Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories

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Addenda et Corrigenda

p. 11 line 4 up: for "1394" read "1395"

pp, 59-65, 329: Bishop John Russell as author of the third (second anonymous) continuation of the Croyland Chronicle: I now believe that the author was Dr. Richard Lavender, Russell's vicar-general, and that Russell was the author of the fourth (third anonymous) continuation. See my article, "The Last Chroniclers of Croyland," *The Ricardian* 7.91 (December 1985) 142-77.

p. 63 par. 2 line 1: for "1479" read "1478"

p. 204 n. 1 last line: for "Richard II" read "*Richard II*"

p. 213 line 8: for "his crusade" read "a pilgrimage"

p. 217 line 7 up: for "cearly" read "clearly"

p. 232 line 3 up: for "slanders." read "slanders,"

p. 238 par. 3 line 6: for "But strangely enough." read "But, strangely enough,"

p. 325 line 5 up: after "fol. 211" add: "(a new page added after he read the Croyland account; see p. 99)"

p. 337, under Arundel: for "Thomas Fitzalan" read "Richard Fitzalan"

For my mother

Preface

Historiographers of earlier times made an abundant use of supernatural elements in their accounts of the events of past and present, and this practice is in many ways so foreign to modern usage that it is often difficult to understand or sympathize with it. Perhaps it will not be out of place therefore to single out this aspect of the older histories for separate study, in an effort to define its basic structures.

It is our purpose here to study the processes involved in the supernatural references that appear in the historical treatments of an important segment of English history, the period covered by Shakespeare's double tetralogy (A.D. 1398–1485); and a primary aim of our discussion will be to analyze and evaluate the use that Shakespeare himself made of this aspect of the historical writings of his day. It is not by mere sufferance that Shakespeare and other poets are admitted to ranks of the historiographers, since dramatic and poetic portrayals were considered by many in their time to be a legitimate and even superior medium for the recording and interpreting of the past. From this point of view, Shakespeare is the greatest of the Renaissance historiographers.

Since the primary materials for this subject are virtually limitless, it will be necessary to impose some restrictions on our treatment at the outset. The lead of the chronicles themselves will be followed in centering interest upon the political and military vicissitudes of England during the fifteenth century, as reflected chiefly in the persons and affairs of kings and kings-to-be. The supernatural is manifested primarily in interpretations of the workings of divine providence in the lives and destinies of these kings, and it is toward this feature that our attention will be particularly directed. The various aspects of the providential and

the supernatural — prodigies, prophecies, miracles, the questions of fate and fortune, predestination and free will, natural and special providence, grace, the intercession of saints, the workings of good and evil spirits, reward and punishment after death, and other theological problems — will be attended to only as they touch upon our central interests. However, since providential interpretations are always based upon moral evaluations of the men involved in the events, it will often be necessary to discuss an author's judgments on the morality of the human actions he records, even where there is no explicit allegation of divine favor or disfavor. God is always assumed to support the cause of justice, and it is therefore necessary to know what causes the author considers just before we can properly deal with his attitudes toward the supernatural impetus behind the visible course of events.

The materials used will be largely the formal chronicles and literary works devoted to the history of these times, especially those known and made use of by later generations. Other writings, including letters and public documents, will be drawn on for the most part only as they appear in the chronicles.

In this discussion we are interested above all not in facts but in opinions, not in events but in interpretations of events and of the supernatural causes behind them. In other words, we will be dealing with those aspects commonly neglected in the ordinary historical study of the works under investigation here. It is hoped that this approach will make some contribution to our knowledge of the philosophy of history implicit in the minds of the authors and of the metahistorical tendencies of their interpretations. Literary considerations will also be a main concern, and we shall follow the line of inquiry auspiciously initiated by E. M. W. Tillyard in *Shakespeare's History Plays*. Our approach will differ from Professor Tillyard's, however, in that we shall concentrate on only one aspect of the themes he deals with, namely, the providential. In this way it is hoped that we may not only supplement his data but effect some serious modifications in his conclusions as well.

H.A.K.

Rome
August 1969

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Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories

Introduction

The authors with whom we will be dealing, the medieval and Renaissance compilers of English history, were of course heir to the common traditions of Christianity. We must say "traditions," for Christianity contains many disparate elements which have often been welded together in a theological reconciliation, but which just as often have been viewed in abstraction from supplementary or contradictory doctrines.

The subject of divine providence provides a good illustration of this phenomenon. The Bible contains an assortment of notions about God's government of the world, particularly in terms of reward and punishment visited upon mankind, which belong to different stages of cultural and moral development. In the Book of Deuteronomy, for instance, the second commandment of the decalogue contains this statement of divine justice: "For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God and I punish the fathers' fault in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments." [1] We see in this pronouncement a reflection of a very early concept of justice among the Hebrew people, one that is satisfied with a kind of collective justice operative in terms of families or nations. It is a notion that seems hardly fair; we may not be inclined to quarrel with the clause that implies inherited blessings, but the punishment of children for the sins of the fathers seems a manifest injustice. And in fact this harsh law is toned down two chapters further

Note: See Bibliography for explanations of shortened references in footnote citations.

[1] Deut. 5.9–10; cf. Exod. 34.6–7; Num. 14.18. All translations of Scripture in the Introduction are taken from the *Jerusalem Bible,* ed. Alexander Jones (London 1966).

on in Deuteronomy: "Know then that Yahweh your God is God indeed, the faithful God who is true to his covenant and his graciousness for a thousand generations towards those who love him and keep his commandments, but who punishes in their own persons those that hate him." [2] We find this picture of God far more acceptable, for now he punishes men only for their own guilt; and we conclude that it represents a more sophisticated level of morality among the Hebrews.

In the Middle Ages, however, the Bible was not interpreted in this historical fashion. Both statements from Deuteronomy are equally the word of God. And while the second was no doubt the more acceptable view to Christians in general, the first was the better known, occurring as it does among the ten commandments. Furthermore, a doctrine very much akin to it received great prominence in the Christian Church; the notion of original sin, especially as elaborated by Augustine, involved not only the first four or thousand generations, but all generations until the end of time, in the guilt and punishment of Adam's sin. The concept of inherited divine retribution was therefore readily available to any historiographer whom personal inclinations or the force of events inclined to such a primitive and rigorous view.

The idea of a just God easily suggests that suffering is often a punishment for sin. We find this idea verified several times in the Gospels. However, many simple minds tend to see all suffering as a punishment for sin. This view is reflected in the question of the disciples of Jesus: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?" Jesus answers that his affliction was not the result of sin; rather its purpose was to make manifest the works of God in him.[3]

The Book of Job also opposes the simplistic notion that all suffering is the result of one's sins, and stresses that it can be intended as a trial and a discipline. The point is also made that the ways of God are unsearchable, and that therefore it may be beyond the power of human reason to account for specific instances of suffering. Furthermore, the Vulgate version of Job hints at the Christian notion of reward and punishment after death, when all the inequalities of this life will be adjusted. In this way God's justice was finally reconciled with the events of everyday reality, and at the same time it remained impossible

[2] Deut. 7.9–10.
[3] John 9.1–3.

to state with any certainty the ultimate divine reason for any specific disaster.

However, the temptation to interpret God's providence was always present, and it received great encouragement especially from the historical books of the Old Testament, primarily the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Here Christian chroniclers could see concrete examples of God's dealings with kings, where reward and punishment are largely visualized in terms of temporal blessings and visible catastrophes, with no otherworldly overtones whatever. And perhaps even more important were the relevant expressions found in the Psalms, whose weekly repetition in the divine office, which was participated in by most of the early chroniclers, would make their application almost automatic.

As for postbiblical thought on this question, perhaps the treatment best known to subsequent generations was that developed in Augustine's *City of God,* and his formulation was accepted after as well as before the Reformation. Augustine states that "to the divine providence it has seemed good to prepare in the world to come for the righteous good things, which the unrighteous shall not enjoy, and for the wicked evil things, by which the good shall not be tormented. But as for the good things of this life and its ills, God has willed that these should be common to both, that we might not too eagerly covet the things which wicked men are seen equally to enjoy, nor shrink with an unseemly fear from the ills which even good men often suffer." [4] But Augustine goes on in this same chapter to say: "Often, even in the present distribution of temporal things, does God plainly evince his own interference. For if every sin were now visited with manifest punishment, nothing would seem to be reserved for the final judgment; on the other hand, if no sin received now a plainly divine punishment, it would be concluded that there is no divine providence at all." He draws the conclusion that when manifestly wicked persons suffer great afflictions, they are being punished by God; but when virtuous men suffer similarly, they are being benefited by God. "For even in the likeness of the sufferings, there remains an unlikeness in the sufferers; and though exposed to the same anguish, virtue and vice are not the same thing. For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly, and chaff to smoke; and under the same flail the straw is beaten small, while the grain is cleansed; and as the

[4] *The City of God* 1.8, trans. Marcus Dods (New York 1950) 10–11.

lees are not mixed with the oil, though squeezed out of the vat by the same pressure, so the same violence of affliction proves, purges, clarifies the good, but damns, ruins, exterminates the wicked."

It will easily be seen that in spite of Augustine's "rules" for interpreting the operation of divine providence, their application to actual events must remain largely a matter of conjecture and personal opinion. It was admitted by all concerned that absolutely everything that happened, happened through the causation and concurrence of Providence, and furthermore it was agreed that God's ways were mysterious and unsearchable, in spite of (and because of) the general principle that they were in accord with wisdom and justice and mercy.

Particular interpretations of the reasons for God's disposal of events would therefore always depend upon each author's individual criteria of wisdom, justice, and mercy when applied to God. And when the subject matter of these interpretations was political, it was understandable that political bias could play a very large role in their formulation.

An important factor that contributed to the proliferation of providential judgments in the pages of medieval and Renaissance chroniclers was the prevailing conception of the primary function of history as an exemplary discipline. Events of the past were recounted in order to provide lessons for the present. And lessons of divine sanctions on good and evil actions formed no small part of this pedagogic; in fact, the whole of history could be and often was reduced (or exalted) to this level.

In her study of Shakespeare's Histories, Lily Campbell confines herself to discussing the kind of lessons drawn from history by Renaissance and Reformation historiographers.[5] But it is not clear that these writers added anything to lessons pointed out by their medieval predecessors. However, it is true that an author would be inclined to place more stress upon the exemplary aspects than upon partisan concerns when dealing with events no longer bearing upon present politics. It will be no surprise, therefore, to discover that the sixteenth-century historians of fifteenth-century history can often bring to their subject a more measured concentration upon eternal verities than was usually managed by the contemporary chroniclers before them, even to the point of endorsing contradictory views of persons and events for the sake of the different lessons they suggest.

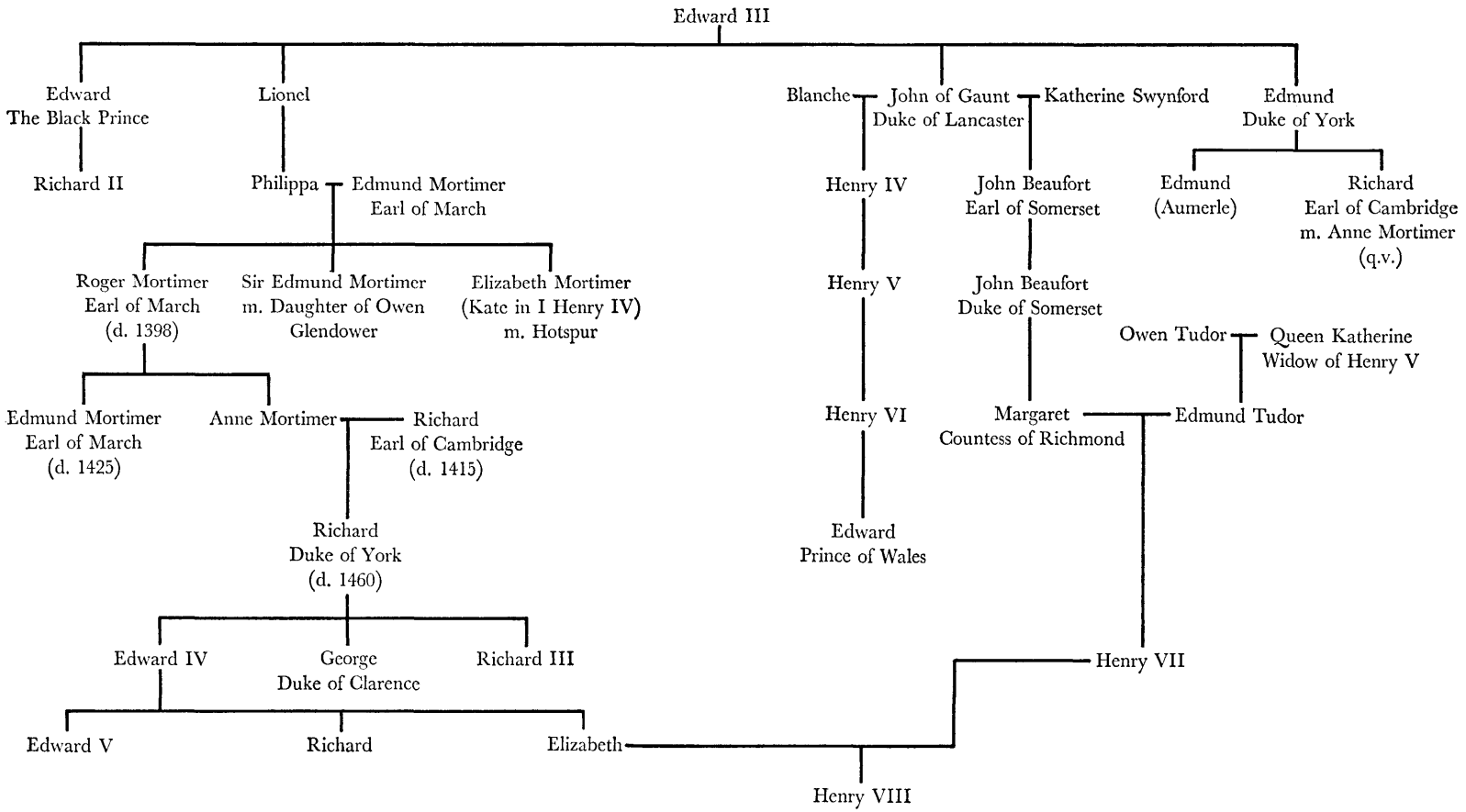
[5] Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories"; Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino 1947) Pt. I: "History, Historiography, and Politics."

It is always possible, however, that the later writers would be tempted to slant their interpretation of the past in order to emphasize a parallel or draw a moral for situations that existed in their own day. One of the purposes of the present investigation is to ascertain how many of the judgments and opinions of the later writers are original with them, and how many are simply taken over from their sources. It is only in this way that we will be able to discover their personal views upon the subjects that they treat.

One

Contemporary Accounts of Fifteenth-Century England

The Divided Royal Family in the Fifteenth Century



I

The Lancaster Myth

The period of English history which we are studying from a providential viewpoint divides easily into two sections; the first extends from the downfall of Richard II to the death of Henry V (1399–1422), and the second from the reign of Henry VI to the accession of Henry VII, with special emphasis on the years 1450–1485. Shakespeare has conveniently allotted a tetralogy to each period, though, less conveniently, he treated the second period first.

From the political point of view, the contemporary historiographers can be divided roughly into four camps, the supporters of Richard II, and the supporters of each of the three dynasties that followed his reign. But since the histories that we will study were chiefly written within the periods of these dynasties, we can treat their providential and moral judgments under the categories of the "myths" of Lancaster, York, and Tudor.

"Myth" is perhaps not the best word to express the concepts it will do service for ("mystique" or "bias" might have been better), but it has become familiar through Professor Tillyard's usage, and for this reason it will be retained here. Tillyard's formulation of the Tudor myth will be in view implicitly throughout our study.

According to Tillyard, and numerous others since who have accepted his thesis, the chief historiographers of the Tudor period justified the Tudor dynasty's claim to the throne by an elaborate defense, to which he gives the general name "Tudor myth." It begins with Polydore Vergil, who, according to Tillyard, sees the stretch of history from Richard II to Henry VII in a solemn moral light, showing "the justice of God pun-

ishing and working out the effects of a crime, till prosperity is re-established in the Tudor monarchy," which providentially united the Celtic line as well as the York and Lancaster lines. Edward Hall states the theme much more strongly, and is followed closely by Shakespeare. For Henry IV's crime, first of usurping the throne and then of allowing Richard to be killed against his oath, "God punished Henry by making his reign unquiet but postponed full vengeance till a later generation, for Henry (like Ahab) humbled himself . . . The curse reaches its full issue in the Wars of the Roses," in which the Yorkists as well as the Lancastrians are incriminated. Meanwhile, Providence is protecting Henry Tudor, and finally the Holy Ghost inspires the Duke of Buckingham to put Henry on the throne and marry him to the York heiress.[1] The Tudor myth that we shall discover in the pages to follow, however, will differ drastically from Tillyard's.

The category of "Lancaster myth" applies strictly speaking only to the versions of history supporting the regimes of the three Lancastrian kings, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI. The opposition that arose to Henry VI constitutes an integral part of the York myth. But, as was pointed out above, there was also historiographical opposition to Henry IV, which we might perhaps have designated as a "Ricardian myth." But since the opposition extends beyond the time of Richard's death, we can deal with it more accurately under the designation of "anti-Lancastrian." Some of the early anti-Lancastrian sentiments will later be utilized by the proponents of the York myth.

The Justification of Richard's Overthrow

We begin our historiographical survey with the views of contemporary chroniclers concerning the deposition of Richard II. According to the official view of the Rolls of Parliament, which was adopted by many of the chronicles, Richard II recognized his faults and cheerfully resigned in favor of Henry Bolingbroke;

[1] E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London 1944 ——) 36–37, 59–61. Tillyard is in some doubt as to what crime started the century-long curse. In the account of Vergil cited above, he is clearly speaking of Henry IV's usurpation, but just before this he notes that according to Vergil it was Richard's crime of killing his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester (Thomas of Woodstock), that first caused Richard to lose the support of his other uncles, Gaunt and York, and that this was the chief cause of his overthrow. He admits that Hall makes little of Richard's crime; but when he comes to restate the Tudor myth in general terms, Tillyard describes the curse as one "incurred through the murder of Woodstock, one of Edward III's seven sons, and not merely passed on but greatly intensified by the murder of Richard" (p. 291).

no mention, of course, is made of the closer claim of the eight-year-old Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March. The whole proceeding therefore was perfectly legal and of great benefit to the realm.

Perhaps the foremost exponent of this version of the transfer of the royal authority was Thomas Walsingham, the last of the chroniclers of the Benedictine monastery of St. Albans near London. Walsingham's work extends over a period of almost fifty years (1376–1422), and the changes that are observable in his attitude toward the house of Lancaster are striking. The scathing attacks against John of Gaunt in the earlier history are later suppressed, perhaps out of conviction as well as out of fear or political expediency.[2] V. H. Galbraith believes that revisions were made several times after 1399, but it seems likely that the most important of them were made when the various chronicles of the kingdom were called in by the government for inspection when Henry was holding Richard captive in the Tower before his deposition.[3]

After his "conversion," Walsingham favored John of Gaunt with several providential benefits;[4] and he was to be even more generous to his son Henry. But as far as King Richard was concerned, Walsingham lost early in his reign any regard he had had for the youthful king, and maintained a fairly consistent hostility toward him for the rest of his life. Although he was grateful for Richard's suppression of the Lollards, and considered his return from Ireland in 1394 for this purpose inspired by God,[5] Walsingham alone among the chroniclers suggests homosexual offenses in Richard (in his *Historia anglicana* account of 1386).[6]

[2] The various parts and versions of Walsingham's history have been issued in five different publications, which are listed in the Bibliography, along with the abbreviations used to designate these and other chronicles referred to in the course of our investigation. V. H. Galbraith untangles the bibliographical problems of Walsingham's works in *The St. Albans Chronicle, 1406–20* (Oxford 1937): 2Wals ix–lxxi. For an account of the tactical change in the early history, see Galbraith, 2Wals l–li, and Sir Edmund Maunde Thompson's edition of the voluntarily suppressed *Chronicon Angliae* (oWals xvii–xxiv).

[3] 1Wals (*Annales Ricardi secundi et Henrici quarti*) 252 (cf. Otterbourne 209–210, based on 1Wals); see also the chronicle of Adam of Usk (Usk 182–184).

[4] 3Wals (*Historia anglicana*) 2.41, 43 (= oWals 327, 328); 3Wals 2.194. For an instance of his earlier views, see oWals 204, revised in 3Wals 1.373, where, among other ingenious changes, "Dei gratia" is substituted for a sarcastic "dux bonus."

[5] 1Wals 173; 3Wals 2.216.

[6] 3Wals 2.148. This charge is not repeated except possibly in *Richard II* (3.1.11–15), where Bolingbroke says to Bushy and Green:

> You have in manner with your sinful hours
> Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,
> Broke the possession of a royal bed

Richard's providential decline began in 1397 after the murder of Thomas of Woodstock and the execution of the Earl of Arundel, when Richard ordered the end of prayers for them and for himself, as if desirous of preventing God from converting him from his evil ways.[7] Two years later there occurred prodigies which were thought to foretell the triumph of the lords over Richard after their eclipse, and the falling away of the people from him.[8] But Richard failed to observe these signs of coming disaster, for his fates urged him on to his ruin, which they had irrevocably set for that year.[9] He refused to listen to a prophet who preached to him the alternatives of reform or destruction;[10] nevertheless, Richard is said to have paid the most scrupulous attention to such prophecies, and he finally got the message: a verse going the rounds warned that "the pomp of John" would scarcely last for two years, and because the king was first baptized John he feared that it applied to him. He realized the danger he was in, as he was preparing to go on his Irish campaign, and he was afraid that matters would worsen.[11]

While Richard was in Ireland, God decreed a humiliation of his pride, and, in order to aid the English people, who had no other resource but in him, he inspired Henry Bolingbroke to return to claim his hereditary rights. The people accordingly received him as a savior sent by God to release them from their slavery.[12] Furthermore, God caused Richard to delay his departure from Ireland for a week, thereby enabling Henry to secure his forces in England.[13]

And stained the beauty of a fair queen's cheeks
With tears drawn from her eyes by your foul wrongs.

But it is more probable that Henry is speaking of dissipation in general; and we should note too that Henry's characterization of the queen's sentiments is belied by the scene in which she appears with Bushy, Green, and Bagot (2.2).

[7] 1Wals 207.

[8] The laurels withered and revived, and a part of the river near Bedford dried up (1Wals 229; cf. 3Wals 2.229; *Ypodigma Neustriae*: 4Wals 380–381). Holinshed offers a possible explanation for the latter phenomenon, namely, that the river went underground at that point (1–2Hol. 2.848).

[9] "Sed urgebant eum fata sua, quae irrevertibiliter texuerant ejus ruinam hoc anno futuram" (1Wals 230). This obviously poetic expression may involve the idea of divine punishment or on the other hand carry no supernatural weight at all.

[10] 1Wals 231–232. This prophet, the hermit William Norham, whom Richard imprisoned for his efforts, seems to be the same northern hermit who later has unpleasant information for Henry IV as well, and is rewarded this time with decapitation. See the continuation of the *Eulogium historiarum* (Eul 380, 397), and cf. 1Wals 372.

[11] 1Wals 237–238.

[12] 1Wals 240–242.

[13] 1Wals 248. Most of these providential interpretations do not appear in the

According to the official charges against Richard, which Walsingham and other chroniclers after him copy out, Richard would have impoverished the realm if God had not provided against it. In his formal challenge for the crown, Henry stated that God had helped him vindicate his right to it.[14] Walsingham adds to all this in an extraordinarily ingenuous (or disingenuous) fashion by seeing an evident miracle of God in the fact that Henry was crowned king on the anniversary of the day that he was exiled from the realm.[15] Moreover, as an auspice of more abundant grace, Henry was the first to be crowned with the miraculous oil that the Blessed Virgin had revealed to Thomas à Becket, which had been providentially kept from Richard's use, and, as was thought, providentially bestowed on Henry.[16]

By a just judgment of God, Archbishop Walden, whose appointment had been secured by Richard, was removed from the see of Canterbury,[17] and Henry's fellow exile, Archbishop Arundel, recovered his old position. In his official capacity, Arundel delivered a sermon upon Henry's accession, which was recorded in the London Chronicles. He took for his text, "Vir dominabitur in populo," the implication of which was, as Froissart puts it, that God had given them a man for their sovereign, in contrast to the childish rulers who had preceded him.[18]

Furthermore, after Henry's installation as king, it was the divine virtue that miraculously alerted him to the plot of the earls against him, and Kent, Salisbury, and Huntington felt the vengeance and wrath of God light upon them. When Henry heard the outcome (namely, that the earls had been disposed of not by his but by God's wisdom), he thanked God effusively for this miracle.[19] Richard on the other hand was reported to have

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abridged versions (3–4Wals), but this is probably due not to any designed withdrawal of grace from Henry in the mind of Walsingham but simply to the process of pruning away the embellishments, since a number of providences in Henry's behalf do occur later in the shorter histories. According to Galbraith (2Wals liv–lxvi), both 1Wals and 3Wals apparently were written at intervals close to the events they record. It would seem that 4Wals was compiled at a later date, but as Galbraith points out, it is identical with 3Wals from 1403 to its end in 1419.

[14] 1Wals 270, 281. Henry confirms this opinion of his in a letter to the Duke of Juliers, in which he says that divine providence delivered the rule of England to him. See *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth*, ed. F. C. Hingeston, Rolls Series 18 (London 1860) 3.

[15] 1Wals 296–297; cf. 3Wals 239 and 4Wals 388, where the miracle is made a matter of opinion. Presumably, of course, the date was set by Henry himself.

[16] 1Wals 297–300; cf. 3Wals 239–240; 4Wals 388. See below at nn. 80 and 91.

[17] 1Wals 213.

[18] CLgreat 69–71; CLk 44–46; Frois 699.

[19] 1Wals 323–330; cf. 3Wals 243 and 4Wals 389.

become so despondent on hearing this news that he wished to starve himself to death, and he could not recover when he changed his mind.[20]

Walsingham's favorable view of Henry IV's ascent to the throne was supplemented with providential judgments by other chroniclers, such as Adam of Usk, the monk of Evesham, Thomas Otterbourne (who copied from Walsingham), and the authors of the Kirkstall Chronicle and the continuation of the *Eulogium historiarum*. But the best known of the Henricians is the poet John Gower, whose *Chronica tripertita* is devoted exclusively to this subject. This chronicle is an appendix to the *Vox clamantis,* which in its early form had excused Richard from blame for the evils then regnant in England, but which now concluded with an indictment against him as the chief cause of the sufferings an angry God had sent them. Gower's change of support from Richard to Henry occurred long before there was any likelihood of Henry's becoming king, as is evident from his revision of the *Confessio amantis* early in the 1390's. In the *Chronica,* he regards the insurrection of Woodstock and his fellow nobles against Richard in 1387 as a providential warning. But since Richard ignored it and continued to do the work of hell (one result of which was the martyrdom of Woodstock and the sending of Arundel's soul to heaven), God determined to cast down this odious tyrant and exalt the pious and beloved Henry.[21]

The author of *Richard the Redeless* agrees in seeing Bolingbroke's insurrection as the work of God, who summoned his servants to put an end to the abuses that had prospered unchecked by Richard. Richard is addressed during the time of his internment in the Tower before he was deposed, and the writer does not yet know whether God will give him grace to amend and be king again or whether he will give the rule to another.[22] But this poet's attitude of pity and concern for Richard is in great contrast to Gower's scathing remarks against his former patron. In making Richard II a completely evil tyrant and Henry IV a saint, Gower is anticipating the treatment that will be accorded to Richard III and Henry VII in very similar circumstances. It is interesting to note that, according to Gower,

[20] 1Wals 330–331; cf. 3Wals 245; 4Wals 390–391.

[21] Gower 305–324.

[22] *Richard the Redeless* in *Mum and the Sothsegger* (EETS) 1–2, 22–23. The reasons given by the editors for considering *Richard the Redeless* as written by the author of *Mum,* even if convincing, seem to be no justification for considering the two works as one poem, since their formats differ (*Mum* is a dialogue).

Henry IV's accession was fated, predicted by saints, and fulfilled by God.[23] The same would be said of Henry VII.

The details of Bolingbroke's conquest resemble those elaborated by Walsingham. The people called upon Christ for vengeance,[24] for God turns to those who turn to him.[25] And God did not allow such abominations to go unpunished, but inspired Bolingbroke and providentially arranged for his return to England. And when he arrived, he first knelt down and prayed to God for victory.[26]

When Richard returned from Ireland, Fortune turned her wheel, and he cursed his fates; nevertheless, the fear of Christ was not yet upon him. The outcome, however, proved that men will not serve a ruler who is not sustained by the Lord.[27] The English people unanimously deposed Richard, and in so doing gave praise to Christ, who had led them out from captivity under the Herod-like Richard and brought them to a glorious kingdom.[28]

And it was God, who disposes all things and sets the times for them, who fixed the day on which Henry was to be blessed by him; accordingly, he was declared king on the feast of Edward the Confessor. God had predestined him for this title so that he might bring justice to the realm. Henry had a threefold right to the crown, for not only was he the heir to the throne, but he was also elected by the people; and furthermore his conquest of the realm proved his right to it. The people accordingly rejoiced when Henry was crowned, since Christ wished him to be venerated, and they worshiped Christ for raising up such a king; the whole earth in fact joined them in praising God.[29]

However, the devil instigated the earls to rebel against this pious king in an effort to destroy him and his race; but God uncovered their plot and vengeance fell on them, for his wrath miraculously effected their ruin at the hands of the common people. Richard, on hearing of it, railed against Fortune and wept over their destruction; he was so grief-stricken over their deaths that he ceased to eat and so died. The people rejoiced,

[23] Gower 339:

> Istud fatatum fuit, a sanctisque relatum;
> Quod tunc complevit Deus, ex quo terra quievit.

[24] Gower 331.
[25] Gower 311.
[26] Gower 329, 333–334.
[27] Gower 335.
[28] Gower 330.
[29] Gower 338.

for Christ had destroyed the one person they feared the most. God hates evil-living rulers, and does not allow sinners to continue in authority, as Richard's end demonstrates.[30] Gower notes that the upright King Henry had Richard buried with the rites of the Church. We shall hear much more about the burial of Richard later.

The Minority Report of the French Chroniclers

Richard had his friends among the chroniclers, especially those who came from the Continent. The most celebrated of these is John Froissart, who was greatly indebted to Richard and lamented his tragic end. Froissart and the other French authors had no reason to write in fear or flattery of Henry (Froissart did in fact admire him), and yet their providential interpretations often correspond with, rather than contradict, those of the Lancastrian annalists. The reasoning behind their judgments however is usually quite different. They also occasionally report the providential sentiments of the people in Henry's favor, but hardly with approval on their own part.

Froissart is aware of Richard's faults, but he also places great stress upon the crimes and provocations of Woodstock and his associates against him.[31] He says it was the devil who caused Mowbray to denounce Bolingbroke to Richard for some well-meant words he had spoken,[32] thereby starting Richard himself on the road to ruin as a result of the measures he took against Bolingbroke. The wise John of Gaunt was afraid that Richard would destroy himself by heeding the advice of his evil counselors. He pointed to the troubles caused by domestic quarrels

[30] Gower 340–342.

[31] Frois 635–644, 655–659. Cf. the chronicle of the English Cistercian house of Dieulacres, which records the opinion that God inspired Richard to punish these rebels, thereby fulfilling, in a sense favorable to Richard, a prophecy that Walsingham and Gower make much of in a reading favorable to Woodstock and his companions (Dieulacres 168–169; 1Wals 206; Gower 313).

The pro-Ricardian "Author A" of Dieulacres goes on to cite two prophecies of Bridlington in Richard's favor (pp. 169, 170). Adam of Usk, the Welshman, on the other hand, is especially sedulous in observing the prophecies of Bridlington, Merlin, and others as well as natural prophecies (i.e., portents), in a sense prejudicial to Richard, and once at least (p. 171) the fulfillment is attributed directly to God's righteous judgment. Cf. also Brut 590. On the question of political prophecies at this time, see John Webb (Créton 250–271) and John Taylor (Kirkstall 22–23, 29–30, 40–42). See also Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, N.J. [1961]) 91–94.

[32] Frois 661.

abroad, and was afraid that the same would occur in England unless God prevented it in some way.[33]

While Henry was in exile, his knights told him that the affection of the English people would soon deliver him from all danger, if it pleased God.[34] When he received an invitation from the Londoners through Archbishop Arundel to take over the country, his advisers assured him that it was an opportunity sent by God, who had taken compassion on him, but that the opportunity would not be renewed if he refused to accept it then.[35]

At the interview between Richard and Henry, Richard prognosticated his downfall from the fact that his greyhound abandoned him and started to fawn upon Henry, as if it knew instinctively that he would be the ruler from then on.[36]

On the day of his coronation Henry went to confession, "as he had good need to do," and then, according to his custom, he heard three masses.[37] We have already seen Froissart's report of the providential intent of the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon, which was given at the coronation. On the subject of the earls' plot, Froissart rather surprisingly says that God was very kind to the king (Henry), for he had news of the affair in time to take action against it.[38]

As for Richard's end, Froissart heard the report of his death, but could not learn the cause of it. And instead of making a specific providential application, he simply takes it as a sad instance of the mutability of the fortunes of the world. Froissart himself benefited greatly from Richard's liberality, he says, and is therefore bound to pray to God for his soul; it pains him to

[33] Frois 663–664.

[34] Frois 680. "If it please God" is, of course, a rather perfunctory conversational tag in Froissart and cannot bear much weight.

[35] Frois 684–685.

[36] Frois 692–693. Usk 196 tells the story of the greyhound also, saying that it left Richard when it sensed his fall and came to Bolingbroke, who welcomed it as a prophecy of his good fortune.

The whole subject of prognostication is a complex one, and it is difficult to give a general philosophy that could definitely apply to all authors. Often one receives the impression that the authors themselves are rather vague about the whole process, and they simply record strange phenomena for the benefit of others who might be able to intepret ulterior meanings in them. For instance, when speaking of a prodigy that occurred in 1338 (willows in January bore blossoms like roses), Walsingham says: "Interpretetur qui poterit signi prodigium, cujus relator esse delegi potius quam expositor" (oWals 8).

[37] Frois 699. Lord Berners in his translation of Froissart omits the quoted phrase (Berners 380).

[38] Frois 705. Berners 392 simply says that "God did aid King Henry."

have to write of his death, and he does so only because it is an event that belongs in his chronicles.[39]

Earlier, Froissart characterized Richard's downfall in terms of destiny, implying perhaps the familiar notion of the incomprehensibility of God's judgments. He says that whatever misfortunes fate has decreed cannot be prevented but must follow their course, and those that happened to Richard "are wonderful indeed to think on" (or as Berners says, "so marvelous that it is hard to think thereon"). He might well have avoided them, but what must be, will be.[40] And he remembers that knights of his acquaintance had foretold the reigns of both Richard and Henry long before either came to pass.[41]

It will be well to look at two more contemporary French accounts of Richard's overthrow, both of which will be of importance in later chronicles. One is a poem by Jean Créton, who accompanied Richard to Ireland and who was present at his arrest by Bolingbroke. His work is marginally referred to by Holinshed as a French pamphlet belonging to Master John Dee.[42]

In Créton's mind, the Lord must have been angry with Richard for some reason, since a great tempest on the sea prevented passage between England and Ireland for a long time, during which Bolingbroke seized the greater part of the realm by the most abominable kind of treachery. For instance, he had Archbishop Arundel preach to the people in London, showing them papal pardons and promising them that by aiding Bolingbroke against Richard they would assure themselves of a place in heaven after death.[43]

After arriving in Wales and hearing of the dispersal of his army, Richard cried out to Christ crucified, beseeching mercy if he had done anything wrong, and protesting that to the best of his ability he never consented to bring evil upon anyone not deserving of it. He added that unless God quickly sent him aid, he would be lost.[44]

The Welsh pitied Richard and protested against the outrageous way in which the English had treated their king, and

[39] Frois 708–709.

[40] Frois 678; Berners 340. Cf. Froissart's remark on Mowbray's determination to denounce Bolingbroke: "for the devil entered his brain, and what has been ordained to happen must come to pass" (661).

[41] Frois 678, 709. One of the knights was drawing on the prophecies of Merlin contained in "a book called Brut."

[42] 1–2Hol 2.850.

[43] Créton 45–53.

[44] Créton 97–98.

Créton warns that God will eventally punish them for it, "for he who willingly doth evil or injury to another is often to be greatly punished of God, who is powerful above the present race of men as well as the past." Créton then indulges in a stereotyped tirade against Fortune; and Richard himself, in his prayer to the Blessed Virgin, complains that Fortune is treating him badly.[45] He complains too that his people have failed in their duty to him, and warns that God will punish them eternally on the last day. He laments over his queen, taken away from him by the violence of Fortune. But in spite of all his sufferings, he is sufficiently resigned to praise God in heaven; and this prayer is no doubt intended as a recognition that whatever God wills is for the best.[46]

When Northumberland came to parley with Richard about going to Flint and swore upon the Blessed Sacrament that no treachery was involved, his blood must have turned at it, Créton says, because he knew it was a lie. In fact, both Richard and Northumberland had bad intentions in making this agreement, but Richard's guilt was not so great, since he was forced to it. As for Northumberland, a shameful death was in store for him unless he appeased God by repentance. Richard's deceit lay in his plan to gather forces against Henry as soon as the opportunity offered. In expounding this strategy, he expressed his conviction that if he and his supporters trusted in God, he would aid them. But when he was betrayed and taken prisoner, he told the perjured Northumberland that he ought to fear divine punishment for his deed, and prayed God to reward him as he deserved.[47]

An old knight of Bolingbroke's told Créton at this time that the arrest of Richard fulfilled the prophecies of Bede and Merlin, which he proceeded to cite and interpret. "Thus," says Créton, "the knight held this prophecy to be true, and attached thereunto great faith and credit; for such is the nature of them in their country that they very thoroughly believe in prophecies, phantoms, and witchcraft, and employ . . . them right willingly. Yet in my opinion this is not right, but is a great want of faith." [48]

[45] Créton 105, 110–113. Again later on, when he prays to Christ crucified, Richard alludes to Lady Fortune's ineluctable ways: "Glorious God! who didst die for us, suspended on the cross, look mercifully upon me. None other than thou can aid my present need; and if I must lose my land and my life, should Fortune will it, I must take it all in good part; for her authority must be obeyed" (115–116).

[46] Créton 114–119.

[47] Créton 140–156.

[48] Créton 168–170; Adam of Usk also says that one of Merlin's prophecies was fulfilled at Flint by Richard (Usk 179).

On the way to London, Richard attempted to escape, but, Créton says, it must not have been the Lord's will that he do so, for he was caught and viciously thrust back into the tower where he was being held. The journey was resumed, and, upon arrival at London, the people welcomed Bolingbroke and devoutly thanked God, saying that he had shown them a miracle in sending Bolingbroke to them, and that obviously it must have been the will of God that he take over since he could not otherwise have conquered all England in less than a month. Henry's asking the citizens what he should do with Richard reminded Créton of Pilate who, also attempting to escape guilt, asked the crowd what was to be done with their king, and then turned him over to them to be killed.[49]

Créton and his companions asked and received permission from Bolingbroke to return to France; on his arrival, Créton addressed a ballade to Henry on the subject of his treachery. In the refrain of this poem he predicts Henry's damnation: "Tu en perdras en la fin corps et ame." [50] Créton believes that it would help any man to achieve eternal salvation if he were to attack and destroy Bolingbroke and his fellow traitors.[51]

He hears later of the deposition Parliament, and wonders that God could have endured the evil that all these people had in their hearts, and he believes they will pay dearly for it, because even if they are not punished in this life, the just Judge who knows their deeds will punish them hereafter. The Archbishop of Canterbury preached on the biblical episode of Jacob receiving the blessing of Isaac rather than his older brother Esau. "This he set forth as true," Créton says. "Alas, what a text for a sermon!" The people agreed to have Bolingbroke as their king and gave praise to Christ as they did so. Bolingbroke accordingly accepted their call and ascended the throne, since it had been ordained by God. "There, alas! was King Richard deprived of it for the whole of his life: such was the grudge they had against him. But, if it please God, they will deal the same by him whom they have placed thereon." [52]

When he tells of the failure of the plot of the earls, Créton prays that they may go to heaven, for they died like martyrs. Richard was overcome by these sad tidings, and called upon Death to come take him, and asked God to have mercy on him,

[49] Créton 175–179.
[50] Créton 182–187; 379–380.
[51] Créton 189–190.
[52] Créton 191–203.

for he could no longer live in such misery. It is said then that Richard refused to eat and so died, but Créton does not believe it, for others say he is still in prison. However, Henry and others of his blood paraded a dead body through London, alleging it to be the body of Richard, and making a great show of mourning after it, without regard for the evils they inflicted upon him. And this will be a great burden to them on the last day, the poet continues, when God will sentence the wicked to the everlasting flames of hell. But if the body were really that of Richard, Créton prays that he may be taken to heaven, for in his opinion he hated every kind of wrongdoing, and he saw nothing in him "save catholic faith and justice." Créton himself served him for seven months in an effort to merit in some way the benefits he had promised him.[53]

In concluding, Créton says: "Let us now beseech God, who humbly suffered his naked body to be suspended upon the cross for the redemption and restoration of sinners from the false foes of hell, that he will speedily avenge the great evils and ingratitude, the outrage and injustice which the wicked English have committed against their king and queen." He greatly desires to see this happen, he says, "for I solemnly declare that, according to my ability, I have uttered no evil or slander of them whereof they have not been guilty." [54]

Our third French source is the *Chronicque de la traïson et mort de Richart deux roy Dengleterre,* referred to by Holinshed as an old French pamphlet belonging to John Stow.[55] The author of this work expresses no providential opinions of his own but simply reports the comments of the people involved. His account of Richard and Northumberland at Flint resembles Créton's very closely, and suggests interdependence between the two works. While at Flint, Richard's servants told him they would throw in their lot with him, whatever happened, since it was the will of God; and Richard in his lament addressed God and the saints. Furthermore, he bade his friends remember how their Savior was undeservedly betrayed into the hands of his enemies.[56] But according to *Traïson,* it was the Londoners, not the old knight, who alluded to Merlin's prophecy and its fulfillment in Bolingbroke, when they greeted him on his entrance to the city.[57] They

[53] Créton 216–221.
[54] Créton 237–239.
[55] 1–2Hol 2.836.
[56] Traïson 199–201.
[57] Traïson 213. Benjamin Williams in his edition of the *Traïson* cites another

also thanked God and prayed for Henry when the revolt of the earls fell through.[58]

According to Froissart, Henry refused to have Richard put to death. But the *Traïson* asserts that on the day that Henry took to the field against the earls, he sent for Peter Exton to despatch Richard, alleging a sentence of execution passed by Parliament.[59] Richard defended himself valiantly, but was finally struck down by Exton himself, and he died, praying God for mercy. The author laments that the king died without being able to go to confession, and ends his account with a prayer of his own for God's mercy upon Richard's soul. In one manuscript, however, there follows an account of the story that his death was caused by voluntary starvation. The author concludes: "In this manner died King Richard, as they say; howbeit, many maintain with more reason that he died in the manner described in the last chapter; to whose soul God grant true pardon!" [60]

In these accounts sympathetic to Richard there is surprisingly little use made of the providential theme of the disciplining of God's servants through suffering. It is explicitly stressed only in the Dieulacres Chronicle, which denounces the interpretation of Richard's downfall as God's punishment for his sins; for the true interpretation, it says, is that God chastises those whom he loves, and this explains Richard's catastrophe.[61]

The Further Dealings of Divine Providence with Henry IV

In our review of the accounts of Richard's character and the explanations of his downfall, we have met with diametrically opposed interpretations. These divergent views were imperfectly assimilated in later accounts and resulted in paradoxes and contradictions in the pictures they gave of Richard.[62] The same, of

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French source which draws on Merlin, the *Ballade de Eustace Deschamps, dit Morel, de la mort du roy Richart Dangleterre.* Deschamps accuses Henry IV and England of killing Richard, and goes on to say that they will be destroyed for their sins, which will fulfill the prophecy of Merlin (Traïson lxxiv–lxxv n. 3).

[58] Traïson 247, 258.

[59] The only sentence mentioned before was that Richard was to be kept in prison and well fed. "Thus," the author adds, "was he falsely sentenced by the said Parliament" (Traïson 223).

[60] Traïson 248–251, 262. These prayers of the author are examples of the conventional aspirations for those whose deaths are recorded in the chronicles, but here perhaps they may take on an added significance because it is mentioned that Richard was deprived of the sacraments.

[61] Dieulacres 169.

[62] See Ernest W. Talbert, *The Problem of Order* (Chapel Hill 1962) 159, 232–