spiritual knight and the emphasis on lay spiritual self-care were not unique to Protestant pastoral care and piety; one has only to think of Erasmus’s famous *Handbook of the Christian Knight* (1503) and the late medieval *ars moriendi* tradition, which similarly assumed an important role for laity in ministering to the sick and the suffering, and also emphasized the importance of

¹²Robert Kolb, *A Booklet of Comfort for the Sick, & On the Christian Knight by Johann Spangenberg (1548)* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007), 60 (German), 61 (English).

¹³VD 16, ZV 14614.

¹⁴Johann Will relays in a 1611 funeral sermon for Nuremberger Carl Tetzl how the deceased consoled himself with verses from Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16. Based on these verses the deceased would say to himself, “Christus ist mein Gerechtigkeit.” Will praises Tetzl for this exercise of self-consolation and assures his hearers that Christ was indeed the deceased’s righteousness and that he is now with Him in heaven. *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt/ Vber den Abschied ond [sic] Begra[e]gnuß/ Weiland deß Edlen/ Ehrnvesten/ Fu[e]rsichtigen vnd Weisen Herrn Carl Tetzels/ uff Kirchensittenbach vnd Vorra/ deß Innern vnd Kriegs-Rahts zu Nu[e]rnberg*, Herzog August Bibliothek (hereafter HAB) 190.22 Theol (3), fols. Aii v-Aiii r. On funeral sermons, see especially Cornelia Niekus Moore, *Patterned Lives: The Lutheran Funeral Biography in Early Modern Germany* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), and Jill Bepler, “Practicing Piety: Representations of Women’s Dying in German Funeral Sermons of the Early Modern Period,” in *Women and Death 3: Women’s Representations of Death in German Culture Since 1500*, eds. Clare Bielby and Anna Richards (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010), 12–30.

¹⁵Johann Anselm Steiger, *Medizinische Theologie. Christus Medicus und Theologia Medicinalis bei Martin Luther und im Luthertum der Barockzeit* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 106. On the importance of self-care in pre-Reformation vernacular medical literature, see Paul A. Russell, “Syphylis, God’s Scourge or Nature’s Vengeance? The German Printed Response to a Public Problem in the Early Sixteenth Century,” *Archive for Reformation History* 80 (1989): 286–287.

spiritual self-care.¹⁶ But the obligation to provide spiritual care for oneself and one's friends and loved ones clearly received new impetus from the Protestant movement through doctrines like the priesthood of all believers, which held that all the baptized were authorized to minister the Word to each other. The rejection of the cult of the saints placed a similar emphasis on this traditional obligation: this-worldly saints had to take over some of the functions attributed to heavenly saints in Catholicism, which included the consolation of the suffering. One also sees this new stress on spiritual self-care in the Lutheran treatment of private confession: evangelical laypeople were regularly instructed to become their own (and each other's) confessors, even as they were exhorted to seek clerical absolution whenever they required it.¹⁷

Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations* provides new evidence for how creative and resourceful Lutheran burghers could be as they sought to console themselves and their loved ones in times of great suffering. This work also shows how the distinctively Lutheran emphasis on consolation could shape the emotional lives of Lutheran burghers in profound ways. In her important recent book, *The Reformation of Feeling*, Susan Karant-Nunn argues that *Trost* (consolation) was the tell-tale characteristic of Lutheran pastoral care and piety in the early modern period, an emphasis she finds sorely lacking in Reformed Protestant sources, which she says place a stronger emphasis on discipline and suppression of emotion.¹⁸ Karant-Nunn focuses primarily on the place of consolation in Lutheran Passion sermons and prescriptions for death-bed ministry, seeking to show how these sources provided an "emotional script" that the laity was expected to learn. Her study examines the creation and dissemination of early modern emotional scripts and thus naturally deals with clerical sources for the most part. She does not examine in detail the lay reception of these scripts, that is, she does not deal with so-called "ego-documents," or lay autobiographical sources¹⁹ Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations*

¹⁶See Claudia Resch, *Trost im Angesicht des Todes. Frühe reformatorische Anleitungen zur Seelsorge an Kranken und Sterbenden* (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2006), 114.

¹⁷On the plight of private confession in the German Reformation, see Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004). On the importance of laypeople becoming their own confessors, see especially pp. 205–206. On this theme, see also Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 7.

¹⁸Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96, 97, 105, 178, 201, 226, 251–252.

¹⁹For an introduction to ego-documents in the early modern period, see Kaspar von Greyerz, ed., *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit: Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007). [It should be noted that von Greyerz prefers the term "self-narratives" to "ego-documents." See his "Ego-Documents: The Last Word?" *German History* 28:3 (September 2010): 273–82.] See also Barbara Schmid, *Schreiben für Status und Herrschaft: deutsche Autobiographik in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Zürich: Chronos, 2006), and Hans Rudolf Velten, *Das selbst geschriebene Leben: Eine Studie zur deutschen*

shows how the Lutheran reformation of feeling could extend to laypeople. His work may be seen as a self-conscious attempt on the part of an elite burgher to allow Lutheran-style consolation to shape, heal, and inform his own emotional life, along with that of his children and their descendents. The *Pious Meditations* is thus an ideal example of how the confessionalizing impulse of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Lutheranism could achieve its goal of forming lay identities around the defining convictions and concerns of the Lutheran gospel, especially in the face of suffering and death.²⁰ But Oelhafen's work is more than an interesting artifact of early modern Lutheran confessional culture. The *Pious Meditations* is an artful, poignant, and even inspiring account of how one rather remarkable human being sought to contend with some of the basic realities of human existence: mortality, loss, despair, the obligations of parenthood, and the frequently mysterious workings of providence. Before we examine the contents of the *Pious Meditations*, a brief introduction to Johannes Christoph Oelhafen is in order.

I. JOHANNES CHRISTOPH OELHAFEN (1574–1631)

Johannes Christoph Oelhafen was born in 1574 in the imperial city of Nuremberg to Johannes (Hans) Oelhafen (1520–1580) and Susanna Harsdörffer (1549–1621). Both the Oelhafens and the Harsdörffer were patrician families,²¹ although for a long time only the latter were considered *ratsfähig*, that is, worthy of serving on Nuremberg's Smaller Council (*der*

Autobiographie im 16. Jahrhundert (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1995). For studies of ego-documents from early modern Nuremberg, see the following: Steven Ozment, *Magdalena and Balthasar: An Intimate Portrait of Life in 16th-Century Europe Revealed in the Letters of a Nuremberg Husband and Wife* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); idem, *Three Behaim Boys: Growing Up in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); idem, *Flesh and Spirit: Private life in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Viking, 1999); and Matthias Beer, *Eltern und Kinder des späten Mittelalters in ihren Briefen: Familienleben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Nürnbergs (1400–1550)* (Nürnberg: Stadtarchiv Nürnberg, 1990).

²⁰On this goal, see Thomas Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2009), 630. On early modern confessionalization, see Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Confessionalization: The Career of a Concept," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, eds. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2004), 1–20; and Ute Lotz-Heumann, "Confessionalization," in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. David M. Whitford (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2008), 136–157.

²¹On the Oelhafen family, see NDB (1999), 19:437–439. For bibliographical information on the Hausdörffer and Oelhafen families, see Gunther Friedrich, *Bibliographie zum Patriziat der Reichsstadt Nürnberg* (Nürnberg: Selbstverlag des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg, 1994), 106–109 and 62–67. See also Michael Diefenbacher and Rudolf Endres, eds., *Stadtlexikon Nürnberg* (Nürnberg: W. Tümmels Verlag, 2000), 410–411, 776–777.

kleinere Rat), the real locus of political power in the imperial city. The Oelhafens did not receive this honor until 1729,²² most likely because they did not settle in Nuremberg until the late fifteenth century (1499). (The Oelhafens were from Nördlingen, having moved there in the fourteenth century from Zurich by way of Lauingen.)²³ Still, the Oelhafens were highly respected in the imperial city, owing especially to the efforts of Sixtus I (1466–1539),²⁴ the paternal grandfather of our Johannes Christoph. Sixtus worked as Chief Secretary (*oberster Sekretär/Secretarius*) and legal advisor (*Hof Rath*) at the imperial courts of Frederick III, Maximilian I, and Charles V. He was also a member (*Genannte*) of Nuremberg's Great Council (*der Grosse Rat*), which was occasionally convened by the Smaller Council to approve new taxes, declare war, and discuss matters relating to the city's safety.²⁵ It was Emperor Frederick III who raised the Oelhafens to the imperial nobility (1489) and presented Sixtus and his brother with an official coat of arms.²⁶ Sixtus also had the opportunity to meet Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521) and was favorably impressed by his person and teaching, although he was circumspect (at least initially) in his support of the reformer, likely for fear of imperial reprisal.²⁷ Sixtus married twice, in both cases proving himself worthy of a wife from a *ratsfähig* family, the Pfinzings and Rieters, respectively.²⁸ The father of our Johannes Christoph was born to Sixtus and his second wife, Barbara Rieter.

Hans Oelhafen left Nuremberg at the age of fourteen to study at the University of Wittenberg, where he was a table companion of Luther and Melancthon.²⁹ (Sixtus had apparently overcome his initial hesitation about declaring his support for Luther publicly.) From there Hans went to Tübingen to study law, and after traveling for a while,³⁰ he eventually became a judge in Nuremberg (1548).³¹ Like his father, Hans married twice:

²²See Christoph von Imhoff, ed., *Berühmte Nürnberger aus neun Jahrhunderten* (Nürnberg: Verlag Albert Hofmann, 1984), 66.

²³Other members of the Oelhafen family settled in Leipzig and Breslau. See Diefenbacher and Endres, *Stadtlexikon Nürnberg*, 776.

²⁴On Sixtus Oelhafen, see ADB 24:292–296, Imhoff, *Berühmte Nürnberger*, 65–66, and Friedrich, *Bibliographie zum Patriziat der Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, 107–108 (items 1000, 1003, 1006, 1007, 1008, and 1009).

²⁵On the structure of Nürnberg's civic government, see Rittgers, *Reformation of the Keys*, 14–18.

²⁶See Imhoff, *Berühmte Nürnberger*, 66. The coat of arms was improved after Sixtus's first marriage.

²⁷ADB 24:295.

²⁸Sixtus married Anna Pfinzing in 1501 (d. 1506) and Barbara Rieter in 1508.

²⁹ADB 24:295–296.

³⁰See Johannes Kamann, "Aus Hans Ölhafens Reisetagebuch (1541–1580)," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 5 (1884): 224–225. Hans Oelhafen's diary is in the GNM-HA, Rst. Nürnberg, Ölhafen/ 6, Nr. XVIII, Hans Ölhafens Tagebuch, 1541–1580.

³¹The Oelhafens were granted the ability to serve as judges (*Gerichtsfähigkeit*) in Nuremberg in 1546. See Imhoff, *Berühmte Nürnberger*, 66, and Diefenbacher and Endres, *Stadtlexikon Nürnberg*,

his first wife was Sybilla Paumgartner (d. 1566),³² with whom he had seven children; his second wife, whom he wed one year after Sybilla's death, was Susanna Harsdörffer, the mother of Johannes Christoph: the couple had six children altogether.³³ Hans died when Johannes Christoph was just five years old; Susanna never remarried.

Johannes Christoph began his education in a Latin school in Nuremberg and then, because of an outbreak of plague,³⁴ in 1586 he transferred to the academy in the town of Altdorf,³⁵ which is located twenty-five kilometers to the east of the Franconian city. He did extremely well at the academy, winning first prize in Latin and Greek. After spending five years in Altdorf, Oelhafen, following in his father's footsteps, went on to study law and also traveled extensively. His legal pursuits and *Wanderlust* took him to the Netherlands, Belgium, England, Italy,³⁶ Switzerland, Spain, and France. It was in France (Anjou) that he received the juristical licentiate degree.³⁷ It was also in France (Montpelier) that he had a close brush with death.³⁸ In May of 1599 a barber surgeon accidentally cut a major blood vessel and nerve in Oelhafen's arm while bleeding him. Oelhafen, who was twenty-four at the time, was convinced he was going to die and even prepared his own epitaph, instructing his traveling companion to make arrangements for his burial.³⁹ However, after six weeks of extreme pain and great expense, the appointed cures worked and he recovered sufficiently to return to Nuremberg. The experience made a lasting impression on him; he records in the *Pious Meditations* that he was still fearful of bloodletting some twenty years later.⁴⁰

776. In 1538, during Hans's period of study and travel, the Oelhafen family acquired Ober- and Unterschöllnbach (in 1538) from the family Rech von Rechenberg. From this point on the Oelhafens were known as the family Oelhafen von Schöllnbach. Imhoff, *Berühmte Nürnberger*, 66.

³²On the marriage of Hans and Sybilla, see Hans Bösch, "Verlobung und Verehelichung in Nürnberg im 16. Jahrhundert," *Mitteilungen des Germanischen Museums* (1893): 41–53.

³³Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvla CCCXLIV. On Susanna, see Tabvla CLVI.

³⁴*Familienbuch* (see note 2 above), fol. 314.

³⁵On the history of this academy, which began in Nuremberg owing to the efforts of Melancthon, and would evolve into the University of Altdorf, see Wolfgang Mährle, *Academica Norica. Wissenschaft und Bildung an der Nürnberger Hohen Schule in Altdorf (1575–1623)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 43–107; Klaus Leder, *Universität Altdorf: Zur Theologie der Aufklärung in Franken; Die theologische Fakultät in Altdorf, 1750–1809* (Nürnberg: Lorenz Spindler Verlag, 1965), 7–10; and Heinrich Kunstmann, *Die Nürnberger Universität Altdorf und Böhmen: Beiträge zur Erforschung der Ostbeziehungen deutscher Universitäten* (Köln and Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1963), 1–19.

³⁶At the University of Bologna Johannes Christoph received the honorary title of "Praeses nationis Germanicae." He received a similar honor while in Orleans. ADB 24:296.

³⁷ADB 24:296.

³⁸The fullest account of this event may be found in Apinus, *Vitae et Effigies*, 13–15.

³⁹Will, *Nürnbergisches Gelehrten-Lexicon*, 3:61.

⁴⁰*Piae Meditationes*, entry 29, 16 May.

In August of 1599 Oelhafen was nominated to be legal counsel (*Rechtskonsulent/ Consilarius*) for the imperial city.⁴¹ After further study at the imperial chamber court in Speyer and the successful defense of his dissertation in Basel, he earned the doctoral degree and then returned to Nuremberg to take up his post in the municipal and marriage courts. Not long thereafter, on May 25, 1601, he married Anna Maria (1582–1619), who, like his mother, was a Harsdörffer. (Johannes Christoph and Anna Mara were second cousins.)⁴² Despite the demands of Oelhafen's new career, which required frequent travel to princely courts and assemblies far beyond the walls of Nuremberg, it seems that Johannes Christoph and Anne Maria enjoyed a loving marriage, along with the blessings and woes of parenthood—they saw five of their thirteen children die in infancy.

According to one source, Oelhafen was an especially pious and theologically well-informed man who began and ended each day by reading scripture.⁴³ His impressive personal library contained a diverse array of theological works by authors such as John Cassian, Thomas Aquinas, Johannes Tauler, Desiderius Erasmus, Johannes Eck, Martin Luther, Philipp Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli, Urbanus Rhegius, Johannes Oecolampadius, John Calvin, Sebastian Castellio, Aegidius Hunnius, Robert Bellarmine, and Martin Becanus; the library also included the Formula of Concord and works on the Council of Trent.⁴⁴ While he nowhere states his position on the doctrinal debates of his day, there are important clues to suggest where Oelhafen's basic theological loyalties likely lay. Oelhafen was certainly a Protestant. As we have seen, his family had become enamored with Luther early on in the Reformation and it

⁴¹On the duties of a *Rechtskonsulent* in early modern Nuremberg, see Kunstmann, *Die Nürnberger Universität Altdorf und Böhmen*, 87. In brief, the task of the legal advisor was to prepare *Rechtsgutachten* or legal opinions (both written and oral) for the Smaller Council to consider on various matters. The legal advisor was not a member of the Smaller Council, something that was forbidden in Nuremberg, but his opinions typically exercised great influence over its policies. On the legal history of Nuremberg, see Gerhard Pfeiffer, ed., *Nürnberg-Geschichte einer europäischen Stadt* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1971), 171–176.

⁴²Anna Maria's paternal grandfather, Wolff I Harsdörffer (1502–1572), was the brother of Johannes Christoph's maternal grandfather, Christoph I Harsdörffer (1505–1578). On the Protestant effort to allow such a marriage, which would was forbidden by the church's traditional teaching on consanguinity, see Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 44–48. Anna Maria had five siblings, at least three of whom survived her. See Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvula CXLIX. Both of her parents predeceased her.

⁴³Sigmund Christoph von Oelhafen, *Zwei Reden zum Gedächtnis an die Prokanzler der Universität Altdorf*, 12.

⁴⁴See Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Handschriftenabteilung, Ms. 2436, fols. 60v, 127–131v. I am grateful to Frau Sigrid Kohlmann for providing me with a copy of the inventory of Oelhafen's non-judicial books housed in the manuscript library of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

even had ties with the leading reformers in Wittenberg.⁴⁵ We also know that Oelhafen urged the Nuremberg city council to support the Protestant cause in the early stages of the Thirty Years, War, albeit unsuccessfully.⁴⁶ There is no indication that Oelhafen shared the Bohemians' Calvinist leanings, although there were certainly those in the imperial city who did.⁴⁷ In the late sixteenth century the civic and religious leaders of Nuremberg promoted a moderate form of Lutheranism that looked to Melanchthon as its guide; Altdorf, where Oelhafen studied, was similarly Philippist in theological orientation,⁴⁸ and we know that Johannes Christoph had heard lectures on Melanchthon's theology during his early years of study in Nuremberg.⁴⁹ The theological climate of Nuremberg and Altdorf began to change in the early seventeenth century when a more conservative version of Lutheranism emerged, owing in large part to the efforts of Johannes Saubert (1592–1646), who sought to purge Philippism (and Socinianism) from this region of Franconia—Saubert clearly had an influence on Oelhafen.⁵⁰

Saubert was born in Altdorf and had studied at its academy, having been especially influenced by the Orthodox theologian Jakob Schopper who taught there. He came into contact with other Orthodox theologians at Tübingen (Lucas Osiander, Matthias Hafenreffer, Johann Valentin Andreae), eventually making his way to Jena, where he studied with Johann Gerhard (1582–1637). The two developed a close relationship in which Gerhard shared with Saubert his deep admiration for the devotional writings of Johann Arndt (1555–1621).⁵¹ Arndt was a Protestant mystic of sorts who stressed the importance of repentance in the Christian life along with the reality of the believer's union with Christ through faith and baptism; one sees these distinctive emphases especially in the enormously popular *Four*

⁴⁵The Oelhafen coat of arms may still be seen on the wall of one of the rooms in Melanchthon's home in Wittenberg. Hans Oelhafen likely had it painted there.

⁴⁶See Kunstmann, *Die Nürnberger Universität Altdorf und Böhmen*, 134. On the place of Nuremberg in the Thirty Years, War, see Pfeiffer, *Nürnberg-Geschichte einer europäischen Stadt*, 265–279.

⁴⁷On the presence of Calvinism in the officially Lutheran Nuremberg, along with a resurgent Catholicism and various forms of Spiritualism, see Pfeiffer, *Nürnberg-Geschichte einer europäischen Stadt*, 279–283.

⁴⁸Mährle, *Academia Norica*, 483.

⁴⁹*Familienbuch*, fol. 313.

⁵⁰On Saubert, see Richard van Dülmen, *Orthodoxie und Kirchenreform: Der Nürnberger Prediger Johannes Saubert (1592–1646)* (München: Beck, 1970); ADB 30:413–415; and NDB 22:447–448.

⁵¹On the close friendship between Gerhard and Saubert, see van Dülmen, *Orthodoxie und Kirchenreform*, 646. See also Wolfgang Sommer, "Johann Sauberts Eintreten für Johann Arndt im Dienst einer Erneuerung der Frömmigkeit," in *Politik, Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Luthertum der Frühen Neuzeit. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 243.

Book of True Christianity (1610).⁵² Saubert was a devotee of both Orthodox Lutheranism and Arndtian-style spiritual renewal, and he sought to spread them in Nuremberg and its surrounding environs.⁵³ He ministered first as a preacher and theologian in Altdorf, and then moved to Nuremberg in 1622, eventually becoming one of the most influential clergymen in the imperial city. Oelhafen knew Saubert and must have had a fairly close relationship with him: Johannes Christoph showed his *Pious Meditations* to the Altdorf preacher, who was deeply impressed by its contents. Affixed to the first page of Oelhafen's work is a slip of paper with a hand-written Latin inscription praising the deep faith that Oelhafen displays in the *Pious Meditations*; the slip of paper is signed by Saubert.⁵⁴ We thus have good reason to believe that Oelhafen was sympathetic to Saubert's version of Lutheran Christianity when he composed the *Pious Meditations*, although we cannot know if he agreed with Saubert on every point.⁵⁵

Oelhafen was a bibliophile;⁵⁶ by the end of his life his personal library contained some 1,900 works. (After his death the majority of these works made their way to the library of the University of Altdorf—the academy was raised to the level of university in 1622—and later to the library of the

⁵²For a treatment of Gerhard along with a general overview of mysticism in the late Reformation, see Johann Anselm Steiger, *Johann Gerhard (1582–1637): Studien zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit des Kirchenvaters der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997), chapter 1, especially pp. 54–89. On Arndt, see Martin Schmidt, “Arndt, Johann (1555–1621),” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 4:121–29, and Johannes Wallmann, “Reflexionen und Bemerkungen zur Frömmigkeitskrise des 17. Jahrhunderts,” in *Krisen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Manfred Jakobowski-Tiessen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 25–42. For a facsimile edition of Arndt's famous work, see Johann Anselm Steiger, ed., *Johann Arndt: Vier Bücher von wahren Christenthumb, Die erste Gesamtausgabe (1610)*, 3 vols. (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007).

⁵³Van Dülmen writes, “Der bekannteste und erste Förderer Arndtscher Frömmigkeit war in Nürnberg Johannes Saubert” (*Orthodoxie und Kirchenreform*, 718). See also Sommer, “Johann Sauberts Eintreten für Johann Arndt im Dienst einer Erneuerung der Frömmigkeit.”

⁵⁴The inscription reads in full:

“Tuta via est alibi, per AMICI fallere
nomen;
Hic sed AMICO etiam fidere,
tuta via est.
O' raras Fidei rarae tabulas! In
AMICO HOC
OLHAFIUS qvis sit, discimus,
et quid amet.”

⁵⁵Saubert wrote a work of devotion in 1619 that could have influenced Oelhafen, but it does not appear to be extant: *Schola crucis oder christliche kreutzschule*. On Saubert's later importance in the production of devotional literature (and images) for lay ministry to the sick and dying, see Beppler, “Practicing Piety,” 21.

⁵⁶See note 7 above. Under Oelhafen's name on the opening epitaph there is a Latin motto that stresses his love of his wife and his books: “DILECTISS. EIVS CONIVG. ET LIBERORVM.”

University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, where they are still housed.) These volumes dealt not only with theology and jurisprudence, but also with history, politics, philosophy, and natural science, among other topics.⁵⁷ Oelhafen owned works by Cicero, Plutarch, Petrarch, Marsilius of Padua, Boccaccio, Bruni, Machiavelli, Lipsius, and Galileo, to name but a few. His book collection contained little in the way of consolation literature, although it is quite clear from the *Pious Meditations* that Oelhafen was familiar with this literature and its long history.⁵⁸

The *Pious Meditations* shares many of the assumptions and deploys many of the rhetorical devices that were common in the consolation literature of early modern Lutheran Germany,⁵⁹ including the literature written by the bereaved for themselves and others—Oelhafen was by no means alone in this endeavor.⁶⁰ Oelhafen understands the consoling effects of writing, an insight that goes back to Seneca.⁶¹ He especially understands the solace one can gain from the writing (and singing) of poetry and hymns.⁶² According to one source, Oelhafen was in the regular habit of composing his own hymns and prayers,⁶³ and so it was only natural that he would employ these talents as he sought to contend with his grief—he adapts standard Lutheran hymns to

⁵⁷The relevant entries in the ADB and Will, *Nürnbergisches Gelehrten-Lexicon*, set the number of volumes at 1040, while the most recent work shows that Oelhafen had amassed 1900 works bound in 1400 volumes or more. See Gunda Werner and Eleonore Schmidt-Herrling, *Die Bibliotheken der Universität Altdorf* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1937), 34–35. A more recent source sets the number of volumes at “1500 Bde Rechtsliteratur.” See Eberhard Dünninger, ed., *Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände in Deutschland*, vol. 11 (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1997), 263, section 1.19. However, it is clear that Oelhafen’s library contained more than jurisprudence. These statistics are based on the number of volumes belonging to Oelhafen that wound up in the library of the University of Altdorf. As noted above, this library eventually came to be housed in the library of the University of Erlangen after the school in Altdorf was closed in 1809.

⁵⁸See Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Handschriftenabteilung, Ms. 2436, fols. 60v, 127–131v. On the ancient and medieval consolation tradition, see Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 2. Oelhafen cites Boethius at one point in the *Pious Meditations* (6 January, 1620), but there are no other direct references to the Christian consolation tradition. Oelhafen owned a work by Julius Caesar Scaliger—his *Vita*—but not the influential *Poetices libri septem*, which in Book III, ch. cxxiii, codified ancient consolation conventions. On the significance of this work, see Anna Carrdus, *Classical Rhetoric and the German Poet 1620 to the Present: A Study of Opitz, Bürger and Eichendorff* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 1996), 29.

⁵⁹On this literature, see Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*; Carrdus, *Classical Rhetoric and the German Poet*; idem, “‘Thränen = Tüchlein für Christliche Eltern’: Consolation Books for Bereaved Parents in Sixteenth- und Seventeenth-Century Germany,” *German Life and Letters* XLIX:1 (January 1996): 1–17; and idem, “Consolatory Dialogue in Devotional Writings by Men and Women of Early Modern Protestant Germany,” *The Modern Language Review* 93 (1998): 411–427.

⁶⁰On this literature, see Carrdus, “Consolatory Dialogue,” 414.

⁶¹See Carrdus, “Consolatory Dialogue,” 414.

⁶²See Carrdus, “Consolatory Dialogue,” 414, and Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*, 98.

⁶³See Sigmund Christoph von Oelhafen, *Zwei Reden zum Gedächtnis an die Prokanzler der Universität Altdorf*, 12.

his own consolatory purposes in the *Pious Meditations* and records that he would sing these hymns with his children.⁶⁴ Oelhafen makes use of *apostrophe* (a speech directed to an absent being), *prosopopoeia* (the introduction of speech from a deceased or divine being), and also *dialogismus* (dialogue between two or more beings that constitutes a miniature drama).⁶⁵ In fact, Oelhafen combines these rhetorical figures when he constructs a fictitious dialogue between himself and his deceased wife in the *Pious Meditations*.⁶⁶ He also employs acrostics.⁶⁷ All of this was typical in the consolation literature produced by the educated classes in early modern Lutheran Germany; in fact, it was typical of burgher family life, although we should not assume that every burgher possessed Oelhafen's skill as a consoler, nor even his remarkable faith. Still, early modern families were quite adept at consolation; parents like Oelhafen were in the regular habit of teaching their children how to face death and how to grieve.⁶⁸ As Anna Carrdus explains, "the traditional consolatory forms and remedies were an integral part of an Early Modern family's day-to-day emotional and spiritual life . . . they helped both parents and children to contain their fear and grief at times of almost unbearable crisis."⁶⁹ Carrdus emphasizes the role of the arts in helping families exercise this vital ministry of mutual consolation.⁷⁰

Oelhafen shares another important characteristic with much of the early modern Lutheran consolation literature, especially the literature dealing with grief: he gives rather full rein to his feelings of loss and despair in the *Pious Meditations*; he does not seek to suppress or control them through natural reason as neo-Stoics like Lipsius recommended.⁷¹ To be sure, Oelhafen heeds the Apostle Paul's warning that Christians must not mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13), but this concern does not prevent him from expressing his deep grief, even as he seeks to hold onto his faith in the Resurrection. Oelhafen would have fully agreed with the judgment made by

⁶⁴See Carrdus, "Consolatory Dialogue," 419.

⁶⁵For a discussion of these and other rhetorical figures and their use in early modern Lutheran consolation literature, see Carrdus, "Consolatory Dialogue," 415.

⁶⁶For parallels in other sources, see Carrdus, "'Thränen = Tüchlein für Christliche Eltern,'" 12–14; idem, "Consolatory Dialogue," 420–421; and Bepler, "Practicing Piety," 23.

⁶⁷For other examples, see Carrdus, "Consolatory Dialogue," 417, 419; and Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*, 79–85.

⁶⁸Carrdus, "'Thränen = Tüchlein für Christliche Eltern,'" 11.

⁶⁹Ibid., 15.

⁷⁰Carrdus, "Consolatory Dialogue," 414.

⁷¹Oelhafen did not own Lipsius's *On Consolation*. For the place of this work in the Lutheran consolation tradition, see Carrdus, *Classical Rhetoric and the German Poet 1620*, 47, and Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*, 187. For a discussion of the work's general influence in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see John Sellars, ed., *Justus Lipsius, On Constancy: De Constantia translated by Sir John Stradling (1595)* (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix, 2006), introduction.

the Lutheran pastor Georg Walther in his *Consolation Booklet* (1559; Nuremberg, 1600) regarding those who disallowed grief for Christians: they are bestial (*viehisches*).⁷² Candor about spiritual and emotional suffering was a hallmark of Lutheran consolation literature in the early modern period, something that can be traced back to Luther himself, who was certainly forthright about his own inner turmoil.⁷³

What separates the *Pious Meditations* from much of the other consolation literature of the period is that it was not intended for publication. We have helpful studies of early modern Lutheran funerary material,⁷⁴ along with works dealing more generally with the Lutheran *ars moriendi* tradition,⁷⁵ and with consolation literature that was not immediately associated with death and dying,⁷⁶ all of which provides important context for Oelhafen's work. But these sources were all printed and were therefore produced—in some cases by the most talented preachers and poets of the day—with a fairly large audience in mind. Scholars have uncovered manuscript works of consolation, which, like the *Pious Meditations*, were intended for a limited audience and were then passed down within families. Jill Bepler discusses how noblewomen would create their own prayer books that were filled with quotations from scripture and contemporary works of devotion.⁷⁷ Oelhafen's work is similar to these private prayer books in terms of its form and intended audience, but it differs from them in that it was not produced by a member of the landed aristocracy, and it is not simply a compilation of consoling sayings found in other sources that includes some of the author's own commentary—the prayers, poems, hymns (though not

⁷²Georg Walther, *Trostbüchlein aus der heiligen Schrift und D. Martini Lutheri Bücher* (1573, Nuremberg), fol. Q6v. Cited in Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*, 29.

⁷³Luther's candor was influenced by his reading of German mystics such as Johannes Tauler and the anonymous *Theologia Deutsch*. See Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 4. Johann Anselm Steiger has linked such candor in the Lutheran consolation literature to Luther's unique Christology, according to which the divine nature of Christ participated in His suffering in a way that was without precedent in the Christian tradition. Steiger maintains that the belief that God Himself—and not just Christ's human nature—participated in the Passion of the God-Man both consoled early modern Lutherans and encouraged the development of an affectivity that was unique in early modern Christianity. See Johann Anselm Steiger, "Zorn Gottes, Leiden Christi und die Affekte der Passionbetrachtung bei Luther und im Luthertum des 17. Jahrhunderts," in *Passion, Affekt und Leidenschaft in der Frühenneuzeit*, ed. Johann Anselm Steiger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 1:179–201. For a critical though appreciative response to this argument, see Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 8.

⁷⁴See the works of Cornelia Niekus Moore, Jill Bepler, Anna Carrdus, and Anna Linton cited above.

⁷⁵See Resch, *Trost im Angesicht des Todes*, and Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007).

⁷⁶See Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling*, and Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*.

⁷⁷Bepler, "Practicing Piety," 16–17. See also, idem, "Enduring Loss and Memorializing Women: The Cultural Role of Dynastic Widows in Early Modern Germany," in *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 131–60, see especially 142–43.

the tunes), and devotional reflections that comprise the *Pious Meditations* are the work of Oelhafen alone.⁷⁸ To my knowledge, there is nothing quite like Oelhafen's book in the extant early modern consolation literature.

II. PIOUS MEDITATIONS ON THE MOST SORROWFUL BEREAVEMENT

The *Pious Meditations* contains seventy-five vernacular entries followed by three Latin entries; most entries are a couple of pages long. Oelhafen dated each entry and also numbered the German ones: the vernacular entries run from February 13, 1619 to December 31, 1619, while the first two Latin entries are dated January 1 and 6, 1620, and the third, June 8, 1628. It is not clear when Oelhafen produced the *Pious Meditations* in its final form, although it is quite obvious that he took great care in its creation and hoped that it would survive for generations to come. As we have seen, its pages are gilded vellum and it is bound in red leather. In addition to the inscription by Saubert, which appears on the first page, early on there is also a color portrait of Oelhafen by the well-known Nuremberg artist Lorenz Strauch (1554–1630).⁷⁹ (Unfortunately, there is no portrait of Anna Maria). This is followed by an ink drawing of Oelhafen's projected epitaph—Johannes Christoph and Anna Maria are depicted in a posture of prayer flanked by their thirteen children; those who have died appear with a cross over their heads. Later on the book includes an image of "Lady Patience." Both this image and the epitaph bear the date 1619, but it seems unlikely that Oelhafen completed his *Pious Meditations* in the year of Anna Maria's death. The dates of the first two Latin entries militate against this possibility—the third is almost certainly a later addition—as does the fact that Oelhafen had given Saubert time to read the *Pious Meditations* in full. It is more likely that Oelhafen completed his work on the book—minus the final Latin entry—shortly after the first two Latin entries, that is, some time in late January or early February 1620, probably before the one-year anniversary of Anna Maria's death on February 13.⁸⁰ The entries are for the most part highly polished, although now and again there are signs of small

⁷⁸It is possible that portions of the *Pious Meditations* were included in funerary material dedicated to Anna Maria, although there is no record of such material in any of the relevant archives or libraries.

⁷⁹Strauch produced portraits of many Nuremberg patricians and also completed paintings of important buildings and locations within the imperial city itself. On Strauch, see ADB 36 (1893): 531; Hannshubert Mahn, *Lorenz und Georg Strauch. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Nürnbergs im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Reutlingen: Gryphius-verlag, 1927); Wilhelm Schwemmer, "Lorenz Strauch," *Fränkische Lebensbilder*, vol. 4 (1971): 186–195; and Matthias Mende, "Zwei Lorenz Strauch (1554–1630) zugeschriebene Zeichnungen zur Nürnberger Topographie Band," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 71 (1984): 178–185.

⁸⁰See below for further discussion of this proposed date.

revisions and mistakes. Oelhafen may have first composed and reworked the entries elsewhere before copying them down on vellum pages, or he may have simply written them directly on the costly material. The entries appear to be authentic, that is, there is every reason to believe that Oelhafen composed them throughout the course of the year following Anna Maria's death, rather than creating them some time afterward and belatedly assigning dates and events to them. (He refers throughout to feast and fast days in the Christian calendar and also to events in his own life and that of Nuremberg and the German lands.) The *Pious Meditations* was Oelhafen's attempt to assuage his grief and to find consolation through writing, artistic composition, and prayer in the period of darkness following Anna Maria's death; he needed such solace every day.

Johannes Christoph does not tell us the cause of Anna Maria's death in the *Pious Meditations*. However, in a diary that he began keeping a couple of years after her passing he reveals that it was a stroke that finally claimed her in the thirty-sixth year of her life.⁸¹ Oelhafen records that on February 10 Anna Maria had thrown up bile through the whole night. This continued over the next two days. Then, around midnight on February 13, after more vomiting, her pulse gradually faded, as did her strength. She began to grow cold and to slip away. Still, she was able to speak to her husband one last time: "Oh darling, help me just once more out of this torment!" (*Ach schatz, hilf mir noch Einmal, auß dieser qual!*) Thirty minutes later she suffered a stroke. Oelhafen records that Anna Maria died peacefully in his arms at 12:45 AM.⁸² We do not know what caused the violent sickness that Oelhafen describes in his diary. It may have had something to do with the cumulative effects of Anna Maria having born thirteen children in eighteen years of marriage, the last of which came just months before her death. We simply know that Oelhafen was devastated by the loss of his *AMICO*—this was his pet name for Anna Maria, a neologism composed of an acrostic of their joint initials intended to convey the deep union that he believed existed between them: Anne Maria

⁸¹"Endlich, richtet sie, Ein schläglein, gar dahin," GNM-HA, Rep. II/80, Nr. 36 Diarium. Familiare et Domesticum Generale, 13 Oktober, 1619. The diary begins from Oelhafen's birth in 1574 and goes to 1622. However, it is not organized like a typical diary, going day by day and year by year. It is organized around each day of each of the twelve months of the year. That is, it begins with January 1, and lists everything of significance that happened on this day in each of the years under consideration in this book (1574–1622), and then proceeds to January 2, and so on. There are many blank pages between the twelve sections (corresponding to the twelve months); Oelhafen was obviously leaving room for additional entries.

⁸²See the entries for 10, 11, 12, and 13 February in Oelhafen's *Diarium*. Oelhafen records that Anna Marie died in his arms in entry 32 (25 May, verse 6) of the *Pious Meditations*.

Johannes Christoph Oelhafen.⁸³ He records in his diary that immediately after her death he began to compose a prayer of consolation.⁸⁴

This prayer, which is the first in the *Pious Meditations*, clearly expresses Oelhafen's deep sense of loss, along with his desire for consolation and reunion with his beloved:

O living God and Consoler of all the sad-hearted, I have lost my dearest treasure on earth, for you have torn away a piece of my heart. You gave her to me and let me have her for eighteen years; now you have taken her again to yourself out of this miserable existence as your dear child, because she knew your Son and called to Him from her heart as her Bridegroom in the middle of death's despair. Console me, a sad and miserable widower, and help me to bear my suffering and to rear up my small children. According to your divine will, send a blessed final hour so that I and those who belong to me may come together with her and be near her before your face in new joy and eternal love. May you, who can bring eternal joy and pleasure out of suffering, be highly praised in all eternity. Amen.⁸⁵

In addition to Oelhafen's grief, we also see in this initial entry his great concern for his children. In the second entry, dated February 14, he prays that God will grant him good health and length of days so that he can parent his children well and thus satisfy (*genug thun möge*) Anna Maria's hopes and wishes, which she no doubt expressed to him before her death. (Oelhafen records at the end of this prayer that his AMICO was placed in a coffin on this day.)⁸⁶

It is also quite clear from the first entry that Oelhafen thought that God had taken Anna Maria from him; God was sovereign over this and all other events in his life. As Johannes Christoph asserts in a later entry, "Affliction cannot exist in this life without the will and counsel of God" (*Creutz kan nicht sein auf Erden, ohn Gottes will vnd Rhat*).⁸⁷ Why had God deprived him of his "most beloved treasure on earth," why had the Almighty so afflicted him? Oelhafen thought it was because of his sin (although this was not his only

⁸³I am grateful to Jill Bepler for drawing my attention to this acrostic.

⁸⁴See entry for 14 February in Oelhafen's *Diarium*.

⁸⁵"O lebendiger Gott, unndt Tröster aller betrübten: Ich habe meinen liebsten schatz auf Erden verloren: dann du hast mir ein stuckh von meinem herten weggerißen: du hast sie mir geben, unndt 18 Jahr Lang gelassen: auch nun wider, zue dir, auß dießem Elendt, alß dein liebes Kindt genommen, wil sie deinen Sohn Erkandt, unndt, mitten in der todten angst, alß ihren Brautigam, hertzlich, angerufen hatt. Tröste mich, Traurig unndt Elenden witber, unndt hilf mir mein Laid tragen, auch meine kleine kinderlein erziehen: unndt schickh, nach deinem Göttlichen willen, ein seeliges stündtlein; das ich, unndt die meinen, fur deinem angesicht, mit unndt neben ihr, in newer frewd unndt ewiger lieb, zusammen kommen, der du, auß Laid, Ewiger freudt, unndt wollgefallen machen kanst, hochgelobt in alle Ewigkeit. Amen." *Piae Meditationes*, entry 1, 13 February.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, entry 2, 14 February.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, entry 51, 22 August, verse 2.

explanation).⁸⁸ In his prayer from February 14, Oelhafen beseeches God to remove His “great rod of wrath” (*große Zorn Ruthe*) from him and his family.⁸⁹ A number of entries reveal the same desire for cessation of divine wrath and take the form of confessions of sin. Oelhafen believed that through repentance God would cease to be a “strict Judge” to him and instead be a “loving Father of mercy.”⁹⁰ In the entry for February 28, Oelhafen confesses to God, “you are certainly justified in everything that you have brought upon me; you have acted justly, because I have been godless and have not lived according to your law nor given heed to your commandment and testimony.”⁹¹ Elsewhere he refers to himself as an unworthy servant who owes God 10,000 pounds (cf. Luke 19:12–27, Luther Bible) and who deserves God’s punishment 10,000 times over.⁹² Oelhafen does not reveal any specific sin that might have moved God to chastise him so severely, not even in the entries that he composed during Lent in preparation for private confession;⁹³ he focuses not on his sins but on his general sinfulness. He also stresses that only God can provide the needed forgiveness and consolation, something he similarly asserts in his initial entry.

And so Oelhafen turned to God and God alone for solace.⁹⁴ Four days after Anna Maria’s death, as a wagon carried her coffin to the cemetery, Johannes Christoph composed a poem that expressed this absolute dependence upon God.

When I consider my misery,
and cast my eyes here and there,
All help and consolation from people and the wide world
fail me.

⁸⁸Oelhafen writes that the knowledge that his wife’s death was divine punishment for his sin “frißet und naget sich mein hertz” (eats away and chews at my heart). *Ibid.*, entry 8, 21 March. See below for how Oelhafen could offer other explanations for his loss.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, entry 2, 14 February.

⁹⁰One sees this view of God in the opening sentence of entry 37, 20 June: “Allmechtiger ewiger Gott, der du zugleich bist ein strenger Richter der unbußfertigen, unndt auch ein liebereicher Vater der barmhertzigkeit, gegen den, so ihre Sunde berewen.”

⁹¹“du [i.e., God] bist zwar gerecht an allem, das du uber mich gebracht, dann du hast recht getan, dieweil ich gottloß geweßen, unndt habe nicht nach deinen gesetz gethan, auch nicht acht gehabt auf deine gebott unndt zeugnuß.” *Ibid.*, entry 5, 28 February.

⁹²“Ach, du Ewiger Gott, Ich bin der Knecht, der dir 10 tausent pfundt schuldig: Ich muß laider bekennen, das Ich deinen Zorn unndt straf, 10/m. mahl verdient.” *Ibid.*, entry 61, 24 October. See also entries 6 (7 March), 10 (24 March), and 52 (24 August, verse 3) for similar confessions of sin.

⁹³*Ibid.*, entry 9, 23 March, and entry 10, 24 March.

⁹⁴In a later entry (53, verse 6, 29 August) Oelhafen asserts that God wishes to be humanity’s sole helper:

“dann Gott allein
will helfer sein.”

But you, the true and merciful God,
 help me, because urgent help is necessary.
 If you do not provide counsel and salvation,
 I will soon die too.
 If you do not take away this burden,
 my heart will have neither peace nor rest.
 O Father, regard my sighs and tears with grace,
 so that I can
 endure this heavy hardship
 into which my wife's death has plunged me.
 If your helpful hand would only extend
 a small finger, there would be nothing to fear.
 I would be wholly strong, calm, and healthy,
 and would have peace and rest at the same hour.
 It is the merit and great beneficence of your Son
 by which He redeemed us
 that I seek and desire from the heart
 and humbly grasp in faith.⁹⁵

The mention of faith in the merit of Christ in the final lines of this poem reveals the vital connection that Oelhafen saw between the Lutheran doctrine of

⁹⁵“Wan ich behertzig mein Elendt,
 unndt mein Augen hin und her wendt,
 Von Menschen unndt der weiten welt,
 Mir alle hülff und Trost entfellt:
 Aber du Trew Barmhertziger Gott,
 hilf mir, dann Eilend hülff ist Not:
 wo du nit schafst Rhat unndt heil,
 werdt Ich gar bald den Todt zu thail:
 wo du nit wegnimbst diese Last,
 hat mein hertz weder rhue noch Rast.
 Ach vatter, sihe mitt gnaden an,
 mein seuffzen und weinen, das ich kan,
 außstehen diese schwere not,
 darein mich stürztz meins Ehegemahl Todt.
 So dein hülffreich hand nur reicht dar,
 Ein fingerlein, hats kein gefahr,
 Ich werdt gantz starckh, rhuig und gesundt,
 haben fried unndt Rast zur selben stundt.
 deins Sohns verdienst und groß wolthat,
 damit Er unß Erlöset hat,
 Such unndt beger Ich hertzliglich,
 unndt faß im glabuen demutiglich.”
 Ibid., entry 3, 17 February.

justification by faith and his ability to face suffering with hope and confidence. Johannes Christoph believed that as long as he could be certain of forgiveness through divine grace, he could contend with tribulation, no matter how severe, for such knowledge would provide him with the assurance that he thought he most needed, namely, that God was still good and merciful, especially toward him and his family.⁹⁶ Again and again Oelhafen prays that God will have mercy on him and his family and cover them with Christ's righteousness, especially at the Last Judgment.⁹⁷

The merit that Christ won for humanity not only provided Oelhafen with hope in the face of divine chastisement, it also relieved him of the need (and the opportunity) of seeing his suffering as in some way salvific. As he observed in a later entry, the only merit he could offer to God was the merit of the cross, Christ's cross,⁹⁸ not his own. Oelhafen never sees his suffering as meritorious in the *Pious Meditations*, an important difference with the Roman Catholic tradition of Oelhafen's day, which taught that suffering could help to atone for the penalty of sin.⁹⁹ Johannes Christoph believed that he had to bear his suffering patiently, but not because it would atone for his sins. The only way he could "satisfy" God was through faith.¹⁰⁰

It is clear from the *Pious Meditations* that faith did not always come easily to the grieving Oelhafen. In another entry he compares himself to doubting Thomas and confesses his lack of faith.¹⁰¹ In such instances Oelhafen turns to biblical promises of divine goodness and mercy for solace. He consoles himself with the promise that God will not discard the broken reed, that is, the weak in

⁹⁶Later in the work Oelhafen prays that God will help him to avoid seeing Anna Maria's death simply as "ein Zeichen der ungenaden" but rather a sign of God's "väterlichen liebs naigung." *Ibid.*, entry 33, 26 May. See discussion below.

⁹⁷Oelhafen implores God to see him and his family "mit den augen deiner barmherzigkeit." *Ibid.*, entry 2, 14 December, and entry 4, 21 February. In entry 61 (24 October) he prays to be "beklaidet mit deinem [Christ's] verdienst," and in entry 66 (21 November) he asks God to clothe His bride worthily "mit der gerechtigkeit deines whürdigsten Sohns gehorsambs" at the Last Judgment.

⁹⁸"Barmhertziger Ewiger gütiger Gott, ich habe ja kein ander vertrauen, hofnung unndt zuflucht, kan mich auch keines andern rhumen, dann das du, fur mich geboren, gestorben, unndt, insonderheit von den Todten wideraufstanden, unndt gehn himmel gefahren bist . . . wann du nun, verdienst von mir forderst, so bringe ich dir herfur, das verdienst deines allerheiligste laidens, das verdienst deines creutzes, unndt das verdienst deines todes." *Ibid.*, entry 26, 6 May.

⁹⁹Both the canons of the Council of Trent and the Roman Catechism insist that suffering can function as a penance for sin, and Trent anathematizes those who disagree. Norman P. Tanner, S.J., Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio XIV, Cap. IX, Canon XII, Canon XIII, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), II:709, lines 35–41; II:713, lines 13–26. See also Robert I. Bradley, S.J., and Eugene Kevane, trans. and eds., *The Roman Catechism* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1985), part 2, chapter 4, Penance, 75 "Sufferings as Satisfaction," 294.

¹⁰⁰"Sintemahl, du ein herr, uber alles bist, was ist dann, im Rest, darmit ich dir satisfaction geben könnte? Ach, anderst nichts, als mein glaubiges hertz." *Piae Meditationes*, entry 61, 24 October.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, entry 72, 21 December.

faith (Is. 42:3, Mt. 12: 20).¹⁰² In one entry he states that although he feels utterly abandoned and his children are now motherless, God's unique work is to have mercy.¹⁰³ In another entry he asserts that God is like a mother hen who protects and does not forget her chicks.¹⁰⁴ In still another he insists that God only sends affliction for good ends.¹⁰⁵ As we have seen, such assertions of divine goodness were essential to Oelhafen's sense of consolation, and one can see him seeking to persuade himself and his children of their veracity again and again in the midst of their collective despair.

The hymns that Oelhafen revises and composes in the *Pious Meditations* especially convey the depth of both his grief and his resolve to look to God alone for consolation.¹⁰⁶ For example, in Oelhafen's version of *All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall* (*Durch Adams fall ist gantz verderbt*), he conveys the sola-Christus nature of his piety:

Before you alone Lord Jesus Christ
I now lament my hardship.
You are rich in consolation and help;
Do not allow me to despair.
In you alone stands my hope;
Give to me, Lord, your grace,
so that I may be obedient to you
and so that this cross will not harm me.¹⁰⁷ (verse 1)

It is the "alones" that are so striking in this verse. Christ alone is Oelhafen's source of consolation as he bears his cross. The substance of this Christocentric consolation was the conviction that Christ had died for sinners, who through faith were delivered from hell, forgiven their sins, and made heirs of eternal life. As we have seen, Oelhafen thought that the way to deal with suffering and grief was to remind himself continually of the mercy God had shown to humanity in Christ and then to draw solace from this knowledge,

¹⁰²Ibid., entry 6, 7 March.

¹⁰³Ibid., entry 8, 21 March.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., entry 9, 23 March.

¹⁰⁵"Creutz neben frewdt, hatt unß Gott zu guetem Endt gegeben." Ibid., entry 52, 25 July.

¹⁰⁶For a reference to other early modern Lutherans who did the same, see Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 118.

¹⁰⁷"Allein fur dir herr Ihesu christ,
Thue ich mein not itzt clagen,
Reich du von trost und hulfe bist,
Laß mich ja nicht verzagen:
In dich mein hofnung steht allein
Gib mir herr dein Genade,
das ich dir mög gehorsamb sein,
unndt mir diß creutz nicht schade." *Piae Meditationes*, entry 15, 25 March, verse 1.

ever thanking God for His grace.¹⁰⁸ Oelhafen thought that Germans had received a special measure of divine grace and were therefore uniquely privileged in the divine economy of salvation; they were God's special people, his "Evangelisch volk," whom God had bought with a heavy price, Christ Himself. Oelhafen asks God several times in the *Pious Meditations* to protect His Chosen Ones in the battles with Catholic forces that were taking place in 1619, the early stages of the Thirty Years War.¹⁰⁹

In another hymn, written in early May, Oelhafen observes that the coming of spring has brought only suffering instead of the usual joy and refreshment.¹¹⁰ In an interesting move for someone with Oelhafen's humanist training, he insists that time, the great boon to grief-stricken souls in classical consolation literature, cannot remove his cross, which only seems to grow heavier as the weeks and months pass. Seneca had referred to time as the "Great Healer,"¹¹¹ but Oelhafen, who likely knew the *Consolation to Marcia* (even though he did not own it), disagreed. This conviction, along with Oelhafen's intended audience—in the first place, his children—helps to explain why there are no references to works of consolation from classical antiquity, whether Christian or pagan. There is one brief quotation from Boethius, who drew heavily on such works, but that is it.¹¹² The primary and nearly exclusive source for Oelhafen's work is scripture, which he quotes frequently, in many cases providing book and chapter references in the margins. There are no non-biblical references in the margins, a rather striking commentary on Oelhafen's piety and the sources to which he felt he could turn and trust in his hour of greatest need.¹¹³ As a Lutheran spiritual knight, Oelhafen outfitted himself first and foremost (and nearly exclusively) with scripture, which, as Steiger has shown, is exactly what Lutheran pastors wanted.

Perhaps the most moving entry in Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations* is the 10-stanza poem he composed on the occasion of his wedding anniversary, May

¹⁰⁸ "Ich danckhe dir, nun abermals, hertzallerlibester himmelischer vatter, von gantzem hertzen, das du mich meinen lieben AMICO, Kinderlein, unndt alle Menschen, also lieb gehabt hast, das du deines Einigen Sohns, unßers herren unndt heilandts Ihesu christi . . . fur unß, unndt alle Menschen, in den Todt, gegeben hast, auf das, wir unndt alle guthertzige christen, so an ihm glauben, nit ewig verdambt wurden, sonder vergebung hetten, aller unserer sunden, und das ewige leben. Verlihe, hertzliebter vater, das wir solcher wollthat, nummermehr vergeßen, sondern unß deren, in lieb unndt laid, es gehe uns woll oder ubel, zur iederzeit, trösten unndt frewen, zugleich auch darfur, von nun an, biß in ewigkeit, danckhen. Amen." *Ibid.*, entry 31, 23 May.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, entries 35 (6 June), 37 (20 June), and 40 (27 June).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, entry 24, 1 May.

¹¹¹ Seneca, "Consolatione ad Marciam," *Seneca: Moral Essays*, with an English Translation by John W. Basore, 3 vols., vol. II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 6:2; pp. 20 (Latin), 21 (English).

¹¹² See the Latin entry dated 6 January 1620.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, see the Latin entry in *Piae Meditationes* dated 6 January 1620.

25.¹¹⁴ The poem takes the form of a dialogue between Oelhafen and his deceased wife in which he has her consoling him with assurances of her blessed existence in heaven. As we have seen, this rhetorical form was common in Lutheran consolation literature. Oelhafen begins by calling out to Anna Maria, asking her to relieve his grief, which clearly has not subsided:

AMICO, beloved darling,
 where have you gone?
 Has the dear God
 taken you to Himself?
 Or have you been completely taken from me for no reason?
 On our anniversary
 speak or cry out
 and help me lessen
 my heart's sorrow.¹¹⁵

Anna Maria “responds” that she is now in God’s “hall of joy” (*frewden Saal*) where there is no pain, and therefore Johannes Christoph should let go his concern for her. He cannot do so: he “replies” that he still bears his suffering all the time and that his heart aches for her every hour. He also wishes that she could still be with their children, though healthy and not sick. Anna Maria again “counsels” him not to despair but to give himself over to God’s will and in so doing to find peace for his troubled heart. She also “urges” him to take comfort in the fact that she died in his arms, as she had wished. Now he must let go of her, body and soul, for this is the divine will.¹¹⁶ Oelhafen finally resolves to do so, or at least to make a beginning in doing so, and wishes her much joy, even as he eagerly anticipates the day when she will be reunited with him and their children in heaven. In the final line of this ten-stanza poem, Oelhafen reveals that he has sung the preceding nine stanzas in the presence of his children, who shared his tears for his departed AMICO.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Ibid., entry 32, 25 May.

¹¹⁵“AMICO, lieber schatz, wo bist
 hinkommen?
 hatt dich der lieber Gott zu sich
 genommen?
 oder bistu mir sonsten gentzlich entnommen?
 Am hochzeit Tag,
 sag, oder clag,
 unndt hilf mir geschwindet ab
 meines hertzen kummer.” Ibid., entry 32, 25 May, verse 1.

¹¹⁶Ibid., entry 32, 25 May, verses 8 and 9.

¹¹⁷“diß liedt hab ich, auß Trew
 unndt lieb gesungen:
 am Vrbanz Tag, da AMICO
 war verschlungen,
 welchs bewainte Ich, mitt mir

It would take some time for Oelhafen fully to commend Anna Maria into the hands of God. He confesses in the very next entry (on the very next day, May 26) that he simply cannot bear this cross of grief unless God helps him. He asks God to hold him “secure in faith and constant in hope” (*fest im glauben, unndt bestendig in hoffnung*). He thanks God for sending him “visible angels” (*sichtbare Engel*), that is, his good friends, who have offered their own consolation.¹¹⁸ Oelhafen was not completely alone, it seems; he, too, received comfort from this-worldly saints, and elsewhere in the *Pious Meditations* expresses gratitude for the consolation he has received through the Lord’s Supper and private confession. Oelhafen goes on to pray that God will help him to regard his affliction not as a sign of God’s “disfavor” (*ungnaden*), but of His “fatherly affection” (*väterlichen liebs naigung*) that only seeks his “edification” (*besserung*). He asks for help in remaining faithful in his calling, adding “so that your fatherly heart’s affection (which is frequently hidden under the Cross) may correspond to my immature faith, and equipped with your strength, power, and might as a Christian knight, may [it] stand firm.”¹¹⁹ It also seems that Oelhafen was familiar with the Theology of the Cross—or at least with some of its defining concerns—and here applies it directly to his own suffering. This cruciform theology, which was clearly present in the consolation literature of the day,¹²⁰ allowed him to view his suffering not simply as a punishment for sin, but also, and perhaps primarily, as a divine summons to spiritual growth, especially the strengthening of his faith—the connection between suffering and spiritual edification receives ever stronger emphasis as the *Pious Meditations* progresses. By positing multiple explanations for his suffering, Oelhafen was participating in an ancient custom; the practice of offering numerous *causae* for suffering had a long history in the Christian consolation tradition.¹²¹ Lutherans drew on this tradition appreciatively and, in keeping with the

hinderlaßen Jungen,
 doch will ich leb
 sie stetigs schweb,
 mir, in meinem hertzen, unndt
 auf meiner zungen.” Ibid., entry 32, 25 May.

¹¹⁸Ibid., entry 33, 26 May. Elsewhere Oelhafen makes it clear that God alone is the One to whom he can direct his lament (*klagen*) and from whom he can expect consolation. See *ibid.*, entry 51, 22 August, verse 1. Therefore, he almost certainly would have maintained that God was the ultimate source of the consolation he received from his friends.

¹¹⁹“damit deiner väterlichen herzens zunaigung, (So, under den Creutz, oftermals verborgen) mein kindtlichen vertrauen correspondiren, unndt mit deiner crafft, macht unndt sterckcke, gewapnet, alß ein christlicher Ritter, fest bestehn.” Ibid., entry 33, 26 May.

¹²⁰See Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 8.

¹²¹See *ibid.*, chapter 2.

distinctive elements of their theology, placed a new emphasis on suffering as a test of faith.¹²²

The entries from June to August are taken up with meditations on the cross and the general misery of the human condition, especially in the light of the gathering storm of religious and political warfare that Oelhafen was witnessing in 1619. He still has Anna Maria in mind and earnestly desires to be with her,¹²³ but he mentions her less frequently. Again and again he prays for faith and patience in the midst of adversity and continues to assert that God uses suffering to produce spiritual improvement in His people,¹²⁴ especially by slaying the “old Adam.”¹²⁵ Patience emerges as the supreme virtue in these pages and Oelhafen devotes an entire entry to its praise, complete with an image of “Lady Patience.” Returning to the nuptial imagery of his earlier entries, Oelhafen writes that “Patience eagerly awaits her Bridegroom’s will” (*gedult erwart ihrs breutigams will*).¹²⁶ Perhaps the main reason she does so is that she believes that the crosses of life will not separate her from Christ, the Bridegroom, something Oelhafen emphasizes with seeming new confidence in a song he composed on August 24 to the tune of Luther’s *From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee* (*auß Tiefer Noth schrei ich zu dir*). In the fourth verse he declares,

This I believe at all times,
that in my cross and suffering
Jesus Christ will keep me
and not leave me.¹²⁷

¹²²On the importance of suffering as a *tentatio probationis* of faith in Luther, see Ute Mennecke-Haustein, *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1989), 84–85. Mennecke-Haustein demonstrates that the proving of faith took logical precedence over the production of virtue in Luther’s understanding of suffering. Medieval consolation literature could also treat suffering as a test of faith, but Protestants stressed this *causa* more strongly owing to the centrality of faith in their conception of authentic Christianity.

¹²³“Amico denckht gewiß auch mein,
weil Ich wolt gerne bei ihr sein.

“Ach komm Christe: Amen.” *Piae Meditationes*, entry 60, 17 October.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, entry 45, 18 July. The sixth verse of this hymn—“im Thon: Es ist das heilig”—reads as follows:

“Du solst in Engsten, Zagen nichts,
Sondern nur halten stille:
unndt wißen, was iemals geschicht,
sei gottes weißer wille:
unndt sein beschloßner gehaimer Rhatt,
dadurch Er dich von böser that,
zur besserung woll bewegen.”

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, entry 60, 17 December.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, entry 46, 21 July.

¹²⁷“An das glaub Ich, zu aller frist,
das in meim [sic] Creutz und laiden,

Christ was Oelhafen's sole source of consolation not only because of His sacrificial death on the Cross but also because of the Savior's sustaining presence in his life.

In the later entries of the *Pious Meditations* Oelhafen again makes it clear that this seemingly constant faith in Christ's fidelity actually wavers quite a bit. On December 21 Johannes Christoph again beseeches God to forgive his small faith and to grant him deeper trust in the future. He wants to be able to hold to God firmly in faith and love regardless of whether he sees or feels God.¹²⁸ One is tempted to conclude that Oelhafen did not expect or even desire such experiences of the divine, that the consolation he sought consisted exclusively of a Word-inspired faith in the goodness of God that believed against considerable evidence to the contrary, including the state of one's own affective life. There certainly is support for this interpretation in the *Pious Meditations*—after all, he asks God for nothing more than a small finger (*Ein fingerlein*) of help¹²⁹—but there is also reason to qualify and augment this reading.

On October 28 Oelhafen composed a prayer to the "sweet Jesus Christ" (*Ach du süßer Jhesus christe*) in which he asks, "let me always feel your friendly sweetness in my heart" (*laß mich deine freundliche süßigkeit in meinem hertzen allwegen Empfinden*). Here Oelhafen wishes to experience in his own inner emotional life the consolation promised in the Lutheran gospel, he wants to feel the "inexpressible grace" (*unaußsprechliche gnadte*) that Christ shows to His adopted friends.¹³⁰ These references to divine sweetness immediately put one in mind of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), the mellifluous doctor, and also of Johannes von Staupitz (ca. 1468–1524), both of whom had a great deal to say about spiritual sweetness in their devotional works.¹³¹ Closer to Oelhafen's lifetime, Lutheran devotional writers such as Martin Moller (1547–1606) and Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608) employed the Bernardine image of the divine kiss to convey the deeply emotive aspect of Lutheran consolation.¹³² Oelhafen's library contains no works by such

Mich erhalten wirdt Jesus christ
unndt sich von mir nicht scheiden." Ibid., entry 52, 24 August.

¹²⁸See *ibid.*, entry 72, 21 December: "verzeihe mir meine Sunde, unndt verwirfe mich ja nicht, umb meines geringen glaubens willen . . . unndt hilf, das ich alle meine zuversicht setze, auf dich allein, meinen herm unndt meins Gott: mit festem glauben, an dich halte, ob Ich dich woll nicht sihe: von hertzen dich liebe, ob Ich dich woll nicht fühle."

¹²⁹See note 95 above.

¹³⁰*Piae Meditationes*, entry 62, 28 October.

¹³¹See Franz Posset, "The Sweetness of God," *The American Benedictine Review* 44 (1993): 143–78, and *idem*, "Christi Dulcedo: The 'Sweetness of Christ' in Western Christian Spirituality," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 30 (1995): 245–265.

¹³²See Moller, *Mysterium Magnum* (Görlitz: Rhambaw, 1595), HAB A:811.4 Theol., fol. 64r; *idem*, *Thesaurus Precationum* (Görlitz: Rhambaw, 1608), HAB A:697.87 Theol., fol. 416; and Nicolai, *Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens* (1599), ed. Reinhard Mumm (Soest: Westfälische

authors, but it does seem that Johannes Christoph was familiar with some of the important themes in their devotional writings, especially those that attest to a desire for an experience of Christ and His gospel that touches the heart in a profound way.

Oelhafen's use of bridal imagery in the *Pious Meditations* also suggests a desire for such an experience of Christ and His grace. In *The Freedom of the Christian* (1520) Luther used bridal imagery (drawn from medieval mysticism) to speak of the "wonderful exchange" between Christ and the Christian; the Wittenberg reformer stressed that Christ was truly present in the believer's heart through faith.¹³³ Johann Arndt also made use of bridal imagery in his devotional works and placed great emphasis on the deeply emotive aspect of the union between Christ and the Christian soul.¹³⁴ We do not know if Oelhafen had read Arndt, but it does seem that he had certain sympathies with his brand of piety; we know that Oelhafen's associate, Johannes Saubert, who had such high praise for Johannes Christoph's faith, certainly knew Arndt's works. It would seem that the tradition of affective piety that reaches from Bernard of Clairvaux to Staupitz, and through Staupitz to Luther and figures such as Moller, Nicolai, and Arndt, had a certain appeal to Oelhafen; at the very least he was acquainted with the vocabulary of this piety and found it deeply meaningful in his time of great suffering.

The *Pious Meditations* ends on a confident if somber note. Oelhafen says that he is certain of Anna Maria's resurrection on the Last Day, and he eagerly awaits their reunion in the next life. In the meantime he says that he will seek to be patient until God calls him home. He mentions the many tears he has shed over the past year and concludes by saying that the "sweet memory" of Anna Maria will never leave his heart.¹³⁵

III. CONCLUSION

Johannes Christoph Oelhafen suffered a terrible loss when his AMICO died in 1619. He was deprived not only of his beloved wife but also of his very self;

Verlagsbuchhandlung Mocker & Jahn, 1963), 80. See also the discussion of these works in Rittgers, *Reformation of Suffering*, chapter 9.

¹³³WA 7:54.31–55.36, and 68.33–36; LW 31:351, 368.

¹³⁴See his *Von der Vereinigung der Gläubigen mit Christo Jesu ihrem Häupte* (1620), which was included in posthumous editions of *Wahres Christentum* (Book 5, Part 2). For an English translation, see *Johann Arndt: True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist, 1979), 245–271. This work appeared after Oelhafen completed his *Piae Meditationes*, but Arndt's emphasis on union with Christ could also be found in his *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, which appeared in 1610.

¹³⁵*Piae Meditationes*, entry 75, 31 December, verse 13.

when she died Oelhafen says that a part of his heart was ripped out of his chest. Furthermore, he lost a mother for his children. Early on in the *Pious Meditations* Oelhafen expressed his loss this way:

Oh, if only I had enough water in my head and if only the sources of my tears were such that I could weep over the loneliness of my life day and night. Death has broken into my life and has strangled my dearly beloved [wife], and because of this my household has been destroyed and my honor has been ruined.¹³⁶

As we have seen, Oelhafen's means of coping with these shattering losses was to employ numerous well-known rhetorical and consolatory strategies as he sought to find *Trost* for himself and his children in their Christian faith. This faith contained many traditional elements: the belief in God's sovereignty over suffering; the positing of numerous explanations for suffering; and the consistent resolve to submit to the seemingly harsh dispensations of divine providence—Oelhafen never protests God's decision to take Anna Maria from him, even though he freely expresses to God and his circle of intimates the pain this decision has caused him. There is also much in Oelhafen's faith that is distinctively Protestant and uniquely Lutheran: there is no mention of saints or purgatory, no reference to private masses or indulgences or other forms of traditional piety, and there is no suggestion that suffering is salvific; furthermore, there is evidence of familiarity with the Theology of the Cross, participation in the Lord's Supper *and* private confession—other Protestants abolished this practice—and there is the rich affectivity and emphasis on self-consolation that Steiger has identified as hallmarks of early modern Lutheran consolation literature.

What we have then in Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations* is a piece of private Lutheran devotional literature that demonstrates rather clearly both the deep commitment to spiritual self-care that early modern evangelical burghers possessed along with their remarkable skill and resourcefulness in carrying this ministry out. In this work Oelhafen pastors himself; he applies the defining remedies of the Lutheran consolation literature to his own situation, and seemingly to good effect. Like Jacob, he wrestles with his evangelical God in these pages, now gaining the upper hand, now holding on for dear life, and he finally emerges from his long night's struggle with both a wound and blessing. Oelhafen also pastors his children; this is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the book from the modern perspective. Johannes Christoph taught his children how to grieve; he welcomed them into his own grieving process at a very intimate level and showed them through song, prayer, confession, and

¹³⁶“Ach, das Ich wußers genug hette, in meinen haubt, unndt meine augen Threnenquellen weren, das ich, Tag unndt Nacht beweinen möchte, die Einsambkeit meines lebens, dann der Todt ist herein gedrungen, unndt hatt mein allerliebste gewurget, dadurch mein haußwesen zerstöret, unndt meine Ehr zuschanden worden.” *Ibid.*, entry 5, 28 February.

verse how a good (Lutheran) Christian was to supposed to cope with loss, something he also wished to convey to his and their posterity through his book. Whether this ego-document allows the historian to encounter the *real* Johannes Christoph Oelhafen or not—I am inclined to think that it does, although surely only in a mediated and partial sense—¹³⁷ the *Pious Meditations* certainly provides eloquent testimony to the great skill and care early modern parents could take in seeking to form the emotional lives of their children around the Christian gospel, especially in times of great suffering.

IV. EPILOGUE

Oelhafen remarried several weeks after the penultimate Latin entry in the *Pious Meditations* and just two days after the one-year anniversary of Anna Maria's death. (The date of this second wedding was February 21, 1620; it is likely that Oelhafen completed the work before embarking on his new marriage.)¹³⁸ There was nothing unusual about this in early modern Germany and should not be seen as evidence of lack of love for his first wife. Oelhafen's father and grandfather had done the same. Oelhafen needed help raising his eight children and facing the vicissitudes of early modern existence with a companion made better sense than seeking to face them alone. His new wife, Katharine Pfinzing (1585–1637), had already been twice widowed and so was likely no stranger to the grief that certainly continued to grip Oelhafen's soul:¹³⁹ their marriage undoubtedly provided ample opportunity for mutual consolation. Unfortunately, we know nothing about their life together other

¹³⁷For discussions and debates on the proper use and interpretation of ego-documents, especially regarding the kind of access—if any—they provide to the emotional lives of human beings in the past, see the following works, in addition to those cited in note 19 above: Hans Medick and David Sabean, eds., *Emotionen und materielle Interessen. Sozialanthropologische und historische Beiträge zur Familienforschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), especially p. 17 (for an English version, see *Emotions and Interests: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986].); Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick and Patrice Veit, eds., *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen (1500–1800)* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 157; Linton, *Poetry and Parental Bereavement*, 225, 226; Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, "In Relation: The 'Social Self' and Ego-Documents," *German History* 28:3 (September 2010): 263–272; and James S. Amelang, "Saving the Self from Autobiography," in *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit. Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 129–140. See also Stefan Elit, Stephan Kraft, and Andreas Rutz, eds., "Das 'Ich' in der Frühen Neuzeit. Autobiographien - Selbstzeugnisse - Ego-Dokumente in geschichts- und literaturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive," <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2002/02/index.html>

¹³⁸Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvla CCCLVII.

¹³⁹Pfinzing had been married first to Jacob Imhoff (1572–1609) (wedding: 11 May, 1605), and then to Sebastian Imhoff (1589–1613) (wedding: November 1612). She had no children from either marriage. Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister*, CCCCXII.

than that they had one child, a son, who survived both of them.¹⁴⁰ Johannes Christoph continued in his position as legal counsel for Nuremberg and served in a similar capacity for other imperial cities and princes. Already during Anna Maria's lifetime he was awarded the *comitatus palatinus* (Count Palatine) by Emperor Matthias (1557–1619, r. 1612–1619), which gave him the authority to dispense certain “graces” that belonged by right to the emperor (for example, the conferral of honorary degrees or titles, the creation of notaries and poet laureates, and the ability to declare illegitimate children legitimate).¹⁴¹ After Anna Maria's death he was appointed to the Imperial Court Council by Emperor Ferdinand II (1578–1637, r. 1619–1637). In 1623 Oelhafen was chosen to give a formal scholarly speech on behalf of the city council at a ceremony in which he also presented imperial privileges to the Altdorf Academy, thus recognizing its status as a university. (These privileges included a golden scepter and new seal.)¹⁴² In 1626 he was appointed Pro-Chancellor (*Prokanzler*) of the University of Altdorf,¹⁴³ and two years later he became the Elder (*Senior*) of his family line, an honor he enjoyed for only three years. In April of 1631 while at an imperial diet in Regensburg he was stricken with an unknown illness that claimed his life a month later.¹⁴⁴ Shortly before he passed away a person at his side asked him if he was dying with sure faith in the merit of Jesus Christ. Oelhafen replied, “Well of course, how else!” (*Ei freilich, wie anders*).¹⁴⁵ One cannot help but wonder if this confidence in the face of death did not also stem from a desire to be reunited his beloved *AMICO*, whose memory he had said would never depart from his heart.

¹⁴⁰His name was Hans Paulus (1621–1645). Biedermann, *Geschlechtsregister*, Tabvla CCLLVIII.

¹⁴¹See the entry for Hofpfalzgraf in *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch* (Weimar, H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1914-), vol. V, Sp. 1308. The *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch* is available online at <http://drw-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/drw/>. I am grateful to Thomas A. Brady, Jr., for calling this source to my attention.

¹⁴²ADB 24:297.

¹⁴³On the duties of the Prokanzler, see Leder, *Universität Altdorf*, 13: “Bei ihm mußten sich Magistranden und Doktoranden aller Fakultäten vorstellen, um die Erlaubnis zu den Prüfungen und Inauguraldisputationen zu erhalten; er fertige wichtige Gutachten für die Universität aus.” See also Kunstmann, *Die Nürnberger Universität Altdorf und Böhmen*, 143.

¹⁴⁴Tobias Oelfhafen (1601–1666), Johannes Christoph's famous nephew, delivered a eulogy for his uncle. On Tobias, see ADB 24:298–300; Friedrich, *Bibliographie*, 1013, 1017–1020; and Imhoff, *Berühmte Nürnberger*, 180.

¹⁴⁵See Sigmund Christoph von Oelhafen, *Zwei Reden zum Gedächtnis an die Prokanzler der Universität Altdorf*, 18; cf. Apinus, *Vitae et Effigies*, 17.