

May 1974

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### Recommended Citation

Guerrein, Robert T. (1974) "The Historical Background to 'Henry V,' I.i.," *University of Dayton Review*. Vol. 10: No. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol10/iss3/4>

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## The Historical Background to *Henry V*, I.i

Robert T. Guerrein

When the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely walk onto the stage to begin the first act of *Henry V*,<sup>1</sup> they greet an audience prepared to see "a kingdom for a stage," princes for actors, and a "warlike Harry" (Prol. I.3-5); and to repair any defects in the presentation with their own imaginations. The Prologue which has preceded the two bishops has promised an epic drama, a *Henriad*. But what the audience actually sees and hears disappoints any heroic expectations they may have formed. Indeed, many recent critics have pointed out the contradictions between the Chorus' predictions and the play's action.<sup>2</sup>

For instance, the Prologue to Act II promises that "Now all the youth of England are on fire,/ And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies" (Prol. II.1-2). These "youth" are Falstaff's companions, who are hardly heroic. They are on fire, however; for as the boy says, "Good Bardolph, put thy face between his sheets, and do the office of a warming-pan" (II.i.80-82). Fire will flash, too, when "Pistol's cock is up" (II.i.50).

The same Chorus speaks of the conspiracy of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, and attributes it to French bribery:

France hath in thee [England] found out  
A nest of hollow bosoms, which he fills  
With treacherous crowns. And three corrupted men—  
One, Richard Earl of Cambridge, and the second,  
Henry Lord Scroop of Masham, and the third,  
Sir Thomas Grey, knight, of Northumberland,  
Have, for the gilt of France—oh, guilt indeed!—  
Confirm'd conspiracy with fearful France (Prol. II.20-27).

But Cambridge expressly denies that the bribe was of such decisive importance—"For me, the gold of France did not seduce" (II.ii.155)—though he admits that it hastened the execution of his plans (II.ii.156-157). The Chorus ignores the obvious and inconvenient reference to Richard's claim to the throne, which his Yorkist descendants ultimately make good, to England's ruin. Nor do the French seem particularly afraid of Henry. If "fearful France" has any fault, it lies in the stupid over-confidence and childish bravado of the Dauphin.

The Prologue to Act III speaks of an England "Guarded with grandsires, babies, and old women" (Prol. III.20), even though Canterbury has assured the King that only one quarter of "happy" England's army need be used to make France tremble (I.ii.213-220)—an England whose "cull'd and choice-drawn cavaliers" (Prol. III.24)

are now all off in the field. These mirrors of chivalry are Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph, whose purpose in the war is "To suck, to suck, the very blood to suck" (II.iii.56). The Chorus later notes that the French King offers Henry only "Katherine his daughter, and with her to dowry,/ Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms" (Prol. III.30-31). Henry gets little more, after all the trouble: a French princess who shall marry him only if her father approves (V.ii.244), and the title of heir which must yet be enforced with arms. The putative object of all the hubbub, the crown, was never won. Henry instead must revel his way into a dukedom in the wooing scene with Katherine.

And though the Prologue to IV promises the audience that they shall see "the royal captain" of the "ruin'd band" of Agincourt walking through the ranks, who will salute him with "'Praise and glory on his head!'" as he smiles a "modest" smile (Prol. IV.29-32), what follows is the argument with Williams. Henry shows he has sophistry and equivocation equal to any Jesuit's.<sup>3</sup>

The pattern of irony thus woven into the play sets light against dark. We are led to expect one thing and find another. But the scene with the two bishops seems an exception to this pattern. They come onto the stage worried about a bill which Parliament has revived from a previous session, a measure which would confiscate their temporalities, "the better half of our possession" (I.i.8). They admit frankly that the money obtained would be used to set up "a hundred alms-houses right well supplied" (I.i.17) for the poor, and to support the King's soldiers; but they want to keep their every penny:

Ely. This would drink deep.

Cant. 'Twould drink the cup and all.

Ely. But what prevention? (I.i.19-21).

Their "prevention" is to remind Henry of his French claims, and so to distract everyone's attention from domestic affairs to foreign.

They are selfish and Machiavellian: two qualities which might tarnish the heroic glory we expected. But the pattern of irony is woven even more subtly into this scene. Canterbury and Ely undercut the Prologue, deflate it, subvert it in fact, because they are more intimately associated with Henry himself than we might at first discern. The irony implicit in the bishops' praises is echoed in *Hamlet*, for both Claudius and Henry employ the rhetoric of a false, seeming virtue. And both are served by counselors who hide the truth rather than reveal it.

All the play's ironies are not expressed directly. Some depend on the audience knowing the historical background from which the play is drawn. The final scene and final chorus foretell the ruin of Henry's golden hopes by reminding the audience of the reign of Henry VI and all its disasters: [Henry to Katherine] "Shall not thou and I, between St. Denis and St. George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?" (V.ii.205-208); and

Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd king  
Of France and England, did this king succeed;  
Whose state so many had the managing  
That they lost France and made his England bleed;  
Which oft our stage hath shown (Epi. V.9-13).

In a similar way, two historical factors might influence our interpretation of the bishops' place in Henry V. The first is the Elizabethan memory of Henry's relations with his clergy, and the second is the 1598-1600 dispute over the bishopric of Ely.

The chronicles, it is true, recall Henry favorably. Raphael Holinshed tells us of a King whose life was "without spot, a prince whome all men loued, and of none disdained . . . his virtues notable, his qualities most praise-worthy."<sup>4</sup> But Holinshed offers us only part of Henry's character; he concentrates on the king's secular concerns. Others were not so lavish with praise: Foxe, for instance, whose views of Henry's policy (as we shall see) had to be dealt with by those who wanted a "warlike Harry," a hero.

The Lancastrians were strongly pro-Papal and anti-Lollard. As such, they are criticized by the *Actes and Monuments*,<sup>5</sup> the second Bible of Anglicans and Puritans alike. We read of the first Lancastrian: "Henry IV, who was the deposer of king Richard, was the first of all English kings that began the unmerciful burning of Christ's saints for standing against the pope . . . Such was the reign of this prince, that to the godly he was ever terrible, in his actions immeasurable, of few men heartily beloved." The marginal gloss comments here, "Much murder and beheading in the time of king Henry IV" (p. 229).

Foxe's theme and the length of his work force him to ignore most of secular history. When therefore he comes to Henry V, he mentions his "virtues, and great victories gotten in France," but chooses not to "intermeddle" in them (p. 319). Instead he writes voluminously on one of his major pre-Reformation martyrs: Falstaff's original, Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham. Henry's reign continued the persecution of the Lollards, with Archbishop Arundel, "as fierce as ever was Pharaoh, Antiochus, Herod, or Caiaphas" (p. 321), and his successor, Chichesly, hounding and harrying them with writs, summonses, examinations, and sentences. Their tool in this affair was the King, "whom they had made fit for their hand" (p. 321). Arundel and his clergy waited on the King at Kensington in 1413 and complained about Lord Cobham. "The king gently heard those blood-thirsty prelates, and far otherwise than became his princely dignity," says Foxe (p. 322), but Henry was reluctant at first to use strong measures with Cobham. He resolved to try persuasion first, and called the "heretic" for an interview. He would reason Oldcastle out of his errors.

The man proved obstinate, however. Cobham affirmed his loyalty to Henry, with the important proviso "next [to] my eternal God" (p. 322), but he held the Pope to be anti-Christ and believed firmly in all of Lollardy. "When the king

heard this . . . he would talk no longer with him, but left him so utterly" (p. 322). The interview, then, was a failure; the King was very angry.

Foxe charges that Oldcastle was then falsely summoned to appear before the Archbishop's court, where he made a profession of faith and was examined at length. The result was predictable: as a Lollard, Oldcastle was condemned and excommunicated. The prelates returned to Henry and accused their enemy of sedition as well. They urged him to consider what they saw as the ruinous condition of the realm—meaning, no doubt, their own unpopularity—and pressed him to take even stronger measures. "Upon this complaint, the king immediately called a Parliament in Leicester," London being too favorable to Oldcastle (p. 341).

The clergy were surprised, however, for this very Parliament urged the secularization of their enormous temporalities, in the bill which Canterbury and Ely find so distasteful in the first act of *Henry V*. They countered the measure by reminding Henry of his French claims, and by forcing through a bill of their own, one which forbade the reading of the English Bibles distributed by Wycliff's followers. The penalties were those assigned to treason and heresy, hanging in chains and burning. "Thus were Christ's people betrayed every way, and their lives bought and sold by these most cruel thieves" (p. 341). Foxe glosses all these proceedings as "A cruel act of king Henry V for religion," and "Never tyrant more cruel" (p. 341).

Foxe interrupts his narrative here with a long digression defending Oldcastle against his detractors, and he inserts the story of John Huss and his Bohemian disciples. When he returns to English affairs he gives the lives of more martyrs. But he tells us that Cobham escaped from the Tower, where the prelates had had him imprisoned. He fled to Wales, but was recaptured through treachery. He was hanged in chains over a fire, following the brutal law the clergy had induced the king to support. Foxe sums up Oldcastle's story by noting that the cause of his death was "his religion, which first brought him in hatred of the bishops; the bishops brought him in hatred of the king; the hatred of the king brought him to his death and martyrdom. And thus much for the death and execution of this worthy servant of Christ, the good Lord Cobham" (p. 543).

The priests praised the ruler who so favored their interests. We hear of "the blind affection of monks and priests at that time towards their king and prince, who was then called 'Princeps Sacerdotum' in condemning and destroying the poor Lollards" (p. 397). The monks called Henry their "verus amicus" (p. 397).

By itself, Foxe's *Actes* proves little. There is no way of documenting that Shakespeare ever read it, though it was standard reading material. Nor is there a way of estimating how much it affected the audience of *Henry V*, or how much he could count on exploiting its ideas. Shakespeare may or may not have approved of Foxe's Protestant hagiography, and his public would react to it as their varying consciences dictated, favorably or otherwise. But it is important to note that at least one popular and authoritative work of the period pictures Henry, that mirror of Christendom, as priest-ridden and a partisan of the Whore of Babylon. "Old-

castle died a martyr," says the Epilogue to 2 Henry IV (Epi. V.32): the sordid affair of Henry and his former friend was to some degree in the consciousness of the audience of Henry V.

So ugly a fault as this had to be suppressed, then, in any drama which set out to glorify Henry as the Prologues glorify him. There must be no mention of the *Princeps Sacerdotum*. It is not surprising that in *The Life of Sir Iohn Oldcastle*,<sup>6</sup> staged to counter the impression of Shakespeare's Oldcastle-Falstaff, the King's relations with the clergy are not presented as Shakespeare presents them. The authors must tamper with Foxe's account, in order to show Henry V as an admirable Protestant.

Drayton and three others have been given credit for the play, which was probably produced at approximately the same time as *Henry V*.<sup>7</sup> The work was in two parts, but only the first, which presents Cobham's history up to his flight to Wales, has survived.

Most of the play, save for one important particular—the King himself—is simply a dramatization of Foxe's account. Drayton's villain is the Bishop of Rochester, one of Foxe's higher Popish clergy: proud, bloody-minded, and anxious to destroy any Lollard in his diocese. He gives us his very definite views on religious matters in a complaint to the Duke of Suffolk:

Grievous complaints haue past betweene the lippes  
Of enuious persons to vpbraide the Cleargy,  
Some carping at the liuings which we haue,  
And others spurning at the ceremonies  
That are of auncient custome in the church.  
Amongst the which, Lord Cobham is a chiefe:  
What inconuenience may proceede hereof,  
Both to the King and to the common wealth,  
May easily be discernd, when like a frensie  
This innouation shall possesse their mindes.  
The vpstarts will haue followers to vphold  
Their damnd opinion, more than Harry shall  
To vndergoe his quarrell gainst the French (151-163).

He is brusque and brutal; he threatens to torture Lady Cobham on suspicion of concealing her husband. His goal in life is "To see this heretike die in a rope" (960), and he pesters the King about him at every opportunity. Further, we see from the Bishop's last line that he wishes his anti-Lollard interests served by the French war. As the Protestants gain strength, it seems, recruits for the King go down. So he will push for war, "patriotically." Drayton has some fun with the Bishop, for when Oldcastle escapes from the Tower, he strips Rochester and disguises himself in his robes. There is no real attempt at characterization—Rochester is simply a stereotype of the Popish prelate.

More interesting is Sir John, the parson of Wrotham. Probably he is Falstaff's counterpart, for he robs travellers (once he robs the disguised king), plays at dice (again, with Henry disguised), and keeps a mistress, whom he sometimes passes off as his "niece." He confesses himself freely to the audience:

Me thinks the purse of gold the Bishop gaue,  
Made a good shew, it had a tempting looke,  
Beshrew me, but my fingers ends do itch  
To be vpon those rudduks [gold pieces]: well, tis thus:  
I am not as the worlde does take me for:  
If ever wolfe were clothed in sheepes coate,  
Then I am he, olde huddle and twang, yfaith,  
A priest in shew, but in plaine terms, a theefe,  
Yet let me tell you too, an honest theefe,  
One that will take it where it may be sparde,  
And spend it freely in good fellowship (301-311).

But Sir John has nothing of the many-sided nature of Falstaff, even though he is not so flat as the Bishop.

Set against these ecclesiastical villains are Cobham and the King. But to present Henry favorably in the Oldcastle affair, Drayton resorts to tampering with the received facts. Quite contrary to Foxe and Shakespeare, he represents Henry as the enemy of the Popish clergy.

When, for example, Rochester wants to bring Cobham to "the Arches," i.e., to the Archbishop's Court of the Arches, the King and he quickly become involved in a dispute over the limits of royal authority over the Church:

Harry How if he appeale?  
Bishop He cannot (my Lord) in such a case as this.  
Suffolke Not where Religion is the plea, my lord.  
Harry I tooke it alwayes, that our self stood ont [on't],  
As a sufficient refuge, vnto whome  
Not any but might lawfully appeale.  
But wee le not argue now vpon that poynt:  
For sir Iohn Old-Castle whom you accuse,  
Let me intreate you to dispence awhile  
With your high title of preheminance. in scorne  
(267-276).

"In scorne": how different is this Harry from the Henry whom Canterbury wants "made a prelate" (I.i.40). Rochester would not praise Harry's piety and devotion to Holy Church, nor deliver lines on his "grace and fair regard." Again contrary to received facts, Drayton twists the result of the interview between Harry and Oldcastle, making it friendly and agreeable. Harry shows a great willingness to bear with Cobham, and to pardon him. When Oldcastle appeals,

I do beseech your grace,  
My conscience may not be incroacht vpon,

Harry replies,

We would be loath to presse our subjects bodies,  
Much less their soules, the deere redeemed part,  
Of him that is the ruler of us all . . . (854-858).

The King urges caution for Cobham, and then pardons a lord for whom Cobham intercedes. When the Bishop enters immediately after, he and the King begin a violent dispute:

[Harry:] . . . You durst be bold, to interrupt,  
And fill our eares with friuolous complaints,  
Is this the duetie you do beare to us?

.....  
This sauours of Ambition, not of zeale,  
And rather proues, you malice his [Cobham's] estate,  
Than any way that he offends the law.  
Go to, we like it not (916-927).

And Harry bids Lord Cobham depart peacefully. This is Drayton's picture of an interview, at the end of which Foxe says the King "would talk no longer with him, but left him so utterly." Harry plays Protestant too when the rebels Acton, Beverly, and Murley plead a desire to reform religion as the cause of their revolt: it is the King's duty to reform, and "good subjects [to] make knowne their griefe" (1662).

Drayton's Harry is the Godly Prince of Tyndale and of the early reformers who hoped so much for a reforming ruler. And instead of the warlike Harry promised by the Prologue to *Henry V*, I, we see the *Rex Monachorum*. Henry may have been Caesar; he was not Josiah.

Thus, Foxe's history and Drayton's play enable us to see that Shakespeare's opening with Canterbury and Ely is no neutral fact. The King is more closely associated with the two bishops than we might think. This conclusion is strengthened by considering a curious feature of the play, the name "Ely."

The bad quartos of 1600 present the two Bishops simply as such, without naming them, but these quartos have little authority and leave off both the Prologue and the whole first scene.<sup>8</sup> It is assumed that the Folio text, which names the Bishops, is the more authoritative. Holinshed reports that Canterbury gives the Salic law speech, but he does not mention Ely, who is Shakespeare's addition. At first it is difficult to see why the dramatist added him to the scene. The Bishop is never called "Ely" by any of the other characters, and it might be assumed that the name is gratuitous. It is not.

In 1599 the see of Ely had been vacant for seventeen years, and this lapse was something of a scandal in the Church.<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth had not liked Cox, the old incumbent, and when he died in 1582, she had not replaced him. Instead she pocketed the revenues, which she used to support Don Antonio of Portugal, who was poor and dependent upon her charity. But after Don Antonio had died, she was ready to fill the vacancy upon conditions, viz., alienations of property. White, whose *Lives of the Elizabethan Bishops* is not always a wholly accurate source, says that before the Queen found a bishop, she was refused several times, for "the conditions which its acceptance involved were too base" (p. 402).<sup>10</sup> However this may be, the alienations finally made were thought excessive. "Elizabeth, shamed at last into filling the see," remarks the *DNB*, "found . . . a compliant instrument for her avarice" in Martin Heaton (or Heton), dean of Winchester and vice-chancellor of Oxford.

The *Calendar of State Papers*<sup>11</sup> covering the period between 1599 and 1600—for Heaton finally submitted to consecration on February 3, 1600—show the government's concern for the diocese. On November 16, 1598 the Privy Council received a four-page Latin report on certain of Ely's lands (p. 119); and by May 28, 1599, Heaton had probably decided to accept the position, for Elizabeth then filled a vacancy at Cambridge which was "in the Queen's gift by vacancy of the see of Ely" (p. 199). On July 5, 1599 a commission was sent out to survey the bishopric's lands and to "take them into her Majesty's hands" (p. 237). By December 23 Heaton had most certainly given his assent, since one entry for that date mentions his promotion (p. 360).<sup>12</sup>

The source for much of our information about Heaton and his quarrels with Elizabeth is Harington's *Breife View of the State of the Church of England . . .*,<sup>13</sup> written for the private instruction of Prince Henry no later than 1608. Harington is better known for his epigrams, for his *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, and for his translation of *Orlando Furioso*, but this little work is a most interesting anecdotal history of the late Elizabethan Church.

The Ely scandal causes Harington some troublesome explanations, for "it was held for one of the blemishes of Queen Elizabeths Virgin raigne"; and though he tries to defend the Queen, Harington admits he "could wish it had not been so" (p. 78). Heaton, he says, "was compelled in a sort so to take it (for potentes cum rogant jubent), and as long as there was not quid dabo, but haec auferam, the more politike it was" (p. 79). Poor Heaton; men said his signature *Mar. Ely* meant "mar Ely" (p. 80). Harington also reports this quip about the Bishop's financial troubles:

I was in Oxford Library, and some of good quality of both Universities; and one of their chief Doctors said merrily to a Cambridge man, that Oxford had formerly had a good Library, till such time (said he) as a Cambridge man became our Chancellour, and so cancell'd or catalog'd . . . our Books (he meant Bishop Cox in King Edward's time) as from that time to this we could never recover them. The other straight replied, then you are even with

us, for one of your *Oxford* men hath seal'd so many good deeds for our good Bishoprick in *Cambridgeshire*, that till they be cancell'd, it will never be so good as it should be (p. 80).

In Harington, then, we have one possible explanation of Shakespeare's choice of the name "Ely" for his prelate, and an indication of a series of events lying behind the opening scene of *Henry V*. The issue was current and serious: the see had long been vacant, it had to be filled, and it had to be filled on financial conditions. The Ely of *Henry V* wants to keep his wealth; so did Heaton, presumably. The Bishops try to inveigle the King; in Shakespeare's time this situation is reversed, with the monarch forcing her will on the hapless vice-chancellor, whose resistance is vain. There is no necessity to believe that the Ely of *Henry V* is meant to suggest Heaton personally, but the similarity of the two situations emphasizes yet again the damaging view of the Ely of the play. Both men want to keep their temporalities, and Heaton's pathetic and useless resistance can serve only to heighten the venality of the prelates, and their tacit agreements with their *Princes* the King.

Thus, a consideration of the varied historical background of *Henry V*, I.i. reveals that the scene is far more important than we might first assume. After all, if the bishops are only accidentally connected with Henry because of a transient political situation, the Leicester Parliament, we may disregard them in judging Henry himself. But the effect of Foxe and Drayton, and of the Heaton controversy, is to show that there is a bond between the prelates and the King. They are, in varying ways, hypocrites.

The prelates, for instance, are the first persons in the play to be fooled by Henry as King. (The Chorus is fooled, too, but he is not one of the participants in the action. He simply fails to comprehend it.) They believed in Henry's acting when he played reveller Hal at the Boar's Head, and so they believe in his sudden "reformation";

Consideration like an angel came,  
And whipp'd th' offending Adam out of him  
(I.i.28-29).

All we know about Henry contradicts these opinions; he was always himself, a politician smoother than his father, and his reformation was a fraud, a device. His fraud, when he played Hal, consisted in his impressing a false image of his personality on others, by associating with the fat, white-haired Vice whom he has now repudiated. He has no need to act thus now, for he can continue the original deception simply by refusing to return to his old life and his old companions. He now has new thieves for his companions; he has Canterbury and Ely. But since he keeps his own counsel, none of these thieves, neither the old nor the new, is aware of the deceit. Canterbury and Ely, who seek to use the King's favor for their own ends, were born too early to read a maxim of La Rochefoucauld which applies to them: "The cleverest subtlety of all is knowing how to appear to fall into traps set for us; people are never caught so easily as when they are out to catch others."<sup>14</sup>

Henry has this too-clever subtlety, for only the audience has been permitted to

know his secrets. Because of these secrets the other characters move in a shadow-play, performing sham actions they think are real. Consider the conference between Canterbury and Ely, and the subsequent public disputation on the war with France. The prelates are first deceived about Henry's personality—cynics themselves, they see him as more honest than he is. Canterbury hopes to distract the "reformed" King by reminding him of his French claims, and so save Holy Church:

For I have made an offer unto his Majesty—  
Upon our spiritual convocation,  
And in regard of causes now in hand,  
Which I have open'd to his Grace at large,  
As touching France (I.i.75-79).

Canterbury credits himself with "opening" the French business to Henry; but the war against France has already been decided, in 2 *Henry IV*, when the old man proposed the war to his son and explained the reasons for it (IV.V.213ff). The ambassadors from France, who are waiting apart from the conference which is to decide if Henry has any claim to France, have been sent to reply to claims Henry has already made (I.ii.246ff). The clergy have not determined Henry's course at all. Canterbury's self-congratulations is not called for, nor is his assurance that Henry seemed interested in the legalities of his claims (I.i.84ff). For it is not the legalities but the pretences of law that Henry seeks.

The consultation on Salic law, outwardly showing the God-fearing clergy advising a God-fearing prince, shows instead unspoken self-interest speaking to unspoken self-interest, the vultures advising the fox in a mutual rhetorical mendacity.<sup>15</sup> These first two scenes thus introduce the ironies of Henry's position by destroying the expectations raised by the Prologue, and by introducing at the same time the aspects of pretence, of acting, and of facile rhetoric.

Henry is an actor, a most accomplished one. He has been compared to Germanicus and to Alexander the Great,<sup>16</sup> or, as Fluellen would have it, the Pig (IV.vii.12ff), but it would be better to compare him to the Claudius of *Hamlet*, another actor-King who can dissemble so well that he fools almost his entire Court, and who also prays uselessly to God when he thinks he is alone. Henry is a usurper, and nothing can hide his position as such; indeed, Shakespeare reminds us of it with the Cambridge conspiracy. Claudius seems popular enough among his nobility, mildewed ear though he might be, and so is Henry. The central portion of Claudius' prayer shows a most exact parallel to Henry's before Agincourt:

'Forgive me my foul murder'!  
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd  
Of those effects for which I did the murder—  
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.  
May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?  
In the corrupted currents of this world

Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above  
(*Ham.*, III.iii.52-60).

The idea here, that true repentance must consist in giving up the advantages of evil, giving up crown, ambition, and queen, is Henry's too. So is the lack of true repentance. Henry has no queen to give up, it is true, but he has the crown inherited from the dead Richard, and he has his ambition. He intends to give up neither, and so he does not intend to repent. What he does instead, is to curry favor with God by superstition:

O, not to-day, think not upon the fault  
My father made in compassing the crown!  
I Richard's body have interred new,  
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears  
Than from it issued forced drops of blood;  
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,  
Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up  
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built,  
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
Still sing for Richard's soul (*IV.i.289-298*).

Chantries and beadsmen, and a new-whited sepulcher: at least Claudius does not descend to these superstitions, which emphasize yet again Henry's close ties to the Romish religion. Five hundred poor he keeps up; but not one hundred alms-houses.

Like Claudius, too, Henry speaks so beautifully—or rather, so rhetorically, and with such a self-conscious rhetoric. The nicely parallel lines of ranting in II.ii, when Henry is berating the conspirators for hypocrisy show the same kind of schoolroom eloquence of the balanced, stately clauses Claudius employs in his opening lines. The very *obviousness* of the rhetoric, the impossibility of mistaking it for impassioned speech because of the over-use of such devices as parallelism, are what must strike us. A long rant, a long involved clause pushes us away from its speaker.

And if Henry speaks like Claudius, the clergy speak like Polonius. Their over-long presentation of the Salic law, so complex and so tedious, and ultimately so silly, is not too far from "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" (*Ham.*, II.ii.392ff). Like Polonius, Canterbury dissolves into a haze of words, sounds issuing from a garrulous mouth.

There is yet a further parallel implicit in the self-conscious acting practiced by the King, his prelates, and Claudius. *Hamlet* reaches out to include its audience as actors in a larger drama, in the implications of what the audience sees. There is a play within a play in *Hamlet*, which has language far more stiff, more heavily iambic, and less colloquial than that of *Hamlet* proper: "Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart

gone round" and so forth (III.ii.150). Hamlet himself, by his passion for sincerity, his exposure of Claudius' hypocrisy, and his own references to acting (including his first words, which deny that he is an actor), awakens in the audience a consciousness of the play they act in, whose language and structure is to *Hamlet's* as *Hamlet's* is to the *Mousetrap*. So, too, Henry V is a play of disappointed rhetoric, of disappointed expectations, of useless prologues. The audience must be forced to stand apart from the play and to judge the form being presented to them, and to recognize the sterility of the action. It will all come to nothing; the play's pumped-up glory is itself another useless prologue to a great disappointment, the reign of poor Henry VI. The Chorus and the Bishops and the King bleat on with their rhetorical exaggerations and Polonius-like sententiousness. Canterbury spoke better than he knew when he said that an argument he disdains has "some shows of truth—/ Though in pure truth it was corrupt and naught" (I.ii.72-73).

Political corruption, religious hypocrisy, a preference for engineered scenes which hide the truth under "shows" rather than revealing it, the long-winded counsellor: we can already see the patterns of *Troilus and Cressida* and of *Hamlet* being woven in Henry V.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Complete Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1951). Further references will be noted in the text.

<sup>2</sup> The idea that Shakespeare portrays Henry V as an admirable ruler persists; for example, Franklin B. Newman, in "The Rejection of Falstaff and the Rigorous Charity of the King," *ShakS*, II (1966), 153-161, explains Falstaff's dismissal as a kindly charity. But critics now tend to accept the irony of *Henry V* and its consequent criticism of Henry himself. Two reasons for Shakespeare's irony are generally offered. The first is that the play attacks Henry's pomposity and hypocrisy: see Honor Matthews, "The Usurped Throne and the Ambiguous Hero," *Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1962), rpt. in *Shakespeare: Henry V: A Casebook*, ed. Michael Quinn (Bristol: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 202-227; Matthews sees the King as a neurotic who has tried to suppress his good qualities. See also Roy Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1962, and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 163-182. The second opinion is that the play's ironies show us some ambiguity in Shakespeare's own mind, or some dichotomy inherent in political action, or in the just ruler: see, for example, Robert Egan, "A Muse of Fire: Henry V in the Light of *Tamburlaine*," *MLQ*, XXIX (1968), 15-28; Egan sees Henry as Everyman turned conqueror. Also interesting is C. H. Hobady, "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," *ShS*, XXI (1968), 107-114, who argues that dichotomies in the play might be those in Shakespeare himself.

But both interpretations accept the ironies of the play as a given—including the undercutting of the choruses. This undercutting runs deeper than anyone has noticed, at least as regards the Bishops, though of course it has been noticed that the audience would probably have disliked them for their Papistry. See Hobady, 109.

<sup>3</sup> This point is well examined by Marilyn L. Williamson, "The Episode with Williams in *Henry V*," *SEL*, IX (1969), 275-282.

<sup>4</sup> *The First and Second [and Third] Volumes of Chronicles Comprising 1 The Description and Historie of England, 2 The Description and Historie of Ireland, 3 The Description and Historie of Scotland* (London, 1587), II, p. 583.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. S. R. Cattley, III (London: R. B. Seely and W. Burnside, 1837). Further references will be noted in the text. Foxe represents for us the "official" view of the religious history of England in Shakespeare's time, if any writer does. The secular historians do not express any strong judgment of the religious struggles of Henry V's reign; Wilhelm Baeske finds Holinshed's treatment of the Protestant martyr Oldcastle "ziemlich farblos," in contrast to the religious writers'. See "Oldcastle-Falstaff in der Englischen Literatur bis zu Shakespeare," *Palaestra*, L (1905), 69. Baeske conveniently summarizes all the major works on Oldcastle before Shakespeare. John Bale supplied Foxe with much of his information and even his wording—Foxe is in this case more of an editor than an original author. Bale's account may be most easily found in his *Select Works*, ed. Henry Christmas, Parker Society Publications, I (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1849), pp. 1-59.

Baeske does not mention the rare *Examinacioun of Master William Thorpe . . . [and of] Syr Jhon Oldcastell*, probably ed. by William Tyndale (Antwerp, 1530?); but this work is a simple passion-story. It consists of speeches and cross-questions, and little commentary. Foxe, therefore, seems to be the major "source" for the Protestant view of Oldcastle, for all the others are either brief, rare, or conflated into the *Actes*.

Alice L. Scoufos, in "The 'Martyrdom of Falstaff,'" *ShakS*, II (1966), 174-191, has also noted the relations between Foxe and Shakespeare, which follow from the identification of Falstaff with the famous Protestant martyr. She stresses that by making Oldcastle into such a man as Falstaff, Shakespeare was satirizing the Cobhams, particularly William Brooke, seventh Lord Cobham, who had inherited Oldcastle's title, and none of his virtues.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Percy Simpson, Malone Society Publication ([London]: Chiswick Press, 1908).

<sup>7</sup> See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), III, pp. 306-307. The other writers were Munday, Wilson, and Hathaway. Chambers notes, p. 307, that "Fleay, ii.16, attempts to disentangle the work of the collaborators." For convenience sake, I shall refer to Drayton as the author.

Simpson dates the play's performance as "not later than 8 November 1599," p. vi.

<sup>8</sup> W. W. Greg, in *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 68-69, says that while the bad quartos are reported texts, the Folio *Henry V* "may have been printed from the author's manuscript" (p. 69).

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hill, in *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 17, says that Ely "proved difficult to dispose of" because of the alienations the Queen demanded. Hill; the *DNB*, XXVI (1891), p. 301; and F. O. White, *Lives of the Elizabethan Bishops* (London: Skeffington and Son, 1898), pp. 401-404, all repeat the same melancholy story about Ely, and about Martin Heaton, the see's eventual bishop, for they are drawn from the same sources. Aside from *Athenae Oxonienses*, and brief notices in Strype's *Annals*, all of which simply catalogue Heaton's dates and offices, what we know of Heaton is drawn from Francis Godwin, *A Catalogue of the Bishops of England* (London, 1615)—which is, indeed, simply a catalogue, not offering us much—and Sir John Harington's *Briefe View*, for which see n. 13 below.

<sup>10</sup> I have not seen this confirmed elsewhere, even though it is believable. White however errs in giving Heaton his B.A. in 1575, when the date was December 17, 1574, according to the *DNB*. So it is difficult to know how far to trust his statement. Hill, p. 17, follows White here; but

Hill does not mention that the revenues of the see were devoted to Don Antonio, and implies that no candidate could be forced to accept for the full eighteen years. Perhaps Elizabeth did not look very hard for one, if she had found so convenient a use for the revenues.

- <sup>11</sup> *Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1598-1601*, ed. Mary Ann Everett Green (London: Longmans, Green, 1869). Again, references will be made in the text.
- <sup>12</sup> Heaton held his depleted see until his death nine years later, and was succeeded by Lancelot Andrewes. He was buried in his cathedral, where his tomb still stands; his epitaph was written by William Gager, the neo-Latin dramatist, his friend and chancellor of Ely. His effigy lies recumbent over his bones, representing him in a rich cope ornamented with pictures of the Apostles. (The same kind of cope is shown in El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz*.) Such a costume is quite unusual, "perhaps the only instance" of such an effigy "since the Reformation," according to Charles Stubbs, *Ely Cathedral Handbook* (Ely: Minster Press, 1904), p. 186. For an engraving of Heaton's tomb (I have never seen any printed photograph), see James Benthams, *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely*, 2nd ed. (Norwich: Stevenson, Matchett, and Stevenson, 1812), facing p. 197.  
For the extent of the depletions of the diocese, see *The Victoria History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, ed. R. B. Pugh, II (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), p. 179; and IV (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 98, 111, 112, 137, 141, 169, and 183.
- <sup>13</sup> The full title is *A Briefe Viewe of the State of the Church of England, As it stood in Q. Elizabeths and King James his Reigne, to the Yeere 1608* (London, 1653). Harington is the main source of our information about Heaton's trouble. I have never seen his assertions contradicted; and his anecdotes are always re-told. Further references will be noted in the text.
- <sup>14</sup> *Maxims*, trans. L. W. Tancock (Edinburgh: R. and R. Clark, 1967), p. 49, no. 117.
- <sup>15</sup> Henry speaks of God thirty-five times, oftener than any other Shakespearean character. Cf. Allan Gilbert, "Patriotism and Satire in *Henry V*," *Studies in Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur D. Matthews and Clark M. Emery (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1953), p. 62.
- <sup>16</sup> George R. Price, "Henry V and Germanicus," *SQ*, XII (1961), 57-60; and Ronald S. Berman, "Shakespeare's Alexander: Henry V," *CE*, XXIII (1962), 532-539.