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SHAKESPEARE'S ATTITUDE
TOWARDS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN "KING JOHN"

This dissertation was conducted under the direction of Arthur Deering, Ph. D., Associate Professor of English, as Major Professor, and was approved by Francis J. Hemelt, Ph. D., Associate Professor of English, and H. Edward Cain, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of English, as Readers.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Shakespeare's Attitude
Towards the Catholic Church
In "King John"

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Was Shakespeare a Catholic? This question has frequently been discussed in the past four centuries, and still the problem remains unsolved. Unless some decisive evidence be discovered in this regard, there is little likelihood that the problem will definitely be solved in the near future. When speaking then of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in *King John*, it is not my purpose to attempt to discover what may have been the religion of Shakespeare. This may seem rather strange, for almost every writer on the subject uses one or more arguments from *King John*, in order to introduce Shakespeare as a member of the congregation chosen for the occasion. Needless to say, their arguments are not very conclusive and their conclusions are often very startling. Although this investigation has revealed certain facts that have some positive significance in regard to the religion of Shakespeare, I hasten to say that the question of Shakespeare's religion is beyond the scope of the present study.

Shakespeare may have had various reasons for writing *King John*. Perhaps his primary purpose was to furnish wholesome entertainment for his fellowmen, or to produce a play that complied with all the artistic standards of his day, or, perhaps—as some would have it—to use the drama as a political or religious weapon in the great controversies of that period. Whatever may have been his purpose in writing *King John*, Shakespeare was constrained to adopt some definite attitude towards the Catholic Church. This attitude may have been dictated by his own personal sentiments, or by external circumstances, such as political or religious policy. Nevertheless, Shakespeare had to adopt

some attitude towards the Catholic Church, and it is this attitude that the present enquiry seeks to discover.

In the course of the investigation the works of at least two hundred critics were consulted. The chief interest in this phase of the study lay in the vast difference of opinion, which directly or indirectly bore upon the subject itself. Naturally, the material that had only an indirect bearing upon the subject was quite difficult to construe. Sometimes mere emendations or incidental explanatory remarks were the sole basis on which to judge the critic's opinion. Whenever there was any doubt about an author's opinion, the critic in question was simply excluded from classification, for a doubtful classification would be meaningless. But even though a critic could not be classified, his views or comments were, nevertheless, duly considered.

Many opinions of critics clearly rest upon premises and assumptions, which, if not absolutely false, are at least questionable. Some of these assumptions pertain to the history of King John, others to the Protestant interpretation of King John and others to certain peculiar circumstances relating to the stage history of Shakespeare's *King John*. It has, therefore, been deemed necessary to probe these assumptions, in order to evaluate correctly the opinions which rest upon them.

Some critics interpret *King John* according to the prevalent religious and political attitude of their own day—to say nothing of their own personal prejudices. This fact has rendered much of the criticism of *King John* valueless. Now, in this study of the play the method pursued is, of course, purely objective: the history of all the vital questions is closely examined, particularly in their relation to Shakespeare's day, and, throughout, that interpretation is followed which seems to have been the most obvious to an Elizabethan audience.

In Shakespeare's *King John* the canon law of the Church plays an important part. Wherever the present canon law is merely a precise statement of the old, the

present law is used. Any critical edition of the present code¹ states the sources for each canon. When the old law contains some distinctive regulation relevant to this subject, the old law will be used. It need hardly be remarked that any references to the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* or to the *Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini* are references to laws promulgated before Shakespeare's time and, of course, still enforced in Shakespeare's time. The references to the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* are given doubly: the first according to the standard form among canonists, the second according to the usual bibliographical method of reference. This method of handling the law seems the simplest and its purpose is to avoid complexities.

Throughout this study the 1623 *Folio Text* has been used, but the act, scene and line references are according to the Oxford Text. Although all emendations of the text, which seem to have some bearing on the present subject, are noted, no emendation forms the basis of any conclusion. This study is based simply on the unemended text. In interpreting a speech, the sources, the context, the important words, the nature of the speech, the manner of its delivery, the artistic requirements, the historical background and the audience—each receive separate consideration as the case may require. In this way conclusions are formed, which, it is hoped, may rightly be considered sound. In order to corroborate these conclusions, the actions, reactions and general attitude of the various characters are considered in relation to the present subject. The final test of these conclusions consists in observing their harmony with an obvious and reasonable interpretation of the play as a whole.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to Dr. Arthur Deering for his time, interest and scholarly advice throughout the progress of this work, to Dr. Francis J. Hemelt and to Dr. H. Edward Cain for their careful examination of the completed work. I wish to express

¹*Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1918).

moreover, my sincere appreciation to my own family for its ever thoughtful generosity, and to my Religious Superiors, who kindly granted, unsolicited as it was, this cherished opportunity of advanced studies.

Capuchin College, Washington, D. C.

Feast of the Assumption, 1938.

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PART I—THE CRITICS

CHAPTER I.

SHAKESPEARE'S INTERPRETERS

The Life and Death of King John has probably produced a more diversified harvest of interpretations than any other play of Shakespeare. This play involves the highly charged question of the relation between Church and state, a question which has ever been a center of lively speculation and debate. Moreover, *King John* was written at a time of tremendous religious upheaval and intense political intrigue; and, to complicate matters even more, the time of its composition bears many striking parallels with the days of King John—parallels, national as well as international, political as well as ecclesiastical. It is not surprising, then, that the harvest of opinions is not only huge, but so varied that at times the wheat is hardly distinguishable from the cockle.

In this chapter the varying interpretations of the incidents in *King John*, which have reference to Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church, will be presented, in order to point out the chief problems concerned in this study and at the same time to show the wide range of opinion on each problem. The opinions center naturally around King-John and Cardinal Pandulph; therefore, Section One will treat of Shakespeare's John, and Section Two of Shakespeare's Pandulph. In Section Three an attempt will be made to classify the interpreters according to their respective opinions of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in *King John*, in order to ascertain, if possible, whether any trend of opinion sufficiently prevailed to be considered traditional.

1. *Shakespeare's John*

Shakespeare's John is not such a simple soul as a few critics are inclined to believe. Even aside from the problems, the solution of which undoubtedly influence the interpretation of him, his character in itself has many aspects. To some critics these aspects appear irreconcilable in one bundle of mortality; to others certain aspects assume a prominence that is hardly justifiable. Consequently, a broad perspective of his character as well as of the problems concerning him is more likely to be an aid in this investigation than a useless complication of issues. Furthermore, in order to make this view of the field less subjective, our observations are made from the shoulders of the critics themselves. But since it would be too wearisome to present a catalogue of the varying shades of opinions with the proponents of each, only representative views will be mentioned.

John's Right to the Throne

King John is the title role of the play—an obvious fact, but often overlooked. Now, John's position as king of England brings up the question of his right to the throne. Maiden¹ considers John the lawful king, because he was recognized by the barons, and because the subsequent revolt of the barons is not due to any denial of his right. In discussing the question of John's right to the throne, Keeton² points out that lineal descent of the crown is not an iron-bound rule in England, but that Shakespeare's conception of the question is fundamentally dynastic. "The crown to him descends in the manner of real property, and he has the best claim who can prove priority of descent. All others are

¹Henry E. Maiden, "Shakespeare as an Historian," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, N. S. 10 (1896): 35.

²George W. Keeton, *Shakespeare and His Legal Problems* (London, 1980) 112.

usurpers. This is a view which is reflected in all the Histories." John himself realizes the weakness of his title, although he boldly speaks of "our strong possession, and our right for us" (I, i, 39). Elinor, the queen-mother, states the situation rather bluntly:

Your strong possession much more than your right,
Or else it must go wrong with you and me. . .
(I, i, 40, 41).

After these words, the insulting suggestion of Arthur's illegitimacy (II, i, 122, 123) and the reference to King Richard's will in favor of John (II, i, 191, 192) hardly strengthen John's right in the minds of the audience. As Agnes Henneke³ observes, John's usurpation is also admitted by Faulconbridge, whom she considers the mouthpiece of Shakespeare. Thus, when Hubert raises the dead body of Arthur, Faulconbridge says,

How easie dost thou take all *England* vp,
From forth this morcell of dead Royaltie?
The life, the right, and truth of all this Realme
Is fled to heauen; and *England* now is left
To tug and scramble, and to part by th'teeth
The vn-owned interest of proud swelling State.
(IV, iii, 142-147)

Wilson⁴ takes a more guarded view by stating merely that John's right to the throne is extremely questionable. Thus, an important point for a correct interpretation of the character of John is not too clearly established.

Further light has indirectly been thrown upon this question by Boas.⁵ At first John acts as a zealous cham-

³Agnes Henneke, "Shakespeares englische Könige im Lichte staats rechtlicher Stromungen seiner Zeit," *Shakespere-Jahrbuch*, 66 (1930): 119-120.

⁴J. Dover Wilson, "Introduction," *King John* (Cambridge, 1936), lix.

⁵Frederick Boas, *Shakspere and His Predecessors* (London, 1896), 240.

pion of his country, but, "conscious of the weakness of his claim, he seeks to buy off the hostility of Philip by surrendering all England's possessions in France to her hereditary foe." This treason makes John's usurpation seem like petty larceny, and it is a clear admission by John himself of the weakness of his claim to the English throne.

John's Character

In the course of the play, John's character is unfolded rather than developed or transformed. As Liebermann⁶ points out, John is quick and strong in action, courageous and able in war, and fearless and defiant in the face of France and Rome. Such is King John, but only for the first half of the play. In the second half of the play he is cowardly and helpless, tyrannical, brutal and murderous, a prey to omens and prophecy. In all this Brooke⁷ beholds the admirable contrast of physical and moral bravery in the character of one man. Somewhat differently, Moore⁸ believes that Shakespeare has selected but one passion—the passion to rule—out of John's many crimes in history, and here Shakespeare presents a picture of the tyranny and fatalism of an overmastering passion.

As Colby⁹ views this grim picture, Shakespeare "could not paint John any whiter than he was when he opposed the Church, though he did paint him blacker than he was when he maltreated young Arthur. . . . He did not make John a hero, and he likewise came far from making him a doctrinal Protestant." In *The Troublesome Raigne John*

⁶Felix Liebermann, "Shakespeare als Bearbeiter des King John," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 143 (1922), 23.

⁷Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927), 234.

⁸Ella A. Moore, "Moral Proportion and Fatalism in King John," *Poet Lore*, 8 (1896), 140.

⁹Elibridge Colby, *EngUsh Catholic Poets: Chaucer to Dryden* (Milwaukee, 1936), 140.

was a Protestant hero, but according to Neilson and Thorndike¹⁰ in Shakespeare's *John* nothing of the anti-Romanist bias remains, and this they consider the most significant fact in the play. Needless to say, many critics consider the anti-Romanist bias of the older play simply more refined in Shakespeare. This will be pointed out in due order.

John's Defiance

John's position in the play has frequently been viewed as a conflict between earthly and spiritual power. Then, as Courtenay¹¹ observes, "it is possible that Shakespeare, in the speech which he has put into John's mouth, has in his mind the king's supremacy, asserted afterwards more effectually by Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth." To strengthen this hypothesis, it has been suggested that John's defiance of Pandolph and Rome (III, i, 147-160; 162-171) is "from the mouth of England." Be this as it may, the question whether John is here insisting on a supremacy like that of Henry VIII or like that of Elizabeth has direct bearing upon the present problem. In fact, the nature of John's defiance has been a bone of contention among the interpreters, and apparently, ink and paper were of little consideration in the controversy, for anyone who had anything to say on *King John* or Shakespeare's religion or a dozen other subsidiary subjects, took the opportunity of discussing John's defiance of Rome.

John's defiant speech it not only looked upon as an "unsurpassed reproof," but coming as it does in the center of the play, Oechelhauser¹² considers it the very "peak of in-

¹⁰William A. Neilson and Ashley H. Thorndike, *The Facts about Shakespeare* (New York, 1931), 78,

"Thomas P. Courtenay, *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1840), I, 13.

¹²Wilhelm Oechelhauser, *Einführungen zu Shakespere's Bühnen-Dramen* (Minden, 1885), I, 9.

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terest for the audience." Birch¹³ believes that Shakespeare intended this speech "to gratify the feelings of the audience." Since this speech is uttered in defiance of Rome, it would seem then that Shakespeare used John for anti-Catholic propaganda. This view of the matter appears substantiated by Keeton's observation:

John is here speaking entirely out of character. Although John actually did oppress the Church, he never denied the spiritual hegemony of the Pope. The speech might have been framed by Henry VIII or Elizabeth, in reply to some new audacity from Rome. It is necessarily a post-Renaissance product, and Shakespeare, in putting it into the mouth of John, is making him a¹⁴ champion of national honour and state absolutism.

Thus, the development of John's character seems to have been intentionally distorted in order that John might express "Protestant feelings" and hatred of Rome, for, according to Van der Spek,¹⁵ these things "appealed to Shakespeare." A romantic touch to the situation is added by Warner,¹⁶ when he says that John's defiance was "like sweet honey to the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth, to whom undoubtedly Shakespeare paid his court in writing them. For she had been through exactly such a papal struggle as was now to follow in the case of John. She felt the 'supreme headship' of the Church as keenly as any who preceded or followed her."

John's defiance, however, permits of a more liberal interpretation. Although "it cannot be said that in this crucial passage he (Shakespeare) weakens at all the im-

¹³William J. Birch, *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakspeare* (London, 1848), 254.

¹⁴George W. Keeton, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹⁵Cornelius Van der Spek, *The Church and Churchmen in English Dramatic Literature before 1642* (Amsterdam, 1931), 81.

¹⁶Beverley E. Warner, *English History in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York, 1894), 36.

peachment of Rome," as Bayne¹⁷ contends, yet he seems to view this "antipapal matter" from the political and not from the religious point of view. Since this is the only instance where John mentions supremacy, whereas in the older play it is mentioned frequently, Liebermann¹⁸ quite agrees that only temporal and not spiritual or dogmatic supremacy is meant. In fact, Liebermann¹⁹ goes further and concludes that John does not even think as an enemy of the Church nor in an unchristian or anti-Catholic manner, but that John protests merely for the temporal suzerainty of the crown.

The incident that provoked John's defiance was a political case that involved ecclesiastical as well as state rights. After noting that Pandulph's activity is strictly political, Wilson²⁰ explains John's attitude thus:

He almost succeeds in confining the issue between John and Rome to the ancient quarrel between the spiritual and temporal powers, which was the standing debate of the middle ages and had nothing necessarily to do with the reformation at all. Almost, I say, but not quite, since he could not with safety avoid some statement of the doctrine of Royal Supremacy. This, following his source, he puts into John's mouth in a single speech; but its force is discounted by the fact that John is neither the rightful king nor an admirable character.

In much the same vein Taylor²¹ points out the weakness of John's utterance, since it "comes from the most wicked and perfidious of sovereigns," and he strongly objects to the application of any of these sentiments to Shakespeare, be-

¹⁷Ronald Bayne, "Religion," *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford, 1917), I, 51-53.

¹⁸Pelix Liebermann, "Shakespeare als Bearbeiter des King John," *Archiv*, 143 (1922): 195.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 143 (1922): 23, 24.

²⁰J. Dover Wilson, "Introduction," *King John* (Cambridge, 1936), Iviii.

²¹John Taylor, "Shakespeare's Religion,"* *Shakespeareana*, 6 (1889): 479.

cause the "whole passage is not much more than a literal transcript from the earlier play by another hand."

In viewing King John in his defiance of Rome, Bowden²² emphasizes that "the language and action of a hero may be supposed to represent the poet's type of what is good and noble, and therefore of what he would wish his own language and action to be." Consequently, Bowden insists that the poet would not make his own views "the sentiments of a scoundrel." He further points out that John is a mean villain who lacks "the satanic grandeur of an Edmund or a Macbeth," and as such he rants and rages defiance. However, John "makes no reply to the prelate after the excommunication is pronounced and he is singularly silent till he threatens Philip at the close of the play."

Enough has been said to bring out the salient features of John's defiance as well as the principal arguments used by critics in its interpretation. Thus, in interpreting this speech, critics have attributed to Shakespeare anti-Catholic prejudice, or antipapal sentiments on grounds of English nationalism or a purely objective attitude which in no way revealed his own feeling towards the Church, whether as a religious or as a political institution.

John's Submission

Another important episode in the study of John, as a possible reflection of Shakespeare's attitude towards Catholicism, is John's submission to Rome and his surrender of the crown into the hands of the Legate (V, i, 1-29). Once again disagreement reigns among the interpreters, but in general they are not so voluble on the subject of John's submission as on that of his defiance. It seems quite evident that to many of the interpreters John's submission is a very distasteful subject. Davies²¹ believes that Shakespeare con-

²²Henry S. Bowden, *Religion of Shakespeare* (London, 1899), 118-120.

²³Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies* (London, 1785), I, 91.

sidered the matter quite contemptible, for he says, "Shakespeare seems to have shrunk from the detested subject: he knew the just representation of such an act would be shocking to an English audience, and, therefore, passes it over with as much celerity as possible." In contrast, Boas²⁴ contends that for Shakespeare the surrender of the English crown and not the Charter was the most significant and supreme event of John's reign. John's submission is also looked upon as a "scene of moral suicide" which was provoked by the approaching attack of France and the downfall of his greatness—both events combining to "rob him of all spirits."²⁵

But Shakespeare's John makes his own comment on the event:

My Crowne I should giue off? euen so I haue:
I did suppose it should be on constraint,
But (heau'n be thank'd) it is but voluntary.
(V, i, 27-29)

To Davies²⁶ these words seem to be irony or a form of self-deception. No action was "less voluntary than this, for he reduced himself to such a necessity." Similarly Swinburne,²⁷ who regards Faulconbridge as the interpreter of Shakespeare, sees but "contempt for his abjection at the foul feet of the Church."

John's submission has also been considered as a matter of policy and statecraft. Brooke,²⁸ still insisting that the king in Shakespeare's hands is no villain, sees John standing up for England and "when he does submit to the Legate (changing apparently his steadfast mind) it is not so much to bow to Rome as to overthrow—as he does—the

²⁴Frederick Boas, *Shakspeare and His Predecessors* (London, 1896), 243.

²⁵Wilhelm Oechelhauser, *op. cit.*, I, 11.

²⁶Thomas Davies, *op. cit.*, I, 95.

²⁷Algernon C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London, 1909), 80.

²⁸Stopford Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927), 234.

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whole conspiracy of his foes against the English crown." But strong-minded or not, John is no longer defiant. After receiving his crown again, John's first words are:

Now keep your holy word, go meet the *French*,
And from his holiness vse all your power
To stop their marches 'fore we are enflam'd.
(V, i, 5-7)

"Being now recognized as King by the Pope," Canning²⁹ observes, "John naturally reckons upon the Church's assistance to maintain his power."

Shakespeare does not actually present the scene of John's submission, but only the bestowal of the crown. He requires but twenty-four lines to explain the agreement in the matter between John and Pandulph. Thus, John's submission lacks emphasis, whereas in the older play it is long drawn out. This lack of emphasis, as Liebermann³⁰ observes, may just as readily be regarded as consideration for Catholicism as for royalism.

Summary

The interpreters have thus enshrouded Shakespeare's John in a fog of diversified opinions. Whatever may be his real nature, it is inconceivable that Shakespeare intended him to be a foil for the interpreters. Doubtless, to Shakespeare John was a clear cut, a genuine character, who opposed the Church and submitted to the Church. A correct interpretation of John's opposition and subsequent submission to the Church will give a better understanding of the king's character, and, it is hoped, will throw light on the more important question of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in this play.

²⁹Albert S. Canning, *Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London, 1884), 64.

³⁰Felix Liebermann, "Shakespeare als Bearbeiter," *Archiv*, 143 (1922): 196.

2. Shakespeare's Pandulph

Cardinal Pandulph is the sole ecclesiastic who appears in *King John*. As Legate of the Pope, he holds the center of the stage in all the problems affecting the relation of Church and state, and is naturally then a central figure in the present investigation. His position and character accordingly merit attention. His every statement must be weighed in the light of Catholic doctrine, Catholic principles, and Catholics views. And, what is of equal importance, the manner in which his utterances are made must be carefully scrutinized. The interpreters, however, have been quite negligent concerning the objective value of the Cardinal's statements, though they are very profuse in their interpretations of the manner of his utterances and also of his attitude to the various characters. In fact, almost every statement of the Cardinal becomes a nucleus for conflicting opinions.

Pandulph's Character

Merely as a starting point, I might begin on this side of the confines of hell. Mrs. Griffith³¹ not only compares the ingenious Pandulph with Milton's Satan, but asserts that the object of both is the same, "the absolute and exclusive dominion of Heaven." It is not surprising then to find such phrases as "the sleek insolence of Pandulph"³² and "the intriguing and strife fomenting cardinal."³³ To Calvert³⁴ Pandulph was Shakespeare's great opportunity to represent "a typical priest, that is, a man who assumes that he is empowered by heaven to be the exclusive, infallible expounder

³¹Elizabeth Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare's Dramas* (London, 1775), 180.

³²Stephen W. Fullom, *History of William Shakespeare* (London, 1864), 62.

³³Charles C. Clarke, *Shakespeare Characters* (London, 1863), 328.

³⁴George H. Calvert, *Shakespeare: A Biographic Aesthetic Study* (Boston, 1879), 140.

and interpreter of heavenly things, to guide and rule the spirituality of other men,—an assumption which, concentrating in itself the guilt of usurpation with the iniquity of despotism, is a blasphemy towards God and an offense and an insult to man."

The personal corruption of Pandulph is emphasized by Ulrici,³⁵ who considers Pandulph "the most correct delineation of a corrupt priest that poet ever painted." From the same angle Oechelhauser³⁶ views the Cardinal, but sees considerably more: "Pride, cleverness, casuistical sharpness. Jesuitical cunning, lack of regard in the choice even of immoral means, as long as they lead to the one fixed goal, the strengthening and widening the power of Rome, all these fix a stamp upon the role, while the mantle of religion^ hypocrisy covers all."

With less emphasis on the moral and more on the political, Gentleman's³⁷ catalogue of the Cardinal's faults is still quite strong: "The Cardinal is a very well drawn churchman of those times, subtle, proud, irascible; rather prone to promote than prevent public calamities, where his master's interest seems concerned; a mere politician, not encumbered with delicacy of principle, or the feelings of humanity. . . ." A. E. Baker³⁸ sees in him "an arrogant nature, priding himself upon his errand and his power to excommunicate, bless and canonize." However, he concedes that "he is also very diplomatic in his methods and carefully takes advantage of circumstances which will further his own ends." All this is quite well summed up by Van der Spek³⁹ in one meaningful phrase, "a master of Machiavellian policy."

³⁵Hermann Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*?, trans. A. J. Morrison (London, 1846), 361.

³⁶Wilhelm Oechelhauser, *Einführung zu Shakespeares Bühnen-Dramen* (Minden, 1885), I, 21.

³⁷Francis Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor* (London, 1770), II, 169.

³⁸Arthur E. Baker, "King John," *A Shakespeare Dictionary* (Taunton, England, 1927), 320.

³⁹Cornelius Van der Spek, *The Church and Churchmen in English Dramatic Literature before 1642* (Amsterdam, 1931), 82.

This view of the Cardinal as a politician is still further modified by Boas,⁴⁰ who asserts that "no religious partisanship blurs the masterful presentation of the Papal envoy."

A loftier conception of the Cardinal is set forth by Canning:⁴¹ Pandulph, "evidently a resolute and conscientious man occupies a singular grand position. ... He mingles with quarreling kings, fierce nobles, and their armed retainers, as if bearing a charmed life—fearless, observant, determined and exacting, or unwillingly obtaining, the respect of all. Yet he is always laboring for the interests of the Church he represents, and never for private purposes." Bowden⁴² adds to this favorable picture of the Cardinal: "He appears as an experienced and farsighted statesman, but also as a ghostly father, full of sympathy for the afflicted." And the caption of this picture is supplied by Hardin Craig:⁴⁴ "... a truly impressive ecclesiastical statesman."

It is difficult to believe that all these interpreters are speaking of one and the same character. Naturally a similar diversity of opinion will charge the interpretations of the various incidents involving Cardinal Pandulph, and, since these incidents are so intimately associated with the present subject, some representative views on each will be noted.

Pandulph and John

Cardinal Pandulph enters the play in the third act. He salutes the two kings and immediately states the purpose of his mission to King John. That monarch becomes indignant and defiant. Thereupon the Cardinal pronounces the sentence of excommunication upon him (III, i, 172 f.). Of course, many critics have recorded their bitter resentment

⁴⁰Frederick S. Boas, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (London, 1890), 241.

⁴¹Albert S. Canning, *Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London, 1884), 57-64.

⁴²Henry S. Bowden, *Religion of Shakespeare* (London, 1899), 127.

⁴³Hardin Craig, *Shakespeare* (New York, 1931), 312.

of this historical event. Needless to say, their comments on the historical event are irrelevant here. In respect to the play, Bayne⁴⁴ is of the opinion that Shakespeare's version of the excommunication is "more definite and pointed in its reference to Queen Elizabeth's case." Wilson⁴⁵, too, states that the terms of Pandulph's speech were "clearly intended to recall the bull of 1570 excommunicating Elizabeth," Brooke⁴⁶ reflects how this "anathema of death . . . went home to the heart of the audience," for, as he asserts, "there is not a man in the pit who had not heard that Rome had treacherously played for the assassination of Elizabeth, had openly attacked her legitimacy, and urged the Roman Catholics of England to throw off their allegiance."

However, Liebermann⁴⁷ is careful to note that the words of the excommunication are not taken from the papal bull against Elizabeth but from *The Troublesome Raigne*. Furthermore, the parallel between Elizabeth's excommunication and John's seems weakened by Canning's⁴⁸ incisive observation, for when Constance asserts that unless her wrongs are considered "no tongue has power to curse him right," Pandulph distinguishes that "there is law and warrant" for his curse. "It is evident," Canning concludes, "that the Pope had no idea of denying John's right to the English Crown, or of acknowledging prince Arthur, which, perhaps, was a great disappointment to Constance and a surprise to the French king." This, indeed, is an important difference between the excommunication of Elizabeth and the ban of King John in Shakespeare.

"Ronald Bayne, "Religion," *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford, 1917), I, 53.

⁴⁵J. Dover Wilson, "Introduction," *King John* (Cambridge, 1936), IviiiL

⁴⁶Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927), 231.

⁴⁷Felix Liebermann, "Shakespeare als Bearbeiter," *Archiv*, 143 (1922); 191.

"Albert S. Canning, *Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London, 1884), 57-58.

Besides the excommunication of John and the absolution of his subjects from their allegiance to him, Pandulph's pronouncement brings up also the question of tyrannicide. With reference to the present case Lloyd⁴⁹ calls it the "authorization by religious sanction of secret, treacherous murder." Of the excommunication, this feature in particular is considered by Collins⁵⁰ to make the Catholic Church as well as the character of Pandulph most contemptible. Birch⁵¹ thinks that "the answer of the Legate making meritorious John's assassination, must have been intended to gratify the feelings of the audience, this crime being charged against the Pope by Elizabeth and James."

That the excommunication is the remote cause of John's death is suggested by Wilkes.⁵² However, Rose,⁵³ followed by Wilson,⁵⁴ states that John's poisoning is not at all motivated as it is in *The Troublesome Raigne*. But Kittredge⁵⁵ holds that John's poisoning is sufficiently motivated by John's command to loot the monasteries (III, iii, 7-11) and by Faulconbridge's thorough obedience to that command (IV, ii, 141-143). Finally, Bowden⁵⁶ points out that the sentiments of the dying John seem to nullify any possible connection of John's death with the excommunication.

In reference to John's death, it is appropriate to mention also that certain critics, such as Rose⁵⁷ and Wilson⁵⁸

⁴⁹William W. Lloyd, *Critical Essays on the Plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1875), 188.

⁵⁰John C. Collins, *Ephemera Critica* (New York, 1902), 355.

⁵¹William J. Birch, *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare* (London, 1848), 255.

⁵²George Wilkes, *Shakespeare from an American Point of View* (New York, 1877), 57.

⁵³Edward Rose, "Shakespeare as an Adapter," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 39 (1878): 72.

⁵⁴J. Dover Wilson, *op. tit.*, xxi-xxii.

⁵⁵George L. Kittredge, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (New York, 1936), 472.

⁵⁶Henry S. Bowden, *op. cit.*, 131.

⁵⁷Edward Rose, *op. tit.*, 72.

⁵⁸J. Dover Wilson, *op. cit.*, xxii.

stress the fact that Hubert calls the monk who poisons John, "a resolved villain." Perhaps on this phrase hangs a tale. However, Brother Leo's⁵⁹ observation cannot easily be ignored. Hubert breaks the bad news to Faulconbridge with this significant line: "The King I feare is poyson'd by a Monke," (V, v, 23). Now in the older play, the words "I feare" do not occur. Thus, what was stated as a fact in the older play becomes a plausibility in Shakespeare.

Pandulph and Philip

After the excommunication of John, Pandulph's next important speech is addressed to Philip of France concerning the latter's recent oath with John. This rather lengthy speech on oaths (III, i, 263-297) has occasioned a great diversity of opinion among Shakespeare's interpreters. Brooke⁶⁰ sees in it an arraignment of the Catholic Church, for he believes that in this passage Shakespeare accuses the Church of "putting aside the most solemn vows, the conscience and honour and faith of men, if those were against her interests and power." To Kopplow⁶¹ the speech discloses the real colors of the Cardinal: "His powerful dialectics with which he quiets the conscience of Philip" is conceived of as one of the "genuinely Jesuitical" characteristics of Pandulph. Oechelhauser⁶², too, sees in this speech a portrayal of the Cardinal's character "in its most unpleasant phase."

As to the speech itself, Ash⁶³ considers it sophistry and

⁵⁹Brother Leo, *Contrast in Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (Washington, D. C., 1915) 76.

⁶⁰Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927) 231-232

⁶¹George Kopplow, *Shakespeare's "King John" und seine Quellen* (Kiel, 1900) 82.

⁶²Wilhelm Oechelhauser, *Einführungen zu Shakespere's Buhneii-Dramen* (Minden, 1885) I, 21.

⁶³Margaret S. Ash, *A Historical Study of "King John"* (Iowa City, 1936, Unpublished) 100.

juggling; and Gentleman⁶⁴ speaks of the "churchman's able sophistry." With more evasiveness, Pye⁶⁵ calls it an "absurd passage." and Rose⁶⁶ characterizes it as "somewhat sinister wisdom." In the same tone Perring⁶⁷ gives his generalization of the speech as "the elaborate web of Cardinal Pandulph's subtle casuistry—a marvellous sample of priestly sophistry." Capell⁶⁸ labels the speech "sophistry." while Ritson⁶⁹ maintains that the passage has "sense and meaning,—is quite in the spirit of the Cardinal's quibbling logic." Verplanck⁷⁰ thinks the speech is full of verbal subtleties, which render the intricate reasonings more intricate," and he believes that the "poet unquestionably meant to produce this effect."

Corson⁷¹ is of the opinion that the speech did not convince Philip. This raises the problem of effective motivation. The same problem is likewise involved in Birch's⁷² view: "The Jesuitical casuistry of Pandulph, that no vows are to be kept except to the Church, is only produced to gain the derisive applause, and accommodate the temper of the times." Wallerstein⁷³ too believes that "the patriotic feelings of the audience were satisfied when Pandulph was

⁶⁴Francis Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor* (London, 1770) II, 159.

⁶⁵Henry J. Pye, *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespa.*' (London, 1807), 142.

⁶⁶Edward Rose, "Shakespeare as an Adapter" *Macmillan's Magazine*, 39 (1878): 72.

⁶⁷Sir Philip Perring, *Hard Knots in Shakespeare* (London, 1885) 147.

⁶⁸Edward Capell, *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare* (London, 1779) 128.

⁶⁹Joseph Ritson, *Remarks Critical and Illustrative* (London, 1782) 82.

⁷⁰Gulian C. Verplanck, *The Illustrated Shakespeare* (New York, 1847) I, 48.

⁷¹Hiram Corson, "(On) King John," *Shakespeariana*, 4 (1887) 62.

⁷²William J. Birch, *An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakspeare* (London, 1848) 256.

⁷³Ruth C. Wallerstein, *King John in Fact and Fiction* (Philadelphia, 1917) 43.

shown a sophister and schemer." If these views be correct, the speech, as motivation, limps, and artistically it is seriously defective.

Liebermann⁷⁴ considers Pandulph "a cunning lawyer," and he observes that "the kernel of the sophism is that an oath is invalid which is contrary to Christian obligations and this is taken as identical with the commandments of the Church." Raich,⁷⁵ however, views the same matter from the aspect of the validity of the latter vow against the former. "This," he says, "is no sophism, but the very foundation of the Shakespearian theory of vows."

According to Dr. Johnson,⁷⁶ there is nothing "inconsequent or ridiculously subtle" in the speech: "The propositions, that the *voice of the church is the voice of heaven* and that *the Pope utters the voice of the Church*, neither of which Pandulph's auditors would deny, being once granted, the argument here used is irresistible; nor is it easy, notwithstanding the gingle (*sic*), to enforce it with greater brevity or propriety." Wordsworth⁷⁷ would interpret the speech in the same light as *Judges XI*, 30-40 and *Henry VI. V*, i, 182-190.

Bowden⁷⁸ points out that in *The Troublesome Raigne* the sworn alliance between the two kings is declared invalid by Pandulph, because "the oath was made with a heretic." "This popular calumny against Catholic doctrine," Bowden declares, "Shakespeare utterly repudiates, and instead he substitutes a careful, accurate, and detailed disquisition on the obligations of an oath, drawn out according to the

⁷⁴Felix Liebermann, "Shakespeare als Bearbeiter" *Archiv* 143 (1922): 43.

⁷⁵Johann Raich, *Shakespeare's Stellung zur Katholischen Religion* (Mainz, 1884) 158.

⁷⁶Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (London, 1765) III, 450.

⁷⁷Charles Wordsworth, *Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible* (London, 1880) 73-76.

⁷⁸Henry S. Bowden, *Religion of Shakespeare* (London, 1899) 125.

Church's teaching." With this, the circle of varying interpretations set about Pandulph's speech on oaths is quite complete.

Pandulph and Constance

The circle of varying opinions is duplicated in reference to Pandulph's attitude towards Constance. When Pandulph tells Constance, "There's Law and Warrant (Lady) for my curse," (III, i, 184) Calvert's⁷⁹ sentiments gush in approved Victorian fashion: "How profoundly must the humane, truly Christian Shakespeare have felt the secret irony of this answer. . . Law and warrant for cursing a fellowman! . . . For the curse of poor Constance there is some warrant, the warrant issued by the wronged, bleeding heart of a mother." Pandulph's other lines to Constance: "Lady, you vtter madness, and not sorrow." (III, iv, 43) and "You hold too heinous a respect of greefe." (III, iv, 90), have inspired Brooke⁸⁰ to remark: "Not only public morality, but the tenderest ties of humanity are thus represented as despised by the Church, when her interests are endangered." In the same vein Liebermann⁸¹ speaks of the "coldness of his commiseration" and notes, "Above all it is remarkable that this Catholic must first preach consolation to a Cardinal, 'That we shall see and know our friends in heauen.' " (III, iv, 77) Quite different is the interpretation of Bowden,⁸² who considers Pandulph "a ghostly Father, full of sympathy for the afflicted." And Bowden continues, "He grieves for Arthur's capture and pities Constance, whose maternal beautiful and pathetic appeal proves that she saw in him a spiritual consoler, and not a mere cold-hearted, calculating politician."

⁷⁹George H. Calvert, *Shakespeare: A Biographic Aesthetic Study* (Boston, 1879) 143-144.

⁸⁰Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927) 232-233.

⁸¹Felix Liebermann, *op. cit.*, 143 (1922): 28.

⁸²Henry S. Bowden, *op. cit.*, 127.

Pandulph and Lewis

Shakespeare's interpreters point an accusing finger at the Cardinal's relations with the Dauphin Lewis. After the battle, Lewis is quite discouraged at the ill-success of the French arms, and at the capture of Prince Arthur. Pandulph bids Lewis to revive his courage and then points out the significance that the new political setting has for the disheartened Dauphin. Once again the words of Pandulph are scrutinized and the interpreters render verdicts, which are quite so drastically conflicting as in other cases. Heraud⁸³ considers the matter as another incident of a "priest's crafty sophistry." Lloyd⁸⁴ is shocked at Pandulph's "cold-blooded complacency as he speculates on the certain murder of Arthur if dextrously provoked and the advantages to result to Holy Church therefrom." Even though Liebermann⁸⁵ stresses the political side of the case, he seems to cast some sinister reflection on the Cardinal's character: "As a cold politician, he reckons with murder, superstition, revolt and war without any indication of pity." In speaking of the same incident, Canning⁸⁶ refers to Pandulph as "the observant Cardinal," and Bowden⁸⁷ views Pandulph's words as good common sense: "In his speech to the Dauphin the Cardinal shows his political foresight, and his knowledge of the ways of Providence in the conduct of human affairs."

Pandulph and Lewis meet again after John's submission to Rome, and again the Cardinal's words and policy are subjected to the scrutiny of the critics. "Pandulph is truly a comic figure," writes Snider,⁸⁸ "Here his deep policy has

⁸³John A. Heraud, *Shakspeare: His Inner Life as Estimated in His Work* (London, 1865) 156.

⁸⁴William W. Lloyd, *Critical Essays* (London, 1875) 188-189.

⁸⁵Felix Liebermann, *op. cit.*, 143 (1922) 43.

⁸⁶Albert S. Canning, *Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London, 1884) 59.

⁸⁷Henry S. Bowden, *Religion of Shakespeare* (London, 1899) 128.

⁸⁸Denton J. Snider, *The Shakespearian Drama: The Histories* (OSt. Louis, 1890) 308.

swallowed itself." Heraud,⁸⁹ remarks that "France, as little as England, will be 'propertied', or consent merely to underplay the game of crafty Rome." This phase of the game Keeton⁹⁰ calls "open perfidy." For Ash⁹¹ this is just another occasion in the play where faith and truth are juggled in the name of religion. Liebermann,⁹² however, looks upon Lewis' opposition as lacking all religious regard, and he asserts that it is directed against Rome as a sovereign state, since it is motivated merely by personal profit. In contrast, Canning⁹³ is inclined to smile at the Dauphin: "Louis warmly, almost boyishly opposes him." Bowden⁹⁴ views the situation rather calmly: "Instead of mutually cursing each other to their 'bellyful' as in the old plays, in Shakespeare the Cardinal tells the Dauphin that he looks at but 'the outside of the work.' and persuades him though victorious to offer England terms of honourable peace."

Pandulph and Faulconbridge

Thus, the various incidents, with which Pandulph is in any way connected, are differently interpreted. However, the key to the correct interpretation of the character of Pandulph may be found in Faulconbridge "whose humorous, honest, and clear-sighted view of the wrongs and intricacies about him serves the twofold function of comedy and chorus, and affords at once a contrast to the somber tone of the rest of the play and a normal standard by which to judge among the contending parties."⁹⁵ While many interpreters readily enough regard Faulconbridge as the official inter-

⁸⁹John A. Heraud, *op. cit.*, 147.

⁹⁰George W. Keeton, *Shakespeare and His Legal Problems* (London, 1930) 67.

⁹¹Margaret S. Ash, *A Historical Study*, 100.

⁹²Felix Liebermann, *op. cit.*, 143 (1922): 41.

⁹³Albert S. Canning, *op. cit.*, 67.

⁹⁴Henry S. Bowden, *op. cit.*, 131.

⁹⁵Felix E. Schelling, *English Chronicle Plays* (New York, 1914) 258-269.

22 *Shakespeare's Attitude Towards Catholic Church*

preter of Shakespeare himself, they disagree in interpreting his attitude to Pandulph and to the Church, Swinburne,⁹⁶ for instance, speaks of Faulconbridge's "loathing for the Church" and "contempt for his (John's) abjection at the foul feet of the Church." Gervinus⁹⁷ is more sweeping in his opinion: "Shakespeare delineates his Faulconbridge (and himself in him) rigidly and bitterly enough as a good Protestant in the base treatment of Popish arrogance." For Snider,⁹⁸ Faulconbridge is "a special character introduced as the representative of nationality." Bowden,⁹⁹ however, looks upon Faulconbridge as a "reckless, careless soldier, but he is not a Protestant bigot. On the contrary, instead of expressing indignant contempt—as he does in the old play—at John's submission to the Legate, by which 'friars are made kings, and kings friars.' Faulconbridge looks upon Pandulph as the friend of England and an honourable peacemaker." Bowden points out further that the "anger of the Bastard is reserved exclusively for France and the Dauphin." From the diversity of these opinions it is quite clear that even if we accept Faulconbridge as the official interpreter of Shakespeare's Pandulph, the dissent of the interpreters on the attitude of Faulconbridge to Pandulph and to the Church clouds the issue as much as it was before.

Summary

From the above differences of opinion on the words and deeds of Cardinal Pandulph, it is clear that excommunication, allegiance, the killing of heretics and the doctrine of oaths are problems of vital importance in this investigation. In the treatment of these problems, the teaching of the

⁹⁶Algernon C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London, 1909) 79-80.

⁹⁷George G. Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries* (London, 1903) 354.

⁹⁸Denton J. Snider, *op. cit.*, 273.

⁹⁹Henry S. Bowden, *op. cit.*, 130.

Catholic Church and certain historical facts associated with these problems will be of great assistance for the proper understanding of Shakespeare himself. The other problems—Pandulph's attitude towards Constance and towards Lewis, and Faulconbridge's attitude towards Pandulph—will certainly illuminate the subject from still other angles.

3. *The Interpreters*

In the following categories the interpreters are classified according to their respective opinion of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in *King John*.¹⁰⁰ Some interpreters have been very definite in the expression of their views; others have merely insinuated or implied their opinions: in regard to the latter, unless the inference is so evident as to warrant definite classification, their names are simply omitted. Again, some interpreters find Shakespeare's attitude towards the Church clearly set forth in the play as a whole; others find Shakespeare's attitude revealed only in one or more episodes, speeches or remarks. In either case the critic is attributing a positive attitude to Shakespeare, and, therefore, the critic is subject to classification.

Shakespeare's Anti-Catholic Attitude

The following interpreters are of the opinion that in *King John* Shakespeare shows himself opposed to the Catholic Church on religious grounds:

1710—Charles Gildon¹⁰¹

1848—William J. Birch

1785—Thomas Davies

1858—William W. Lloyd

¹⁰⁰References to the works of the interpreters, upon which this classification is based, are given in the Appendix.

¹⁰¹Interpreters are listed according to the date of publication of their views—the earliest date discoverable in case of several editions or reprints. This date immediately precedes the name of the interpreter.

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- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1862—Frieder. A. Kreyssig | 1895—Eduard W. Sievers |
| 1863—Charles C. Clarke | 1896—Frederick S. Boas |
| 1863—George G. Gervinus | 1899—Adolphus W. Ward |
| 1864—Stephen W. Fullom | 1902—John C. Collins |
| 1867—Ebenezer Forsyth | 1903—Joseph Knight |
| 1874—Hermann von Friesen | 1913—Stopford A. Brooke |
| 1879—George H. Calvert | 1930—George B. Harrison |
| 1880—William J. Rolfe | 1930—George W. Keeton |
| 1880—nAlger. C. Swinburne | 1931—C. Van der Spek |
| 1888—Frank A. Marshall | 1935—Donald Morrow |
| 1880—Denton J. Snider | 1938—Maurice R. Ridley |
| 1894—Beverley E. Warner | |

Shakespeare's Antipapal Attitude

The interpreters in this group consider *King John* as the expression of Shakespeare's personal sentiments in regard to the political domination by the Catholic Church. They do not regard Shakespeare as denying or protesting in any way the spiritual supremacy of the Church. But they assert that *King John* is at once Shakespeare's plea for nationalism and his protest against political interference in England by the Church as a foreign power. These critics are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1846—Hermann Ulrici | 1900—George Kopplow |
| 1859—John C. Campbell | 1901—Frie. T. von Vischer |
| 1865—John A. Heraud | 1903—R. Garnett & E. Gosse |
| 1868—Charles Knight | 1903—Richard G. Moulton |
| 1869—Henry T. Hall | 1912—Henry M. Belden |
| 1879—Jas. O. Halli.-Phillips | 1916—W. M. Creizenach |
| 1886—Frederick G. Fleay | 1917—Ronald Bayne |
| 1887—Hiram Corson | 1922—Felix Liebermann |
| 1892—Clara French | 1928—Clement C. Webb |
| 1896—Henry E. Maiden | 1935—Arthur J. Russell |
| 1900—George M. Brandes | 1936—Max Huhner |

Shakespeare's Non-Committal Attitude

The interpreters here listed contend that Shakespeare assumed a non-committal attitude towards the Catholic Church, and that *King John* is to be considered merely as a work of art. Each role is considered to speak "in character" and no incident or character is construed as expressing Shakespeare's personal sentiments.

1851—Hartley Coleridge	1918—Sir John A. Marriott
1889—John Taylor	1931—Hardin Craig
1896—Ella A. Moore	1936—Margaret S. Ash
1901—Karl Koppe	1936—Elbridge Colby
1907—Morton Luce	1936—Harold Child
1910—Charlotte Porter	1936—J. Dover Wilson
1917—Ruth C. Wallerstein	

Shakespeare's Shakespeare's Pro-Catholic Attitude

Under this classification are those interpreters who see revealed in *King John* a pro-Catholic attitude. They contend that the treatment of the issues involved shows Shakespeare to have been definitely sympathetic towards the Catholic Church.

1877—George Wilkes	1899—Henry S. Bowden
1892—Appleton Morgan	

Observations

Some Shakespearian critics believe that *The Troublesome Raigne* was written by Shakespeare himself. Since *The Troublesome Raigne* is very definitely anti-Catholic, one may be inclined to infer that these critics held that Shakespeare was also definitely anti-Catholic in *King John*. However, this inference is not conclusive, for there is always the possibility that these critics thought that Shakespeare changed his attitude in writing the later play. In

the absence of positive evidence on this point these critics have been excluded from the above classifications. But they will be mentioned in the next chapter in treating of another aspect of the present subject.¹⁰²

The above classification confirms an old truth.¹⁰³ The early Shakespearean critics were mostly editors and commentators. In general, interpretation of Shakespeare as a definite phase of Shakespearean criticism is, according to this classification, hardly a century old. This type of criticism is concerned with the interpretation of episodes and scenes, characters and plots, and it seeks a fuller appreciation of the substance. It does not ignore textual criticism, but the solution of purely technical difficulties is only a secondary aim.

In the above classification it is quite evident that the majority of interpreters consider Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church to be anti-Catholic or antipapal. Among those who consider Shakespeare's attitude antipapal, there are many who do not consider Shakespeare in any way Catholic minded, but who attribute any toleration he may show to his art. Consequently, those holding the anti-Catholic interpretation and those holding the anti-papal interpretation may be considered as belonging to one and the same school of interpretation, even though for the purpose of more accurate classification the objective distinction has been made between anti-Catholic and anti-papal. But to this school of interpreters, including both groups holding an "anti" view, the honor of being traditional can hardly be accorded, because to be traditional, the "anti" view should be traceable a few centuries closer to Shakespeare's own day. Nevertheless, this "anti" view has certainly been the prevailing view, and, as such, its reliability demands some attention.

¹⁰²See below p. p. 40-42.

¹⁰³See Charles P. Johnson, *Shakespeare and His Critics* (New York, 1909) viii-ix.

CHAPTER II—HISTORICAL FICTIONS

In reading the opinions of the interpreters, one becomes aware of the impression, again and again insinuating itself, that with many critics the wish is father to the thought. Their own attitude towards the Catholic Church leads them consciously or subconsciously to conclude that Shakespeare's attitude was quite the same. Arguments in favor of a personal conviction or of a pet theory are always far more captivating than those in favor of the opposite. This is just one of those misleading traits of human nature, to which even the best of us in all good faith and sincerity may fall a victim. That some critics have thus indulged their feelings can hardly be doubted. But the most discerning eye could not exercise such fine discrimination as any judgment in the matter would require. It would, therefore, be rash and imprudent to accuse any one of deliberate prejudice. Indeed, among the critics there are many of undoubted scholarship, many who are conscientious devotees at the shrine of truth. While then it is not my purpose to pass judgment on the thoughts, intentions and inclinations of any critics, nevertheless I shall point out certain objective circumstances in the history of King John and in the history of the play, which might readily induce a critic to develop erroneous views and to draw false conclusions. In many instances it will be very evident that certain able critics have been lured into a land of make-believe by the misleading nature of these objective circumstances.

Among the historical events frequently misconstrued are the election of Stephen Langton and the submission of King John to the Pope. These incidents will be presented in Section One and Two respectively. In Section Three the King John tradition, including the play *Kynge Johan*, will be examined. *The Troublesome Raigne*, as the source of

Shakespeare's play, will be accorded separate treatment in Section Four. Section Five will point out certain misleading facts resulting from the work of the early editors and commentators. In Section Six the stage history of *King John* will be reviewed with reference to the present subject. In each section the misleading signposts, which may readily deceive the unwary, will be duly pointed out.

1. *Canonical Election*

It was an ancient law and custom in the Church that bishops be elected by the clergy and the people. However, in the early middle ages bishops and abbots were considered temporal lords, and they held both spiritual and temporal authority. The temporal authority came from the king; the spiritual authority came from the Church. From a legal point of view, the Church considered the spiritual office of bishop or abbot as primary and foremost, while she considered the possessions, revenues and political privileges attached thereto merely the means for the proper function of the office itself. The state stressed the temporal side of the office: the political influence, the financial and military resources, which in time of war might become an important factor. For the security of himself and of his realm, the king naturally wished to choose the bishops and abbots. Consequently, many kings took it upon themselves to appoint bishops and abbots and present them for consecration.¹ Unless a king were conscientious and not very amenable to financial and political persuasion, he might appoint a very unworthy candidate to an ecclesiastical office. Thus, at least for the sake of discipline, the Church was constrained to oppose this newly assumed royal privilege of appointment.

When William the Conqueror (1066-1087) reorganized the Church in England, he appointed bishops and abbots at

¹E. Roland, "Élection des Évêques" *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1924) IV, 2256-2281.

will.² On the one hand, William was conscientious, judicious and zealous in administering the affairs of the Church; and on the other hand, Gregory VII (1073-1085) was too busy with the Emperor Henry IV to do more than protest the assumed powers of the Conqueror.³ In consequence, William II (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-1135) looked upon these practices of their father as a royal prerogative. A conflict between Church and state was inevitable. This controversy, which ended in 1107, concerns chiefly the question of investiture, but it clearly indicates that the Holy See considered toleration of these assumed privileges as extremely dangerous to faith, discipline and the liberty of the Church.

About the time of the publication of the *Corpus Juris Canonici* (c. 1140), which contains the old law on the election of bishops,⁴ the Church was growing in power, and she was able to insist on normal electoral procedure.⁵ At the same time there is an evident development in the law, giving more and more the control of elections to the Pope himself.⁶ In view of this, it is interesting that the *Constitutions of Clarendon* (1164), which is manifestly hostile to the Church, prescribes that the election of bishops and abbots are to be held in the king's chapel with the consent of the king.⁷ Though the Constitutions were repudiated by Henry III (1154-1189) at the murder of Thomas a Becket, they were nevertheless looked upon by future kings as a bill of royal rights.⁸ However, it is important to note that disputed elec-

²The Cambridge Medieval History (New York, 1936) V, 516.

³John T. Ellis, *Anti-Papal Legislation in Medieval England: 1066-1377* (Washington, 1930) 6-13.

⁴C. 34, D. LXIII: *Corpus Juris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) 211.

⁵E. Roland, *op. cit.*, IV, 2269.

⁶Geoffrey Barraclough, "The Making of a Bishop in the Middle Ages", *The Catholic Historical Review* 19 (1933): 284 f.

⁷Ellis, *op. cit.*, 34. This regulation was by no means a concession, for the *Constitutions* stipulated that the king was to receive the revenues of the vacant sees, and thus it was a ready means of keeping the sees vacant.

⁸Ellis, *op. cit.*, 27-41.

tions were more and more referred to the Holy See for decision, so that Henry II attempted to check the growth of these appeals, but he had to concede the point at Avranches in 1172.⁹ With the turn of the century these appeals for decision became very common.

In 1205 when the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury became vacant, the monks of Christ Church elected Reginald, their sub-prior, while King John proposed as his candidate John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich. Both parties rushed to Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) to have their respective candidate approved.³⁰ John's action is noteworthy, but this was by no means an unusual procedure in those days, nor was it unusual that the Pope should reject both candidates and appoint one of his own.¹¹ That the Pope's choice was a good one, is a matter of history.¹²

King John's indignation at the rejection of his candidate created the appearance that the Pope's action was an encroachment upon royal authority. It was this element that John Bale capitalized in *Kynge Johan* in the character Usurped Power. The same phrase, "usurped power," was spread abroad by John Foxe,¹³ and some critics show a decided leaning towards the sentiments of the phrase, if not towards the actual wording.

2. *King John's Submission*

The fact that King John steadfastly opposed the Pope in the case of the election of Stephen Langton, as Archbishop of Canterbury, seems very commendable to many writers. But the termination of that quarrel with the submission of John to the Papacy is one of those phases in his-

⁹Barracclough, *op. cit.*, 279, 294.

¹⁰Ellis, *op. cit.*, 43.

¹¹Barracclough, *op. cit.*, 295.

¹²Hefele—Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1913) V, 1250-1252.

¹³John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London, 1837) II, 326.

tory to which a little modification of facts would be welcomed by ardent spirits of Protestantism and nationalism. Indeed, on the surface it may appear very contemptible that any king should surrender his crown and sovereignty only to receive it back again in vassalage.

John's action in becoming the vassal of the Pope was really a stroke of policy, for John was sorely in need of the strong support of the Church. True, he was forced by circumstances—principally the stress of invasion, the rebellion of some of his barons and the doubtful loyalty of others—to make peace with the Church.¹⁴ But peace with the Church did not imply the surrender of John's sovereignty. Briefly, the chief demands of the Church were the recognition of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury, the return of the exiled churchmen, and the restoration of Church property and subsidies, which John had confiscated. These demands by no means implied any surrender of the throne. John's surrender of his crown and his throne into the hands of the Pope was, indeed, a piece of astute politics, possibly even originating in his own wily brain.¹⁵

To understand the situation it is important to bear in mind that governments in the Middle Ages were feudalistic. By this system every man was directly responsible to his immediate overlord. But such vassalage was not considered

¹⁴See John Stow, *The Annals of England* (London, 1592) 249.

¹⁵John Lingard and Hilaire Belloc, *The History of England* (New York, 1912) passim; John T. Ellis, *Anti-Papal Legislation in Medieval England: 1066-1377* (Washington, 1930) 45f. Archbishop Langton absolved John from excommunication on July 20, 1213 at Winchester. From Winchester the Archbishop went to St. Albans, thence to London, where a great assembly of clergy and barons gathered at St. Paul's on August 25. On this occasion the Archbishop preached, saying in the course of the sermon: "Nee aliquis nostrum curiam Romanam adiit, cum illud impetraretur capitulum, scilicet ut non relaxeretur interdictum donec restituerentur ablata, immo dominus rex illud postulavit et per nuntios suos impetravit." Remarkable zeal for restitution in an unscrupulous king! See George Lacombe, "An Unpublished Document on the Great Interdict (1207-1213)", *Catholic Historical Review*, 15 (1930): 408-420.

very degrading in those days. At the time most kings were actually vassals: for example, the king of Scotland was a vassal of John; John himself was a vassal of Philip of France; John's father had become a vassal of Pope Alexander III; John's brother, Richard the Lion-hearted, had become the vassal of the Emperor of Germany. Now, by John becoming the vassal of the Pope, the power of the Church, which nearly drove him from the throne, was bound to preserve him and his posterity to the throne against his foreign (France in particular) and domestic enemies. Moreover the great council of the barons, John's constitutional advisers, constrained John to this action, for thereby the Pope became John's superior lord, and the barons could then, according to the laws of feudalism, appeal to the Pope against the arbitrary and despotic rule of John.¹⁶

Those who have not understood the situation correctly have naturally looked upon John as the Judas of English history. Lingard is fully aware of this misunderstanding, for he writes,

This transaction has heaped eternal infamy on the memory of John. Every epithet of reproach has been expended by writers and readers against the pusillanimity of a prince, who could lay the crown of England at the feet of a foreign priest, and receive it from him again as his vassal and tributary.¹⁷

John's surrender of sovereignty was certainly disgraceful, but the extenuating circumstances of the case must not be forgotten. Unfortunately, some of the interpreters of Shakespeare have made this mistake. But even though John appears contemptible in their eyes, when they speak of the Church's part in that transaction, then John becomes a victim of ecclesiastical politics and intrigue and the Church becomes a greedy usurper demanding not only spiritual obedience but scepter and crown as well. Once again, they are

¹⁶Lingard-Belloc, *op. cit.*, II, 332; Ellis, *op. cit.*, 46.

¹⁷Lingard-Belloc, *op. cit.*, II, 331.

not allowing for the manners and notions of the early thirteenth century. However, distorted notions do influence the judgment of men; and it is clear that a warped concept of this particular historical fact was brought to bear upon the interpretation of Shakespeare's *King John*, the result being at times something little better than an invective against the Church instead of a calm interpretation built upon reasonable observations of the play itself.

3. *The Chronicles and "Kynge Johan"*

The early English chronicles give various estimates of King John. Historians contemporary to John lacked the full facts and the necessary perspective to make a fair judgment of the King and his reign. To some he was weak, cruel and self-indulgent. Then again, he was a strong English king, who somehow came to grief in quarrelling with his men. And, in spite of his fight with the Church, one chronicler considers him even a good king.¹⁸

In much the same way, early thirteenth century literature is hampered in forming a correct judgment of John. At the loss of Normandy early in John's reign, the troubadours bitterly regretted being separated from England, and they cast many caustic reflections on the King's cowardice and weakness.¹⁹ In regard to John's quarrel with Rome, some interesting literature has come down. A poem, *Invectio contra avaritiam*, which was probably written during the interdict, makes John a lion, and the Bishops asses, and at the end the King is represented as Jupiter whilst the Pope receives the contemptuous designation of Pluto.²⁰ Another poem in Provençal, written by an ardent antichurchman,

¹⁸Ruth C. Wallerstein, *King John in Fact and Fiction* (Philadelphia, 1917) 54.

¹⁹Thomas Wright, editor, *Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II.*, Camden Society (London, 1839) VI, 1-6.

²⁰*Ibid.*, VI, 14-18.

makes John a martyr to Roman tyranny; this poem anticipates Bale's conception of John by several centuries. Then too, there is a Latin poem, written in England shortly after John's death, in which John is treated with charity, and emphasis is placed on the necessity of a united England—quite in the spirit of Shakespeare's *Faulconbridge*.²¹ On the other hand, a Latin poem, *Planctus super Episcopis*, vehemently attacks the Bishops of Norwich, Bath, and Winchester for adhering to John in his struggle with the Church.²²

In the minor chronicles the interdict is the outstanding event of John's reign, and since these chroniclers were churchmen, they by no means whitewashed the King's contumacy. While these lesser annalists hold John duly responsible for the continental losses, they are not generally aware of Arthur's claim or of his murder.²³ Fifty years after John's death, Robert of Gloucester, whose chronicle may be considered fairly representative, incorporated the story of Arthur's murder in his chronicle; thus making this incident universally accredited. Pity for Arthur established a belief in his just claim to the crown, and accordingly John looms as a weak and vicious usurper in almost all subsequent chronicles.²⁴ While each succeeding chronicle repeats the story of John, political and controversial literature recalls his story only occasionally, and then usually by way of example. Thus, the story of John is enmeshed in a tradition, which ranges from a virulently unfavorable to a lenient and even to a favorable view of that King and his reign.

Perhaps the immediate precursor of Bale's *Kynge Johan* is *The Image of Ypocresye*,²⁵ a long poem written in 1533 by an anonymous author. The poem is a scathing de-

²¹Wallerstein, *op. cit.*, 55.

²²Wright, *op. cit.*, VI, 6-13.

²³Wallerstein, *op. cit.*, 55.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁵Anon. "The Image of Ypocresye", *Ballads from Manuscripts: 1502-1603*, F. J. Purnivall and W. R. Morfill, editors (Ballad Society, London-, 1868) I, Introduction and Text.

nunciation of the Church. The clergy and bishops, cardinals and popes, preachers and prelates, monks and friars are successively trounced and roundly condemned. In the course of the poem, approximately one hundred lines are devoted to a protest against John's excommunication. In this protest, the Pope is the "great bloodsucker," who through his underlings oppresses countries with bell, book and candle, just as he did to King John in order to bring England as well as the King into his power.²⁸

The Image of Ypocresye showed that the time was ripe for Bale. John Bale (1495-1563) had been a monk, but with the Reformation he turned Protestant, and eventually he became the Protestant Bishop of Ossory, Ireland. "Billious Bale," as he was called, devoted his pen to anti-Catholic propaganda. Neither exile nor imprisonments dampened the ardor of his bitter, untiring and redoubtable spirit. The most notorious product of his spleen is his play *Kynge Johan*, which, from a literary point of view is important, since it is the first play in which materials from the English chronicles are utilized.²⁷

Bale studied the chronicles, which he condemned for having "more Romish blasphemy than godliness." Nevertheless, he selected his facts from them. The spirit of *Kynge Johan* is not original with Bale. Its spirit is much the same as that in the Provencal poem, which made John a martyr to papal tyranny.

In itself Bale's play is a perversion of history. He adapted for his purpose a few of the leading and popular events in the reign of King John, such as his dispute with the Pope, the suffering of his kingdom under the interdict, his subsequent submission to Rome, and his alleged death by poison from the hands of a monk of Swinstead Abbey. He does not mention "Magna Charta," because this, of course, did not fit into his purpose. In *Kynge Johan*, the

²⁶*Ibid.*, Part II, 11. 1304-1404.

²⁷Felix E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama: 1558-16W* (Boston, 1908) I, 71.

characters of the churchmen are made evident by their introduction to the audience as abstract qualities. Thus Raymundus first appears as *Dissimulation*, Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, as *Sedition*, who seems to be the arch-enemy of King John; Cardinal Pandulph is called *Private Wealth* and the Pope is *Usurped Power*. In the very beginning the audience is given the keynote of the play. Thus "Ynglond vidua" beseeches King John to protect her from her oppressors in these words:

Such lubbers as hath dysgysed heads in their hoodes
 Whych in ydleness do lyve by other menns goodes,
 Monkes, chanons and nones in dyvers colours and shap-
 pe,
 Bothe whyght blacke and pyed, God send their increase
 yll happe.²⁸

The important feature of *Kynge Johan* is that John is a Protestant hero, who is to be deeply commiserated as the noble victim of papal chicanery and exactions. To make John a hero, required some careful twisting of facts. In the first place John's notoriously bad character was white-washed by giving the lie to the monastic chroniclers: "King John is like to rue it sore for vexing of the clergy." Then, enough charges were insinuated against Peter of Pomfret that he deserved hanging. The loss of the French possessions was minimized by emphasizing John's victories in Wales and Scotland. Finally, John's surrender of crown and kingdom to Rome was attributed to the command of Rome, supported by the oppression of adverse circumstances, which were also attributed to Rome's machinations.²⁹

Now, in all this there is much anti-Catholic virus, which could easily enough be read into Shakespeare's *King John*.

²⁸John Bale, "Kynge Johan", *The Malone Society Reprints* (Oxford, 1931) 3.

²⁹Ruth C. Wallerstein, *King John in Fact and Fiction* (Philadelphia, 1917) 37.

In fact, there are a few critics, who seemingly suppose that some relation—closer than a chance treatment of the same subject—exists between Shakespeare and Bale, and that Shakespeare had the same purpose in producing *King John*, as Bale had in producing his *Kynge Johan*, the only difference being that Bale produced a morality and Shakespeare a very actable historical play.

But to summarize the evidence in the case. It has been pointed out dozens of times perhaps that Shakespeare most probably never heard of Bale's *Kynge Johan*. And it is also very improbable that the anonymous author of the *Troublesome Raigne* had any contact whatsoever with the play. Scholars base these statements on the following facts. *Kynge Johan* is usually dated 1548, although Schelling believes that it was acted at least ten years earlier.³⁰ It may be the play acted in Cranmer's house in 1539, which play an admiring Protestant described as "one of the best matiers that ever he sawe touching King John."³¹ Be this as it may, *Kynge Johan* was apparently never printed in the sixteenth century. The manuscript of the play was recovered about 1835 from old papers probably belonging to the Corporation of Ipswich. Now, according to the Court Calendar, Queen Elizabeth visited Ipswich from August 5-11, 1561, and there is no record of any other visit. It was suggested therefore that Bale's *Kynge Johan* was revived and acted

³⁰Felix E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama: 1558-1642* (Boston, 1908) I, 70. However, Furness—*Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) ix—places the date of composition between 1558 and 1563. In this Furness is doubtlessly following Frederick G. Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage: 1559-1642* (London, 1890) 62.

³¹Edmund K. Chambers, *History of Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford, 1903) II, 221. In view of this fact, it may be significant that Thomas Kirchmayer, a fiery heretic, dedicated his *Pammachius* to Archbishop Cranmer. This play was translated into English by John Bale, and it was *Pammachius*, which proved so offensive to Bishop Gardiner, when it was staged at Christ's College in 1537. Furthermore, Bale himself informs us that he won Cromwell's favor *06 editas comedias*, for Cromwell encouraged interludes to further the Protestant cause.—*Ibid.* II, 219-220.

before the Queen.³² This suggestion gains weight by the fact that the last twenty-one lines in the manuscript are a prayer for the Queen, and they are clearly a later addition.³³ Such are the facts. Consequently, in all this there is no positive evidence to indicate that Shakespeare and the anonymous author of *The Troublesome Raigne* were in any way acquainted with Bale's *Kynge Johan*.³⁴

4. "*The Troublesome Raigne*"

The next notable landmark in tracing the King-John tradition is *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*. This play was published anonymously in London for Sampson Clarke in 1591. According to the title-page, it had been "sundry times publicly acted." The play was probably written a few years previous to 1591, it being usually assumed that it had some connection with the Armada scare in 1588.³⁵ The authorship of *The Troublesome Raigne* is still a matter of speculation. The main incidents in this play were taken from Holinshed's *The Historie of England* (1586).³⁵

The Troublesome Raigne is definitely a play of propaganda. It is usually considered to have the same purpose as Bale's *Kynge Johan*, but actually its purpose seems far wider in scope. King John is once again a Protestant martyr. The prologue announces its bitter brand of anti-Catholicism:

Vouchsafe to welcome, with like courtesy,
A warlike Christian and your countryman.
For Christ's true faith endur'd he many a storm,
And set himself against the Man of Rome. . . .³⁶

³²Frederick G. Fleay, *op. cit.*, 62.

³³Edmund K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923)

I, 245.

³⁴Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) ix.

³⁵*Ibid.*, ix.

³⁶*ibid.*, 472.

The denunciation and repudiation of the authority of the Pope would probably incite the envy of Bale himself:

Since *John* did yield unto the Priest of *Rome*,
Nor he nor his have prospered on the earth:
Curst are his blessings; and his curse is bliss. . .
I am not he shall build the Lord a house,
Or root these locusts from the face of earth;
But if my dying heart deceive me not,
From out these loins shall spring a kingly branch,
Whose arms shall reach unto the gates of *Rome*,
And with his feet tread down the strumpet's pride
That sits upon the chair of *Babylon*.³⁷

The defamation of things Catholic is far more lurid than in Bale's play. Besides this, *The Troublesome Raigne* has a strong political element of propaganda. Apparently, France is the treacherous foe, Spain the open foe and Rome at once the foe within and the foe without. The closing lines of the play is a call for unity of all England in the face of her foes.

If *England's* peers and people join in one,
Not Pope, nor *Fraunce*, nor *Spain* can do them wrong.³⁸

Such is the spirit of *The Trmiblesome Raigne*, which Shakespeare used for the composition of his play.³⁹ Shakespeare's *King John*, however, is far more than a revision of *The Troublesome Raigne*. He curtailed and cut liberally, for he made one play out of what actually is two plays. He perfected the characters by breathing into them the charm of life and vigor with the touch of the human. The language too is not that of *The Troublesome Raigne*, but throughout bears the seal of the genius of Shakespeare. The sequence

³⁷*Ibid.*, 534.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 537.

³⁹*Ibid.*, viii; Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1930) I, 367; Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama* I, 258. For a brief review of the arguments that Shakespeare based his play on *Troublesome Raigne*, see J. Dover Wilson, "Introduction", *King John* (Cambridge, 1936) xxi-xxxiv.

of the plot is the same in both plays, although it, too, was somewhat curtailed by Shakespeare.

Now, since *The Troublesome Raigne* is the parent of *King John*, some critics seem to assume without question that the religious spirit of both plays is the same, and, therefore, that both are in line with the Bale tradition. Obviously this assumption is not logical although the fallacy involved in this assumption may readily be passed over unnoticed. It seems quite apparent that among others Ward, Kopplow and Brooke⁴⁰ are victims of this fallacy.

Several incidents in the history of *The Troublesome Raigne* tend to mislead the critics. It has been pointed out that *The Troublesome Raigne* was first printed in 1591. Shakespeare's *King John* was written about 1596.⁴¹ Now, in 1611 *The Troublesome Raigne* was reissued with the superscription "by W. Sh." By this device the publisher evidently hoped to sell the play on the strength of Shakespeare's popularity. In 1622 a third edition of *The Troublesome Raigne* appeared and this time "W. Sh." on the title-page was changed to "W. Shakespeare." Critics today are agreed that this attempt to attribute *The Troublesome Raigne* to Shakespeare was merely a publisher's hoax. The hoax in 1611 must have been somewhat successful to warrant a new edition in 1622 with the more significant "W. Shakespeare." Chambers⁴² suggests that the absence of *King John* from the Stationers Register entry for the first folio edition (1623) might indicate that "it was regarded as commercially identical with its predecessor," *The Troublesome Raigne*. If this supposition is correct, here is another instance of the success of this hoax. Be this as it may, the hoax was all too successful with a number of Shakespeare's critics.

⁴⁰Adolphus W. Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature* (London, 1899) I, 185; George Kopplow, *Shakespeare's "King John" und seine Quellen* (Kiel, 1900) 84; Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays* (New York, 1927) 227, 251.

⁴¹Furness, *op. cit.*, vi-vii; Chambers, *William Shakespeare* I, 366.

⁴²Chambers, *op. cit.*, I, 365.

Gerard Langfoaine in his *Account of the English Dramatic Poets* (1691) gives a list of Shakespeare's works in which he mentions *The Troublesome Raigne*. "I am apt to conjecture," he writes in reference to the 1611 edition of *The Troublesome Raigne*, "that these were first writ by our Author, and afterwards revised and reduced into one Play by him."⁴³ Without citing any reason for his statement, Alexander Pope attributes *The Troublesome Raigne* to Shakespeare and William Rowley.⁴⁴ In 1764 John Bowie reedited *The Troublesome Raigne* from the 1611 edition. In the preface Bowie states that *The Troublesome Raigne* is unquestionably Shakespeare's. He is surprised that "the several editors of Shakespeare should have so totally unnoticed this work." He states too that Theobald and Warburton have mentioned *The Troublesome Raigne* in their several lists of Shakespeare's writings.⁴⁵ It is rather surprising that so notable a critic as Edward Capell held that *The Troublesome Raiyne* was a juvenile production of Shakespeare.⁴⁶ George Steevens, likewise, included *The Troublesome Raigne* in his edition of the twenty "quarto" plays of Shakespeare; however, he later retracted this earlier opinion.⁴⁷ In his first tentative chronological list of Shakespeare's plays, Samuel T. Coleridge included *The Troublesome Raigne* and characterized it as "not his but of him;"⁴⁸ but in later chronological attempts Coleridge rightly rejected *The Troublesome Raigne*. Even in our own century, Shakespeare's authorship of *The Troublesome Raigne* is strongly favored by Courthope.⁴⁹

⁴³C. M. Ingleby, L. T. Smith and P. J. Furnivall, *The Shakespeare Allusion Book* (London, 1932) I, 363, 371.

⁴⁴Chambers, *op. tit.*, I, 367.

⁴⁵John Bowie, *Miscellaneous Pieces of Antient English Poesie* (London, 1764) preface.

⁴⁶Furness, *Variorum of King John*, viii & 448.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, viii.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, viii.

⁴⁹W. J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry* (London, 1903) IV, 464-466.

In the German school of Shakespearean critics, the most steadfast propoent of Shakespeare's authorship of *The Troublesome Raigne* is Ludwig Tieck.⁵⁰ August W. Schlegel likewise favored the view.⁵¹ Hermann Ulrici considers *The Troublesome Raigne* a juvenile attempt of Shakespeare, but asserts that it is Shakespearean only in part and that it is probably an enlargement of a still older play.⁵² Thus in the German school of Shakespearean criticism the theory of Shakespeare's authorship of *The Troublesome Raigne* was supported by influential critics.

Although the critics mentioned held that Shakespeare was the author of *The Troublesome Raigne*, it does not necessarily follow that they considered Shakespeare to have animated *King John* with the same anti-Catholic spirit. Shakespeare's authorship of *The Troublesome Raigne* being assumed, there is always the possibility that Shakespeare may have changed his religious attitude in writing *King John*. Consequently, from the above evidence alone I hesitate to attribute to these critics the anti-Catholic interpretation of *King John*. But, since these critics, who held that Shakespeare was the author of *The Troublesome Raigne*, had considerable influence particularly in their day, undoubtedly many of their readers—if not these critics themselves—interpreted *King John* as having the same anti-Catholic spirit as *The Troublesome Raigne*.

5. *Editors and Commentators of "King John"*

The seeds, from which much of the nineteenth century criticism of *King John* sprang, were sown by the early editors and commentators. Change in punctuation, text emendations and explanatory comments—all contributed, little or much as the case may be, to crystallize the later interpreta-

⁵⁰Furness, *op. cit.*, viii & 448.

⁵¹August W. Schlegel, *Dramatic Literature, Lectures* trans. J. Black (London, 1902) II, 258.

⁵²Furness, *op. cit.*, 449.

tions. In this respect the *Variorum* edition of Furness tells an interesting story.

In respect to emendations, a passage that has been particularly prolific of critical changes and suggestions is Pandulph's explanation of oaths. Perhaps, the most striking instance is in line 271 of that passage. Furness here notes that the words *Is not* are changed to *Is most*, *Is yet*, *Is't not*, *Is but* and *Is done*.⁵³ Now these two words are important for one of Pandulph's philosophical arguments. If the 1623 Folio edition, which has *Is not* is correct, the editors and commentators have obviously misunderstood the argument. If this argument, in which these two words are important, is according to Catholic theology—or shall I say, is philosophically sound—then the editors and emendators were out of touch with Catholic thought. But I shall discuss this phase of the matter later. The point I wish to make here is that the very fact that editors and emendators have shown such confusion on this particular speech, which, in addition, is by its nature philosophical, was certainly a strong inducement for commentators to toss off the entire speech with such labels as "sophistry," "Jesuitical casuistry," "quibbling logic," "verbal subtleties" or "absurdities."⁵⁴ Later commentators, such as Delius and Vaughan⁵⁵ have even attempted to explain the nature of the quibbles and subtleties.

This type of fumbling criticism has undoubtedly influenced some of the interpreters; in fact, the influence is quite evident when the interpreters use the stock phrases of the commentators or quote their explanations. Perhaps too,

⁵³Furness, *op. cit.*, 218.

⁵⁴ See, Joseph Ritson, *Remarks Critical and Illustrative* (London, 1782) 82; Henry J. Pye, *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespeare* (London, 1807) 142; Gulian C. Verplanck, *The Illustrated Shakespeare* (New York, 1847) I, 48.

⁵⁵Nicolaus Delius, *Shakespeare Werke* (Elberfeld, 1872) II, 594; Henry H. Vaughan, *New Readings and New Renderings in Shakespeare's Tragedies* (London, 1886) I, 44-45.

the interpreters have overlooked that some of the emendations on which their interpretations ultimately rest have long since been abandoned.

6. *Stage History of "King John"*

In the stage history of *King John* there are certain peculiar circumstances strongly flavored with misleading assumptions. Since it is not necessary to review the entire stage history of the play, only pertinent facts will be mentioned here.⁵⁶

The first mention of Shakespeare's *King John* is by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* 1598.⁵⁷ Scholars know of no existing data directly concerning the popularity of *King John* in Shakespeare's day.⁵⁸ Even the indirect evidence is not very enlightening. For instance, in May 1606, an act was passed "for the preventing and avoiding of the great abuse of the Holy Name of God in Stage playes, Interludes, Maygames, Shows and such like."⁵⁹ Now, it has been pointed out that in the 1623 Folio edition the examples of "Heaven" markedly outnumber those of 'God', but still it must remain doubtful whether such indications can be taken as evidence of revivals.⁶⁰ Again, the fact that illegal editions of *Troublesome Raigne* were risked in 1611 and 1622 with the caption "by W. Sh." and "by W. Shakespeare" respectively, would indicate the popularity of Shakespeare himself as much as the popularity of Shakespeare's *King John*. Moreover, in connection with the stage, *King John* is mentioned only once from the days of Shakespeare until 1736. This single reference is merely its inclusion in a list

⁵⁶. Harold Child, "History of Play", *King John*, edited by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1936) Ixiv-lxxix.

⁵⁷ Ingleby, Smith & Furnivall, *The Shakespeare Allusion Book* (London, 1932) I, 46.

⁵⁸ Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, I, 366.

⁵⁹ Virginia C. Gildersleeve, *Government Regulations of the Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1908) 19-20.

⁶⁰ Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, I, 241.

dated Jan. 12, 1669, of "part of his Mates Servants Playes as they were formerly acted at the Blackfryers and now allowed of to his Mates Servants at the New Theatre"; but there is no evidence that the King's company performed it.⁶¹ As the case stands to-day, except for Meres reference in 1598, there is no record of the actual performance of *King John* before 1737.⁶²

It cannot be said that *King John* was unknown, for it was printed in every edition of Shakespeare's works. Moreover, there are records of other Shakespearean productions from Meres till 1737.⁶³ It is therefore commonly supposed that *King John* was not performed during this period.

This gap in the stage history of *King John* seems very

⁶¹Harold Child, "History of Play", *King John* (Cambridge, 1936) Ixiii.

⁶²Little significance can be attached to the fact that when the play was revived at Drury Lane in Feb. 1745, the play bill advertised it as "not acted 50 years." (*Ibid.*, Ixiv.) Davies writing in 1785 likewise believed that *King John* had not been acted since Shakespeare's day. (*Dramatic Miscellanies*, I, 4.) In a letter relative to his revision of *King John*, Colley Cibber writes in the *Daily Advertiser* for Feb. 4, 1737, "But as many of that Fam'd Author's Pieces, for these Hundred Years past, have lain dormant, from, perhaps, a just Suspicion, that they were too weak, for a compleat Entertainment, so those that are in Possession of the Stage, are too few in number, with out frequent Repetition, to hold out the Service of the Season." See Emmett Avery. "Cibber, King John, and the Students of the Law", *Modern Language Notes* 53 (1938): 273.

⁶³In speaking of the popularity of Shakespeare's plays at the time of the *First Folio Edition* (1623), Sidney Lee states that of the histories, the Two Parts of Henry IV, Henry V, Richard III and Henry VIII could still count on an appreciative hearing. See Sidney Lee, "Introduction", *Facsimile of The First Folio Edition from the Chatworth Copy* (Oxford, 1902) xix. In writing of the theatre of the Restoration, Downes mentions the following plays of Shakespeare which were staged at various times after 1659: *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Henry VIII*, *King Lear*, *King Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Macbeth*. See John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (London, 1708) *passim*.

significant. If *King John* is a manifestly anti-Catholic play, it is difficult to understand that it was not utilized in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when wave after wave of anti-Catholic bigotry swept over England, just as in 1745 when Gibber's *Papal Tyranny* won success, because it crested such a wave.⁶⁴ Yet the worthy Dr. Johnson makes the following comment on John's defiance in the play: "This must have been at the time when it was written, in our struggles with popery, a very captivating scene."⁶⁵ George Chalmers and William Birch⁶⁶ repeat the words of Johnson, and again and again the echoes of Johnson's statement are discernible in the works of commentators and interpreters. Thus the gap has been lightly passed over by a number of the critics,⁶⁷ and the anti-Catholic interpretation has been with an apparent erudite presumption insinuated into Shakespeare's very day. Until positive proof be produced, if any inference at all can be made from the silence or non-existence of records, that inference must stand decidedly not in favor of the Anti-Catholic interpretation.

If one accepts the opinion that Shakespeare never intended his play to be anti-Catholic, there is certainly no reason to be surprised if Protestant England should have ignored it for over a hundred years. Though due regard be taken for the period (1642-1660) in which the theatres were closed, though consideration be conceded for the period from 1660 till 1688, in which both Catholics and Protestants may have considered *King John* too dangerous for

⁶⁴Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, I, 4.

⁶⁵Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (London, 1765) III, 445.

⁶⁶George Chalmers, *A Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakespeare-Papers* (London, 1799) 358. William Birch, *Inquiry into the Religion and Philosophy of Shakespeare* (London, 1848) 256.

⁶⁷Both Marshall and Child express surprise at the silence of the records. Vid. Henry Irving and Frank A. Marshall *The Works of William Shakespeare* (New York, 1888) III, 154; Child, "History of Play," *King John* Ixiv.

production,⁶⁸ though allowance be made for the popularity of loose comedy from the Restoration till the end of the century, there are fully a hundred years still unaccounted for. While these hundred years are marked by waves of bigotry which would have made an anti-Catholic play most opportune, the very tenor of the Protestantism, which prevailed during this time in England, was so consistently pitched that an anti-Catholic play would have been welcome at almost any time. It becomes quite probable then that the real reason that *King John* was not publicly staged in Protestant England during this time was that it seemed too fair to the Catholic cause. This probability is certainly confirmed by Colley Gibber's dedication of *Palpal Tyranny*, which will be considered presently.⁶⁹ Now, as soon as Colley Gibber drew attention to Shakespeare's *King John* in a manner, which greatly fostered an anti-Catholic interpretation, it immediately became a popular theatre number and continued popular for the next hundred and fifty years.⁷⁰ Only in modern times has its popularity as a theatre attraction waned.

Since Colley Cibber (1671-1757) drew attention to *King John* in a manner highly charged with interest for our subject, a closer examination of the situation will afford a better understanding of the nature of his influence. It was probably some time in 1727 that Colley Cibber, poet-laureate, though an actor by profession, revised Shakespeare's *King John*.⁷¹ It was actually an alteration, which

⁶⁸Child, *op. cit.*, Ixiv.

⁶⁹See below, p. 49.

⁷⁰Furness, *Variorum of King John* 656-660.

⁷¹In a letter appealing for his revision of *King John*, Colley Cibber states in the *Daily Advertiser* for Feb. 4, 1737: "The same Gentleman therefore, who stops at no Expence to gratify his Audiences, was desir'd, by some of the Ladies I have mentioned to treat with me for the Play of *King John* of Shakespear, which I had finish'd the Revisal of above Ten Years since, and which I had lately the Honour of reading to them: ..." For the full letter, see Emmett Avery, "Cibber, *King John*, and the Students of the Law," *Modern Language* Votes 53 (1938): 272-275.

Gibber called *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (published 1745). About the beginning of 1737 or earlier, he offered the play to Mr. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. Davies⁷² continues the story thus,

This was no sooner known to the public than Cibber was most severely attacked by the critics in the newspapers; Fielding wrote a farce upon the subject, which was played at the little theatre in the Haymarket . . .⁷³ However, the parts in the *Papal Tyranny*, were distributed, and a time fixed for its performance, but the clamour against the author, whose presumption was highly censured for daring to alter Shakespeare, increased to such a height that Colley, who had smarted more than once for dabbling in tragedy, went to the playhouse, and, without saying a word to anybody, took the play from the prompter's desk and marched off with it in his pocket. Pope, in his new edition of the *Dunciad*, which he had taken the pains to alter, in order to dethrone Theobald and place Gibber in his room, in the following line hints at the cautious conduct of the poet-laureat:

"King John in silence modestly expires."⁷⁴

But Gibber's hopes as well as his favorite child survived, although in hiding.

In condemning Gibber's attempt on Shakespeare, critics lavished much praise on the latter. Rich, manager of Covent Garden, sensed the significance of the occasion⁷⁵ and for several nights he produced Shakespeare's *King John*—the first showing being on Feb. 26, 1737.TM The play was performed at various times during the following years. Early in 1745 fate became more kindly disposed toward Cibber's *Papal Tyranny*. The country was going through one of

⁷²Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, I, 4-5.

⁷³For pertinent excerpts from Fielding's farce, see Furness, *op. cit.*, 538-539.

⁷⁴Alexander Pope, *The Complete Works* (Cambridge, 1902) 229.

⁷⁵Davies, *op. cit.*, I, 5-9.

⁷⁶Furness, *op. tit.*, 656.

those periodical outbreaks against Roman Catholicism. Protestant sentiments had become particularly aggravated due to the threatened invasion of the kingdom by the Young Pretender and due to the possibility of the dreaded return to the throne of the Stuart line. Opportunity knocked for Cibber. At Convent Garden Cibber produced his alteration, *Papal-Tyranny in the Reign of King John*. Once again John became a hero and the Pope was insultingly defied. Cibber had catered to the incensed feelings of his audience, and in return popular excitement accorded him the then respectable run of ten nights.⁷⁷ But like a fond mother Cibber attributed all his success to his favorite offspring, for, when he published his play in the same year (1745), he avowed his puerile conceit in the dedication to Lord Chesterfield:⁷⁸

In all the historical Plays of Shakespear there is scarce any Fact, that might better have employed his Genius, than the flaming Contest between his insolent Holiness and King John. This is so remarkable a passage in our Histories, that it seems surprising our Shakespear should have taken no more Fire at it: If then he was under no Restraint from his Religion, it will require a nicer Criticism than I am master of to excuse his being so cold upon so warm an Occasion.

It was this coldness then, my Lord, that first incited me to inspirit his *King John* with a Resentment that justly might become an English Monarch, and to paint the intoxicated Tyranny of *Rome* in its proper Colours. ... I have endeavour'd to make it more like a Play than what I found it in Shakespear. . . .

Cibbers play, although doomed to oblivion, helped to popularize the assumption that Shakespeare's play was anti-Catholic. The challenge to Shakespeare's "coldness" towards "his insolent Holiness" would naturally make lovers

⁷⁷Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (New York, 1901) 316-317.

⁷⁸Colley Cibber, *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (London, 1745) Dedication.

of Shakespeare want to find fiery insinuations in his play, because such a challenge seemed to attack the inherent greatness of Shakespeare. Consequently, the nature of Gibber's attack, when considered in the light of the strongly anti-Catholic spirit of England, makes one wonder whether the subsequent popularity of *King John* is not rather a dubious compliment to the genius of Shakespeare.

There are other facts that may not be disregarded, facts which doubtlessly strengthened the anti-Catholic conception of *King John*. 1. The attention of the critics was drawn to *King John* by *Papal Tyranny*, for, though *Papal Tyranny* was not staged or published till 1745, critics were well acquainted with its nature as early as 1736, that is, prior to the resurrection of *King John*. And even if the critics had not examined *Papal Tyranny* as early as 1736, its very name sufficiently indicated the anti-Catholic significance which it attributed to Shakespeare's *King John*. Furthermore, the line in Pope's *Dunciad* (1743) clearly suggests that the entire incident was fairly well known. 2. *Papal Tyranny*, as staged and published, openly assumed that its stepfather, Shakespeare's *King John*, was anti-Catholic. 3. For the ten performances of *Papal Tyranny* Colley Gibber took the part of Pandulph,⁷⁹ and the spirit he injected into this role is evident from the Dedication to *Papal Tyranny*. Now all these circumstances connected with *Papal Tyranny* are entirely extraneous to Shakespeare's *King John*, yet the nature of these circumstances are such as to make *King John* appear anti-Catholic.

That the circumstances connected with *Papal Tyranny* actually fostered the anti-Catholic interpretation of *King John* seems substantiated by Davies' remark. After quoting John's boastful speech to Philip of France immediately before the excommunication, Davies says,⁸⁰

⁷⁹For a description of Gibber as Pandulph, see Davies *Dramatic Miscellanies* I, 41.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, I, 44.

From this and the former speech of King John to the legate, many good Protestants, and, amongst the rest, Colley Gibber, have brought ample proofs to discredit the belief of Shakespeare's being a Roman Catholic, which seems to have taken its rise from the description of purgatory by the ghost in Hamlet. Shakespeare's contempt of the fopperies and corruptions of Rome, may (be found in more places of his works than this, and particularly in his Henry VIII.⁸¹

The spirit that surrounds the stage history of *King John* would be a study in itself, and therefore, it cannot be given here in detail. While other alterations and revisions, such as, Valpy's,⁸² Kemble's and Kean's, might be discussed, their influence has little significance for the present sub-

⁸¹Child writes ("History of Play", *King John*, Ixx): And so ends the story of *King John* in the era of Garrick, in which, it had been often seen and treated on the whole with respect by all but Cibber." Unfortunately Child mentions no authorities for this statement. If he relies on Thomas Davies or Francis Gentleman, I would suggest the proverbial grain of salt. Davies certainly holds that Shakespeare was anti-Catholic in *King John* (see, for example, the above passage), and Gentleman much inclines to this same opinion (*Dramatic Censor* II, 159 & 169). Consequently, their idea of respectability must be understood in the light of their interpretation of the play. In fact, Davies makes an admission that is quite to the contrary: "The character of Pandulph has not, as yet, been represented with that air of dignity and importance which it demands." (*Ibid.* I, 41.)

⁸²Richard Valpy, *King John: An Historical Tutyedy* (Reading, 1800) Advertisement immediately after Dedication: "When the Editor formed the design of introducing the Play of *King John* on his classical Stage, he procured Cibber's *Papal Tyranny*, with a view of adopting some part of his plan and style. On the perusal, he found two great obstacles to his wishes. Gibber's object, during the rebellion in 1745, was to paint the character of the Pope's Legate in the blackest colors, and to darken the principles of the Romish Church with circumstances of horror, which might increase the indignation of the people of England against them. In the present times, when the situation of the Pope had become a subject of commiseration to the Christian world, the aim of the Editor was to soften the features of *Papal Tyranny*, as far as historical evidence would permit him."

ject, and it seems to affect the popular mind, as a few incidences indicate, more than the actual trend of criticism.

The circumstances, connected with the history and tradition of *King John*, undoubtedly had their influence in making the anti-Catholic interpretation of Shakespeare's *King John* more credible and in propagating this assumption. By unmasking these historical fictions, which occurred to me in the course of this investigation, I wish merely to point out the inherent weakness of what some may consider the traditional or preponderant interpretation, namely, the anti-Catholic interpretation. Unless new records be discovered, the stage history of *King John* discloses nothing to ascertain Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in this play.

PART II—THE PLAY

CHAPTER III

KING JOHN'S DEFIANCE AND BOAST

John's defiance of Pandulph (III, i, 147-160) and his boast to Philip (162-179) were delivered at the same time and in the same heat of passion. Certain historical questions on the relation between Church and state are brought to the fore, but actually it is not so much the settlement of these questions that demands attention as the extent to which John is asserting his jurisdiction and supremacy. Consequently, before venturing upon an interpretation of John's speeches, it is necessary to observe the origin and development of the king's jurisdiction in relation to the Church and to discover the manner in which that jurisdiction was generally understood in Elizabethan days, particularly in the period in which Shakespeare's *King John* was written.

1. *Supremacy*

When Henry VIII became supreme head of the English Church, the event was a decidedly new procedure in English history; yet it was not without some important precedents. Certain English kings had assumed a pronounced anti-papal attitude in the centuries previous to Henry VIII, and consequently the way was fairly well prepared. When Henry then brought into England this essentially different creature, royal supremacy, only comparatively few Englishmen recognized her for what she actually was, and doubtless hardly anyone expected royal supremacy to be claimed as a prerogative of the crown of England.

KING JOHN'S DEFIANCE AND BOAST

Pan. Hale you annotated deputies of beaven;
 To thee King loan my holy errand t' .'
 I pandulph, of faire Millane Cardinall,
 And from Pope Innocent the Legate heere,
 Doe in his narper religioufly demand
 \Why thou against the Church, our holy Mother ,
 So wilfully doft spurne; and fore? perforce
 Keepe *Stephen Langion* chofen Arftibfhop
 Of Canterbury from chatholy Sea:
 This in our foresaid holy Father name
 Pope *Innocent* , I doc demand of thee,

John. What earthie name to Interrogatories
 Can taft the free breath of a facred King?
 Thou canft not (Cardinall) deutfe a name
 So flight, vnworthy, and ridiculoui
 To charge me to an anfwere, at the Pope:
 Tell him this tale, and from the mouth of England,
 Addethus much more, that no Italian Prictt
 Shall by the ortoll in our domin.cns:
 But as we, under heauen, are fupreame head,
 So vnder him that great fupremacy
 Where we doe reigne, we will alone rphold
 Withoutt that affiftance of a mortall hand:
 So tell the Pope, all reucrence fet apart
 To hint and his vfurp dauthoritie.

Era. Brother of England you blaspheemy in this.

John. Though you, and all the Kings of Chriftendome
 Are led fo groffely by this meddling Prictt,
 Dreading the curfe that money may buy our,
 And by the merit of vilde gold, Jroffe, duft,
 Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
 Who in that falefelf pardon from himfelfe:
 Though you, and al the reft fo groffely led ,
 This jugling witchcraft with reuernue cherich,
 Yet I alone, s'one doe me oppofe
 Agairft the Pope, and count his friends my foes.

The Church in England had been reorganized by William the Conqueror (1066-1087). William was zealous and staunch in his Catholicity, and assumed considerable control of the English Church. In fact, he not only looked upon himself as having the sole right to control the English Church, but did many things that were unquestionably far beyond his kingly status. He made bishops and abbots at will and invested them with their spiritualities; and in the spirit of his times, he insisted that no pope be recognized in England without his approval, and without his permission no papal letter or ban of excommunication was to have any force in his dominions. This naturally led to strained relations between the Conqueror and the papacy. But in view of the Conqueror's zeal for clerical efficiency and in view of the harrowing situation of the papacy at the time, Pope Gregory VII merely protested the Conqueror's encroachments on the liberty of the Church.¹

The Conqueror's two sons, William II (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-1135) assumed that the privileges allowed to their father, were actually the rights of the crown, and they evidently considered themselves masters of the Church in England. Their successors, of course, were loathe to let any powers or privileges slip from their hands. As a result these ecclesiastical pretensions of the crown led to a series of conflicts with the papacy, which finally culminated in King John's wilful surrender of the crown of England to the Pope.²

With England as a fief of the papacy, the Holy See naturally exercised considerable control of the English Government. And since the papacy was under the stress of prolonged conflicts with the Empire, the popes were constrained to make numerous financial demands and requests on their vassal kingdom. Many abuses crept in, and they tended to magnify and aggravate the just grievances of

¹*The Cambridge Medieval History*, (New York, 1936) V, 516.

²John T. Ellis, *Anti-Papal Legislation in Medieval England* (Washington, 1930) 13-49.

England against the papacy. The inevitable reaction first gave voice to innumerable protests, but the remedies and correctives were not thorough and radical, for they consisted mainly in minor respites and temporary concessions. In the reigns of the three Edwards (1272-1377) Parliament assumed a determined attitude and took steps to eliminate the grievances. John's surrender of the crown was repudiated as illegal and the series of laws which followed not only asserted the rights of the state but invaded the rights of the ecclesiastical authority.³ In fact, these laws virtually made the actions of the Church wholly dependent on the good pleasure of the crown. Of course, there was an agreement with mutual concessions between the papacy and Edward III; and, although the stipulations of these laws were frequently evaded, and their violations even at times openly tolerated, nevertheless these statutes had been written into the permanent and fixed laws of the land and they could be invoked at any time when the papacy seemed too demanding.⁴ So far-reaching were these laws that succeeding anti-papal legislation from the death of Edward III (1377) to the Protestant Reformation was merely a repetition and enlargement of the enactments under Edward III.⁵

The fifteenth century found England almost continuously playing the game of war. England had hardly terminated the Hundred Years War with France, when her nobility turned against itself in the bloody War of the Roses (1450-1485). This civil strife broke the power of the feudal nobility, and the new King, Henry VII (1485-1509) emerged supreme.⁶ The new ministers were Tudor made, and they owed their positions entirely to the good pleasure of the king. Thus when Henry VIII decided to break with Rome, there was no strong feudal lord to restrain his rashness in behalf of the religious interests of England.

³*Ibid.*, 50-120.

⁴*Ibid.*, 123.

⁵*Ibid.*, 121.

⁶*Ibid.*, 122.

When Henry VIII (1509-1547) came to the throne, the control of the Church by the king was already very extensive. No papal legate could enter England, and no letter or bull could be received without the king's permission; no case could be appealed to the Roman court, and no decision from it could be effective in England without royal approval. Provisions to English sees and benefices were within the jurisdiction of the king's pleasure. Furthermore, no money could leave England for Rome without the express permission of his majesty.⁷ It would seem that Henry considered himself vested with full temporal power over the Church and entitled to define the boundaries between the spiritual and temporal jurisdictions.⁸

In 1534 by the Act of Supremacy, Henry VIII cut off all bonds with Rome, and henceforth he assumed the position of pope in the English realm,—"Supreme Head of the Church of England after God." By ascribing to himself spiritual supremacy, Henry was assuming the power to define doctrines and to perform spiritual functions in person. Under Henry VIII the question never became a practical one and Edward VI (1547-1553) died when only sixteen. The practical issue under Henry was a complete repudiation of the spiritual authority and power of the pope. In the confession of faith of the reformed church, the forty-two articles of 1552 place no restriction on the royal supremacy. The thirty-sixth article reads: "The King of England is Supreme Head in Earth, next under Christ, of the Church of England and Ireland. The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England." Since the concept of royal supremacy was thus defined in so sweeping and unlimited a manner, Catholics could not acknowledge the royal supremacy and even many Protestants resented it.⁹

⁷*Ibid.*, ⁷*Ibid* 122.

⁸James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England* (London, 1908) I, 281-284.

⁹Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* Trans, by Rev. J. R. McKee (London, 1916) 22.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, the question of making her supreme head of the Church arose. Archbishop Heath of York delivered a strong speech against royal supremacy in the House of Lords, and he argued that a "woman can not be the pastor of Christ's flock; can not teach, preach or administer the sacraments, and, therefore, a woman can not be supreme head of the church." Elizabeth herself would not take the title, and, as Meyer points out "in no other point of her ecclesiastical legislation do we find the personal wishes of the queen so clearly expressed, and, although she offended many by her pointblank refusal, she nevertheless held to her point." Instead of "supreme head of the church," she chose "the only supreme governor of this realm, as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal."¹⁰

Elizabeth's explanation is expressed in the thirty-seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles:

The Queen's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of *England*, and other her Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction.

Where we attribute to the Queen's Majesty the chief government, by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended; we give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by *Elizabeth* our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.

The Bishop of *Rome* hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of *England*, etc.¹¹

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹*The Book of Common Prayer* (London, n. d.)

For political reasons, Elizabeth was determined to avoid what might appear extreme, and, therefore, she limited her supremacy. The purpose of her policy was to deceive foreign governments,¹² and to bid for the support of English Catholics at home.¹³ In 1570 this feature of Elizabeth's supremacy became a trump card against the bull of her excommunication, since the bull states that Elizabeth assumed "the place of supreme head of the Church in all England".¹⁴ In the wave of patriotism that her excommunication aroused this point was particularly stressed.¹⁵ Furthermore, Elizabeth's supremacy was the bone of contention in the controversy on the oath of allegiance, which agitated the Catholic party, and consequently it was of great concern for every conscientious Catholic.¹⁶ Thus the Elizabethan conception of spiritual supremacy was different from that of Henry VIII and Edward VI, and this difference was certainly impressed by circumstances on the minds of Englishmen at large.

Among Catholics the nature of Elizabeth's supremacy became an even more vital question in the succeeding decades. With the laws becoming more stringent against them, they sought for every possible loophole. Early in the reign it was mainly a question of attending Anglican services.¹⁷ From 1570 onward the chief issue was one of allegiance. Since the bull of excommunication also deposed Elizabeth, those who remained loyal to her incurred a similar censure, while the others were all the more liable to the

¹²John B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth: 1558.1603* (Oxford, 1936) 22-23.

¹³Meyer, *op. cit.*, 23 f.

¹⁴Haec eadem, regno occupato, supremi Ecclesiae capitis locum in omni Anglia, eiusque praecipuam auctoritatem atque iuris dictionem monstruose sibi usurpans, regnum ipsum, iam turn ad fidem catholicam et bonam frugem reductum, rursum in miserum exitium revocavit.—Bull "Regnans in excelsis" *Bullarium* (Naples, 1882) VII, 810.

¹⁵Meyer, *op. cit.*, 82-83.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 79-80.

¹⁷Black, *op. cit.*, 19.

severity of the law. Thus the bull merely made the lot of faithful Catholics all the worse.¹⁸ Finally, in 1580 the Pope granted faculties to the Jesuit Fathers, Edmund Champion and Robert Persons to the effect that the bull was not binding on Catholics until a favorable time should come for the deposition of the queen.¹⁹ While this partial suspension eased the consciences of Catholics, it certainly made the government more apprehensive of their loyalty in the event of an invasion.²⁰ Nevertheless, when the Armada threatened, English Catholics were loyal, although their fidelity was not put to the test.²¹ Still in some respects the lot of the Catholics became increasingly more bitter, which was doubtlessly due to the fear of an invasion, the dread of assassination and the growth of the puritanic spirit.²² However, in other respects it seems that after 1590 the execution of the penal laws was less drastically enforced,²³ for from November, 1588 onward it frequently happened that recusants, whose loyalty was not suspected, were placed under bond and granted liberty.²⁴

Naturally English Catholics sought every means of relief. Loyalty and patriotism dominated in the spirit of the

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 138. Lord Burghley maintained that no one was accused of treason who held "that the Pope ought by authoritie of Gods worde to be supreme and onely Head of the Catholique Church through the whole world" but "such as did obstinately maintaine the contentes of the Popes Bull afore mentioned, which doe import that her Maiestie is not the lawful Queen of England, the first and highest point of treason." Lord Burghley, *The Execution of lustice in England* (London, 1583). This pamphlet was, of course, intended to vindicate the English government in the eyes of foreign nations.

¹⁹A reprint of the Faculties is given by Meyer, *op. cit.*, 486-488; for the interpretation of the Faculties, see *Ibid.*, 141 f.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 138 f. and 157.

²¹*Ibid.*, 346.

²²*Ibid.*, 347.

²³Wilbur K. Jordan, *The Devevelopment of Religious Toleration in England* (London, 1932) 202.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 188-189. Recusants, whose loyalty was above suspicion but who refused to sign the bond—for the bond amounted to an oath of allegiance—were often treated with surprising lenity. *Ibid.*, 199.

England of that day, and it had been repeatedly shown that the Catholic laity and the priests they supported were overwhelmingly loyal to the queen.²⁵ In the early nineties English Catholics quite generally felt that the foreign political tactics used in their behalf should cease. They considered themselves quite capable of maintaining the Church in England on the basis of full recognition of papal supremacy in spiritual matters, and with a strictly non-political policy in the temporal sphere.²⁶ The literature of the non-political Catholic group, which represented by far the majority of Catholics living in England, stresses the necessity of distinguishing between the political and non-political or spiritual groups,²⁷ and in the most ardent terms pleads for religious toleration based on the fullest loyalty to the queen in temporal matters with freedom of conscience in the strictly spiritual.²⁸ On the other hand, the government too felt that it could not carry coercion much further without the risk of provoking rebellion, and consequently, it was ready to consider some measure of toleration in behalf of the large

"Black, *op. cit.*, 374; Meyer, *op. cit.*, 243 f.; 296 f.; 299 f.; 328 and 346.

²⁶Black, *op. cit.*, 374.

²⁷Jordan, *op. cit.*, 407.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 197-206; 372-375 and 398-419. "By the end of the next year, 1595, the balance of power on the Continent, in so far as it concerned the English Catholic party, was altogether changed. Henry IV, of France had been absolved by the Pope; La Sainte Ligue, with its grandiose ideas, had all but passed away. Spain no longer gave the tone and fashion to the Catholic world, but the rivalry between that country and France was leading to the development of new ideals. The old Spanish party—what with the mishaps to Spanish arms, the exhaustion of her treasury, the mistakes of her partizans—was unpopular. Cardinal Allen had passed away, as well as the Duke of Parma, and almost all the active members of the great house of Guise. Philip II was on the verge of the grave. The chief forces which had kept the Catholics together were therefore dissolved, and we can but expect a period of trouble, before the power destined to govern them in future can assert itself." J. H. Pollen, S. J., "The Politics of the English Catholics during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth: No. VI. "After the Armada", *The Month* 100 (1902): 179.

body of non-political Catholics.²⁹ Cecil was well aware of the movements in the Catholic camp, and, hoping on the one hand to break the unity of the Catholic party and on the other to win as many Catholics as possible to favor the succession of James VI of Scotland in the event of Elizabeth's death, he appeared interested and allowed some relaxation for the time being in favor of the non-political Catholics.³⁰ Conferences were held, and a plan was formulated by which priests and laity were to promise full loyalty to the queen in temporal matters and the queen on her part was to grant liberty of conscience. The Queen considered the plan an insult to her honor and accordingly rejected it. The approval of the Pope, for which Cecil had ardently hoped, was likewise sought, but the Pope considered such a move dangerous. Elizabeth immediately issued a proclamation against the presence of priests in her realm. Thus this incident, which was just another attempt of the non-political Catholic party to obtain religious toleration, terminated early in 1603.³¹

It is important to note that throughout Elizabeth's reign, the question of her religious supremacy played an important part. For Protestants it was one of the reasons for which the bull of excommunication was ever to be heartily and vehemently despised. For Catholics it was the ever vital problem, which affected their daily lives, for it was the reason for those laws, that kept them in constant fear, that inflicted on them ruinous fines that branded them with the ignominy of treason and sentenced many of them to a brutal death. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that in the last decade of the sixteenth century the non-political Catholic party, occupies a changed position in the eyes of the government, and that the non-political Catholic party sought toleration and a settlement of the religious question on the basis of loyalty to the queen in temporal matters and

²⁹Black, *op. cit.*, 375.

³⁰Jordan, *op. cit.*, 203 f.

³¹Black, *op. cit.*, 373-379.

loyalty to the Pope in spiritual matters. Finally, long before the last decade of the century, and particularly in that period, the non-political Catholic party certainly realized that as far as the English government was concerned there was nothing more to their advantage for a peaceful settlement of the religious question than strong and sincere manifestations of loyalty.

2. John's Defiance

*King John*³²⁻⁻

What earthie name to Interrogatories	147
Can tast the free breath of a sacred King ?	148
Thou canst not (Cardinall) devise a name	149
So slight, vnworthy, and ridiculous	150
To charge me to an answer, as the Pope:	151
Tell him this tale, and from the mouth of <i>England</i> ,	152
Adde thus much more, that no <i>Italian</i> Priest	153
Shall tythe or toll in our dominions:	154
But as we, vnder heauen, are supream head,	155
So vnder him that great supremacy	156
Where we doe reigne, we will alone vphold	157
Without th'assistance of a mortall hand:	158
So tell the Pope, all reuerence set apart	159
To him and his vsurp'd authoritie.	160

(III, i.)

The Troublesome Raigne"

And what hast thou, or the Pope thy master, to do, to demand of me how I employ mine own? Know, Sir Priest, as I honour the Church and holy churchmen, so I scorn to be subject to the greatest Prelate in the world. Tell thy master so from me; and say, *John of England* said it, that never an Italian Priest of them all, shall either have tithe, toll, or polling penny out

³²*Folio* (1623) 9. See Plate I. p. 54.

³³Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 493.

of *England*; but, as I am King, so will I reign next under God, Supreme Head both over spiritual and temporal. And he that contradicts me in this, I'll make him hop headless.

Remarks on Context

Pandulph begins with the words: "Haile you annointed deputies of heauen;" (1. 136). In *The Troublesome Raigne* Pandulph immediately refers to John as being "accurst of God and men."³⁴

In Pandulph's address, it is clearly indicated that John has refused to admit Stephen Langton, as Archbishop of Canterbury. It is important to note that the point at issue is not the validity of Stephen's election, but his admission to the see of Canterbury.

In the foregoing speech Pandulph has also made it clear that he is making the demands on John in the name of the Pope, not as a temporal ruler, but as spiritual Head of the Church. Pandulph says in line 140, "Doe in his name *religiously* demand" and again in line 145, "this in our foresaid *Holy Fathers* name."³⁵

Pandulph's speech is strong and to the point and shows that the Pope is ready to take action against John. The accusation is couched in vigorous phrases: "wilfully dost spurn" and "force, perforce." The threat is already implied in "religiously demand", and the final words "I doe demand of thee" show that action against John is imminent.

An Elizabethan audience would certainly have understood the menacing nature of Pandulph's speech, and the audience would have been led to expect the Pope's ban of excommunication and deposition. Without a doubt Elizabethans were very well acquainted with the general nature of these papal censures, and the Catholics in the audience

³⁴*Ibid.*, 493.

³⁵Italics mine.

in particular would have had a thorough grasp of them in their minutest details.

Historically, the excommunication of King John did not bring about his reconciliation, for Innocent III had to resort to deposition and even commit the execution of the sentence to a foreign power. Shakespeare realized how little the ban of excommunication affected John and therefore Shakespeare makes John argue directly against deposition. John bases his argument on the sacredness of his kingly character, by virtue of which he claims full freedom to rule in his dominions and immunity from rendering an account to any earthly man, not even to the Pope. He asserts a temporal supremacy in his realm, which supremacy is inherent in his sacred kingly character, and, therefore irrevocable and not dependent on any "mortal hand."

Meaning of Words

Line 147, *earthie*: "earthly." This word is to be taken in its most obvious meaning, that is, in distinction to "heavenly." There seems to be no reason that it should be understood in the meaning of "temporal" as contrasted with "spiritual."

Line 148, *sacred King*: Since kings were anointed by a special religious ceremony, they were considered sacred. This has already been signified in Pandulph's words (line 136):

Haile you annoited deputies of heauen

Shakespeare refers to the theory throughout *Richard II*. Particularly apt is a statement of John of Gaunt in the same play:

God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,
His deputy annoited in his sight,
Hath caus'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
An angry arm against his minister.

(I, ii, 37-41.)

The sacred kingly character, claimed by John, seems to be similar to, if not identical with, the sacred character of the priesthood. According to the Catholic doctrine on Holy Orders, once a priest is duly ordained, not even the Pope can take from him his priestly character.³⁶ Therefore, by insisting on the sacredness of his kingly character. John is clearly arguing against deposition by the papal ban. Moreover, on the basis of the theory of the sacredness of kings, the Pope's supremacy is fully acknowledged in spiritual matters only; and, as a corollary of this, both are assumed to Jack authority in the other's jurisdiction. Now, according to Pandulph's accusation, John has refused to admit Langton, and it is very evident that John considers this within his temporal jurisdiction. Therefore, John insists that he is not answerable to the Pope, and he contends that a demand of this nature, made even in the Pope's name, cannot "task the free breath of a sacred King."

Lines 149-151, *Thou canst not . . . as the Pope*: The same idea, as to the authority of the Pope in this matter, is continued, but with greater vehemence.

Line 152, *from the mouth of England*: In the course of the play, the word "England" refers either to the king or the nation. In this phrase King John refers evidently to himself in his official capacity as king. In the preceding line he speaks of himself in the singular: "To charge me to an answer." But after using this phrase, he refers to himself in the plural: "in our dominions," "But as we vnder heauen, are supream head," "Where we doe reigne, we will alone vphold." Consequently, it is quite clear that in this phrase King John is referring to himself as king and not to the nation.

Line 153, *no Italian Priest shall tythe or toll*: The papal officials, sent to collect the revenues for the Holy See, were most frequently Italian. As a matter of fact, many kings of England insisted that no tithes or taxes for the benefit

³⁶See p. 103.

of the Holy See could be collected without royal approval." It is clear that by this reference John wishes to show to what extent his temporal supremacy can affect the Church. At the same time it is an assertion of authority over a matter that was often disputed by temporal and spiritual powers.

Line 155, *supreame head*: The phrase is not here used as an official title, for it is neither capitalized nor italicized. It was not understood by the audience to mean spiritual supremacy, for it was a well known fact in Elizabethan England that Elizabeth never took such a title. Moreover, the anonymous author of *The Troublesome Raigne* expressly uses the title, but he finds it necessary to add the word "spiritual": "Supreme Head both over spiritual and temporal." In view of the subject matter of the speech, it must be said that the words refer only to John's temporal jurisdiction as king. Moreover, there is nothing here to indicate that due to the Langton case John is now assuming a new title of spiritual supremacy; whereas the phrase "where we doe reigne," in line 157, signifies that his power and dominion would continue unimpaired as before.

Line 156, *supremacy*: This word is used only in the abstract sense³⁸ and never in the concrete sense, i. e. in the meaning of "kingdom" or "territory", which is seemingly implied by the phrase "where we doe reigne." The abstract sense becomes apparent when it appears in its proper place in the sentence: "we will alone vphold that great supremacy under him." Still the qualifying phrase, "where we doe reigne," indicates a temporal authority, which he possessed prior to this incident.

Line 157, *Where we doe reigne*: "Where" has probably the meaning of "whereby", otherwise the word "supremacy" would have both an abstract and a concrete sense.

³⁷ See p. 57. For the historical foundation of this line, see Plate II p. 70.

³⁸ *New English Dictionary*.

Line 158, *Without th'assistance of a mortall hand*: John rashly contends that deposition cannot take from him his kingly character, for by deposition all his subjects would be released from their allegiance. Therefore, he claims that as a sacred king he would ever maintain his rightful supremacy even "without th'assistance of a mortall hand."

Lines 159-160, *all reuerence set apart to him and his' vsurp'd authoritie*: Since John does not deny the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, an acknowledgement of some sort is in place. The phrase means "with due reverence to him" or "saving his reverence." And as a final note of bitterness John adds, "and his vsurp'd authoritie." The words "to him" seem to be frequently overlooked by the interpreters. These lines have sense only when the Pope's spiritual supremacy is duly preserved in the interpretation of the speech.

Line 160, *vsurp'd authoritie*: John had likewise vainly accused Philip: "Alack thou dost vsurpe authoritie" (II, i, 118).

Comments

A. THE NATURE OF THE SPEECH. John's defiance begins with haughty scorn (lines 147-148). He rises to exaggerated insult (lines 149-151), and then his anger seems to take complete possession of him, for there is an evident recklessness in his words: "Tell him this tale, and from the mouth of *England*, Adde thus much more." It is only after his anger has had its sway that he throws out a curt apology. But even this is not without bitterness.

That the speech is strong is not at all surprising, for it is thus by dramatic necessity. Unless John shows obduracy and contumacy towards the Pope's demands in the Langton case, the excommunication would not be justified. Furthermore, the speech would be neither natural nor characteristic if it were otherwise.

B. THE CONTENTS OF THE SPEECH. John speaks of temporal matters only, over which he claims to have temporal authority. By the vigorous assertion of his temporal supremacy, his answer to the Pope's demand is clearly implied, and it is evident that he considers the Langton case within his jurisdiction. The fact that he forbids Italian priests to tithe or toll is at once the assertion of jurisdiction on an old disputed question between Church and state and a gesture on the part of John to show how much his temporal supremacy can affect the Church, if such be his royal will.

In *The Troublesome Raigne* King John expressly insists upon spiritual supremacy as well as temporal, whereas in Shakespeare's *King John* there seems to be no indication that the supremacy John asserts is to be taken in a spiritual sense.

Shakespeare's treatment of John's defiance should also be compared with a passage in Holinshed.³⁹ (See Plate II, p. 70).

If history was Shakespeare's guide in his choice of materials from *The Troublesome Raigne*, then he probably turned to Holinshed. Now, it is interesting to note that the passage containing John's letter to the Pope is in quotations in the 1586 edition. Therefore, even though the contents of the letter are given in indirect speech, it is nevertheless recorded as sound history. In this letter John's rejection of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury is immediately followed by his reference to the financial gains Rome enjoyed from England. Then there is a strong insistence on the "liberties of the crowne" that he would champion "to the death." In the second paragraph John asserts that "if he might not be heard and haue his mind", he would permit no one to leave the realm, "least his land should be so emptied of monie and treasure, that he should want sufficient abilitie to beat backe and expell his enimies that might attempt inuasion against the same." The sig-

³⁹Raphaell Holinshed, *The Historic of England* (1586) 171. In the 1577 edition, the quotation marks do not occur.

KING JOHN'S LETTER TO THE POPE

The monks
of Canturbu-
ry banished.
King John
opposed to
the pope.

How gainful
England
was to the
court of Rome

The king sore offended in his mind that the bishop
of Norwich was thus put beside that dignitie, to the 30
which he had advanced him, caused forthwith all the
goods of the monks of Canturburie to be confiscate
to his use, and after banished them the reline, as well
I meane those at home, as those that were at Rome,
and herewith wrote his letters unto the pope, giving
him to understand for answer, that he would never
consent that Stephen which had bene brought up
an alwaies conversant with his enemies the French
men, should now enjoy the rule of the bishopricke and
dioces of Canturburie. Moreover, he declared in the 40
same letters, that he marvelled not a little what the
pope ment, in that he did not consider how necessarie
the friendship of the king of England was to the see
of Rome, sith there came more gains to the Romane
church out of that kingdome, than out of any other
realme on this side the mountaines. He added here-
to, that for the liberties of his crowne he would
stand to the death, if the matter so required. And as
for the election of the bishop of Norwich unto the see
of Canturburie, sith it was profitable to him and to 50
his realme, he meant not to release it.

Moreover, he declared that if he might not be
heard and have his mind, he would surely restraime
the passages out of this realme, that none should go
to Rome, least his land should be so emptied of mo-
nie and treasure, that he should want sufficient abili-
tie to beat backe and expell his enemies that might
attempt invasion against the same. Lastly of all he
concluded, sith the archbishops, bishops, abbats, and
other ecclesiasticall persons, as well of his realme of 60
England, as of other his lands and dominions, were
sufficientlie furnished with knowledge, that he would
not go for any need that should bring him the tere, to
seek justice or judgement at the prescript of any for-
ren persons.

nificance of this letter seems quite clear. As far as he himself is concerned, John is willing to resist the Pope to the death, which is certainly defying the Pope's excommunication, for the excommunication affects more the person of the man than his external possessions.⁴⁰ Obviously, John has also in mind deposition, for he clearly expects invasion, and he will immediately prepare for such an invasion, "If he might not be heard and have his mind." Now, it should be noted that John does not deny the Pope's spiritual supremacy, nor does he himself claim any spiritual supremacy. While he seems to have no regard for his own excommunication, his sole concern is the "liberties of the crowne" which he will maintain "to the death" in the event of an invasion to depose him. Therefore, it is deposition alone that John fears as a result of the present conflict. Now, the clear parallel between King John's letter and the explanation here presented of John's defiance in Shakespeare is so striking that this explanation seems at least strongly confirmed.

C. THE PLOT. The basis of the trouble is the refusal of John to admit Archbishop Langton to Canterbury. From Pandulph's speech it is evident that the Pope considers John's refusal as an encroachment on the spiritual jurisdiction of Rome. On the other hand, John considers the case as falling within his jurisdiction. Thus the case as presented is clearly a borderline case between the temporal and spiritual jurisdictions. Therefore, Pandulph makes the demand "religiously", that is, in the name of the Pope in his spiritual character. However, the manner in which John insists on his temporal supremacy shows definitely that he considers Langton's case within his temporal jurisdiction. Thus, John's attitude towards Langton's case makes him liable to excommunication and deposition. It is this imminence of the ban that provides the motivation for John's defiance to Pandulph and his boast to Philip.

⁴⁰See p. 88.

If John assumes also the spiritual authority, there is a disproportion between cause and effect, or in other words, between the motivation and the effect of the motivation. As it is, John's action is motivated only to the extent that he insists on the case being within his temporal jurisdiction. Besides this insistence on the part of John is sufficient motivation also for the excommunication. Therefore, from the point of view of the case involved, and from the point of view of motivation, the plot as well as artistic restraint demands no more than an assertion of extended temporal jurisdiction and not a declaration of spiritual jurisdiction.

It should also be observed that the motivation for the subsequent excommunication is by no means dependent on the soundness or orthodoxy of King- John's theory of inherent temporal supremacy. John's theory is merely the vehicle that carries his refusal to admit Langton. The theory also emphasizes John's obduracy and contumacy, a condition which is essential for excommunication. But the Langton case is nevertheless the sole reason for John's excommunication and deposition.

D. THE AUDIENCE. Protestants and Catholics could readily perceive that the issue in the conflict between the Pope and the king was no other than the Langton case. While they may have had a diversity of opinion as to the legitimacy of either claim in the matter, the motif of the plot would still have been preserved.

The reference to deposition touched a vital question of the day. Protestants looked upon Elizabeth's deposition as a vain gesture of the Pope, while Catholics sought every means to avoid its application in their regard, for they were overwhelmingly loyal to the queen.⁴¹ It is interesting then to note that the trend of thought in the non-political Catholic party in the 1590's is a direct shift from the obligations imposed on Catholics by any ban of deposition. This movement in the non-political Catholic thought finally culminat-

⁴¹See p. 60.

ed in "The Protestation of Allegiance," which was signed by thirteen secular priests on January 31, 1603. The following are the chief points in this document:

The queen has the same sovereign power over us as any of her predecessors had; nothing in the world can release us from the obedience we owe her in all things temporal.

We swear to defend the queen and the state against conspiracies, attempted invasions, and attacks of all kinds whatsoever.

If the pope, in fulfillment of his excommunication, commands us to forsake the queen and take part with her enemies, we shall refuse him obedience, even if he threatens us with excommunication.

At the same time we acknowledge the pope to be our spiritual chief pastor and the successor of St. Peter who has "as ample and no more authority or jurisdiction over us" as Christ committed to that apostle. For as we are most ready to spend our blood in the defence of her majesty and our country, so we will rather lose our lives than infringe the lawful authority of Christ's catholic church.⁴²

This document represents a phase of development in the larger and more complicated problems of the relation between the Church and the modern state. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this work to judge the soundness of the tenets expressed in this document. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that it contains the tenets which were germinating for years among Catholics in England.⁴³ Moreover, even though the majority of the appellants shrank from signing this document in the crucial moment,⁴⁴ it nevertheless formulates the trend of thought among

⁴²Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 456 f.

⁴³See p. 59 f.

⁴⁴Meyer, *op. cit.*, 456.

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staunch Catholics, who were suffering for the faith even to the shedding of blood⁴⁵

The document of the non-political Catholics and John's defiance make no statement in favor of the spiritual supremacy of the crown. The Catholic document expressly acknowledges the pope's supremacy in spiritual matters, whereas John's defiance acknowledges it but in such a way as to show a deep personal disrespect. The Catholic document asserts a temporal supremacy that is considered beyond the scope of papal jurisdiction; in John's defiance the same temporal supremacy is asserted but in a manner far more vigorous and embittered. But the two differ radically in spirit. The Catholic document was formulated by conscientious loyal Catholics, many of whom finally refused their signatures lest they should compromise their loyalty to the Catholic Church. John's defiance is prompted by greed and ambition, and his argument against deposition totally ignores the ban of excommunication, which is most imminent. Indeed, far from indicating any religious scruple in the matter, John shows not the slightest concern for his own personal religious welfare. Thus, there is a definite implication of irreligion in John's defiance. So haughty and disdainful is John's attitude towards the Pope that his defiance provokes a timely warning from Philip of France

Brother of *England*, you blaspheme in this.

(III, i, 161.)

This warning of Philip fully confirms the interpretation of John's personal sentiments.

Now, since the contents of John's defiance were quite in keeping with the trend of Catholic thought on the subject of supremacy, Catholics could hardly have missed see-

⁴⁵Apparently the government considered the above document inadequate, for one of the signers was executed a month later, though four others were pardoned. The subsequent illness and death of the Queen terminated the affair, without any decisive action on the question from Rome. *Ibid.*, 468-459.

ing in John's defiance an expression of their own problem. It is, therefore, very probable that the defiance did not cause any resentment among Catholics in the audience, as it did in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ But while the issue of the nonpolitical Catholics was stated in John's defiance, their sympathies were not with John on account of his character and sentiments. Consequently, there seems to be no reason for assuming that John's defiance was intended as a thrust against the Church or its members.

While it is impossible to say from this evidence alone what Shakespeare's personal opinion was on the question of supremacy, the very bitterness of John as well as the warning of Philip might be construed as indicative of a favorable attitude towards the Catholic Church. Certainly, from all that has been said there is no justification for assuming an unfavorable attitude.

Finally, the observations just made show to what extent critics have been out of touch with Elizabethan religious thought, and, in consequence, many of them were grossly misled in their interpretations of John's defiance.

Conclusion

1. John's defiance is in keeping with his character.
2. A study of the contents of the speech in itself, in comparison with *The Troublesome Raigne* and in comparison with Holinshed, clearly indicates that John is speaking of temporal supremacy in view of probable deposition.
3. This interpretation seems to be in full harmony with all requirements of dramatic art.
4. This interpretation of the speech would hardly have been offensive to Catholics in Shakespeare's audience; in fact, the speech may have had some patriotic appeal to Catholics and Protestants alike.

⁴⁶Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 677.

5. From all the various aspects in which John's defiance has been considered, there is apparently nothing to indicate that Shakespeare was in any way inimical to the Catholic Church. The fact that Shakespeare seems to show a thorough grasp of the thought of the non-political Catholic party may have some positive significance.

3. *John's Boast*

*King John*⁴⁷

Though you, and all the Kings of Christendom	162
Are led so grossely by this meddling Priest,	163
Dreading the curse that money may buy out,	164
And by the merit of vilde gold, drosse, dust,	165
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,	166
Who in that sale sels pardon from himselfe:	167
Though you, and al the rest so grossely led,	168
This iugling witchcraft with reuennue cherish,	169
Yet I alone, alone doe me oppose	170
Against the Pope, and count his friends my foes.	171

(HI, i.)

*The Troublesome Raigne*⁴⁸

Philip, though thou and all the Princes of Christendom suffer themselves to be abus'd by a Prelate's slavery, my mind is not of such base temper. If the Pope will be King in *England*, let him win it with the sword. I know no other title he can allege to mine inheritance.

Remarks on Context

After John's boast, Philip of France remarks: "Brother of *England*, you blaspheme in this." It seems quite apparent that Philip is here referring to the fact that John ig-

⁴⁷*Folio* (1623) 9 See Plate I., p. 54.

⁴⁸Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 493.

nored entirely the threat of excommunication in his defiance of the Pope. The ban of excommunication in the Catholic sense and also in the Protestant sense, which will be treated at a later point, would deeply affect any truly Christian man. Therefore, Philip looks upon this ignoring of the threat of excommunication as a blasphemy against God and religion. The fact that John immediately takes up the subject of excommunication in his boast to Philip shows the significance of Philip's words.⁴⁹ Moreover, since John has ignored the threat of excommunication so completely up to this point, there is already an implied disregard for religion as such. It will not be surprising then to hear him scorn any type of religion that is bothersome to him. John seeks only his personal advantage, even to the disregard of every standard and principle of morality and religion. From the first, his right to the throne is mere pretense, with no clearer claim than his "strong possession". Then he traitorously surrenders the English possessions on the continent merely to gain the recognition of his title to England by the King of France. Now, that he is crossed by the Pope, he sees that title once more in jeopardy, and, conscious of the weakness of his title, he stresses the sacredness of his kingly character. The claims of the Church and religion now militate against his "strong possession", and it is but natural that he should now scorn the Church and religion.

Meaning of Words

Line 163, *this medling Priest*: The reference is to Pandulph, which is clear from the word "this".

Line 164, *the curse*: It is a synonym for "excommunication".⁵⁰ In this scene the word is repeatedly used.

⁴⁹The *New English Dictionary* gives the following definition of the word "blaspheme": "to utter profane or impious words, talk profanely," and as an example of this meaning it cites this particular passage.

⁵⁰*The New English Dictionary*.

Line 164, *that money may buy out*: A bribe,—perhaps also some political concession, though not very likely,—is meant. It seems quite clear that John is looking upon the excommunication as a mere political gesture, such as a boycott, which can be easily enough lifted for a bribe. The fact that John attaches no religious significance to the excommunication shows an utter lack of faith in, and regard for, religion. He seems to view religion as something that occasionally causes temporal and financial strains. Thus, this seems to be nothing else than a scoff at excommunication and therefore, at religion itself, for he ignores entirely the deep spiritual significance of the excommunication.

Line 166, *corrupted pardon*; "Invalid absolution" is undoubtedly the meaning: "absolution," because he is speaking of excommunication; and "invalid," because John seems to be ignoring once again the spiritual powers or faculties necessary to give absolution from such excommunication. As far as the Church law is concerned in the matter, to demand a fee for absolution from excommunication was already forbidden by an old law of the Church.⁵¹ Moreover, an excommunication specially reserved to the Holy See, of which John is obviously speaking could not have been validly absolved without special faculties from the Holy See.⁵² And if the offender were insincere and continued in his contumacy, the absolution would still be invalid unless the law were in some manner abrogated.⁵³ Thus, the "corrupted pardon" or invalid absolution is actually according to the law of the Church, and, consequently, John's inference is also true: namely, that to give such an invalid absolution is

⁵¹C. 24, X, *de simonia, et ne aliquid pro spiritualibus exigatur vel promittatur*, V, 3: *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) II 729. This decree is incorporated in Canon 2236, *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1918).

⁵²C. *de poenitentibus et retnissionibus*, V, 9, in Extravag. com.: *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) II 1222. This decree is also embodied in Canon 2236, *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1918).

⁵³Eduardus Genicot, & J. Salsman, *Institutiones Theologiae Moralis* (Louvain, 1931) II, n. 577.

nothing else than selling pardon from oneself, for it has no spiritual value. Now, since John's conclusion is strictly according to the law, and since this is certainly intended as a scoff, it can be considered as a scoff only on the assumption that John here ignores entirely the deep spiritual significance of excommunication and, therefore, also the spiritual values of religion.

Line 169, *This iugling witchcraft*: This phrase can refer to religion only. The phrase "with reuennue cherish" makes it beyond a doubt that John is referring to the support of religion or, in John's day, of the Catholic Church. Philip is here portrayed as being faithful to the Church, and, therefore, he is supporting the church with revenue. Consequently, in this disdainful remark to Philip, John is giving undeniable proof of his irreligion.

Line 170, *Yet I alone, alone . . .*: Here John glories in his disdain for Philip's religiousness and his own contempt for the Pope.

Line 171, *count his friends my foes*: By virtue of the ban of excommunication and deposition, those who are faithful to the Church may give John no recognition, service or support but may actually be bound to oppose him.⁵⁴ His deposition seems uppermost again in his mind, and in view of that sentence these words seem utterly rash and foolhardy.

Comments

A. THE NATURE OF THE SPEECH. It is with bitter disdain that John addresses himself to Philip. He calls Philip's religious reverence but fear and dread of excommunication, which he despises as simply a means of fraud. With acrid contempt he brands the support that Philip and the other kings of Christendom give the cause of religion, which he condemns as "iugling witchcraft". His words ring with haughty conceit as he hurls defiance at the Pope, and,

⁵⁴See p. 90.

blinded by passion, he defies the friends of the Pope as well.

B. THE CONTENTS. An aspect of the character of John, which in his foregoing speech was only implied, is now clearly accentuated. The question of deposition having been uppermost in his mind, John now turns to the subject of excommunication, and he despises the excommunication, because he has no regard for religion. To him, excommunication is only a means by which the Church obtains money. Once again he harkens to the subject of Church revenues. He considers the support of the church as cherishing witchcraft. In reiterating his defiance of the Pope, he asserts more plainly the effects of deposition, for the friends of Rome will then be automatically turned against him. In this way an element of irreligion becomes accentuated in John's character. The irreligion is emphasized by his disdain for excommunication, by his contempt for religion and by his general defiance.

In *The Troublesome Raigne* John is also disdainful of Philip's attitude in submitting himself to be "abused by a Prelate's slavery", and with a show of dignity and high resolve he asserts that his "mind is not of such base temper". Then with rather chivalrous defiance he challenges the Pope to take the sword. He thus assumes the role of a hero in championing the crown of England. John is then a type of Protestant hero, a forerunner of Elizabeth. There is no trace of any irreligion as in Shakespeare. John seems more self-controlled and calculating. Although he defies the Pope he does not rashly defy all the kings of Christendom. The contrast then between Shakespeare's John and the John of *The Troublesome Raigne* is very considerable. In Shakespeare, John is not a Protestant as in *The Troublesome Raigne*, but he is positively irreligious. Shakespeare's John rashly defies the world, whereas in *The Troublesome Raigne* John is staunch in defying the Pope, but he does not invite Philip to break the newly made treaty of peace. In this way, in *The Troublesome Raigne* the ignominy falls

on the Church and on Philip, while John is a champion whose rights and dignity have been outraged. However, in Shakespeare John's irreligion and uncontrolled passion make him despicable, and his blustering conceit and defiance is unworthy of a king. The difference here between the two plays is great, and it indicates a pronounced difference in motive and purpose.

Although it is commonly said that Shakespeare based his play exclusively on *The Troublesome Raigne*, it so happens in this instance that Shakespeare's treatment conforms perfectly with Holinshed and not with *The Troublesome Raigne*. This fact is also confirmatory of the interpretation here given of John's boast. Now, in John's letter to the Pope as given in Holinshed,⁵⁵ there is no trace of John's concern over possible excommunication, whereas he is defiant to the Pope and fears deposition and invasion by foreign foes. Moreover, the fact that John in Holinshed is ready to sustain "the liberties of the crowne" even "to the death," shows a reckless disregard for religion. Thus Shakespeare's John is apparently identical with John in Holinshed. This fact is certainly noteworthy, but far more significant is the fact that Shakespeare's John is decidedly not the Protestant hero of *The Troublesome Raigne*.

C. THE PLOT. John's seizure of the crown by might more than by right has already indicated a deep disregard for moral standards. His squandering the English possessions in France showed not only a profound lack of responsibility in performing his royal duty but also indicated an admission of the guilt of usurpation by treasonably buying the throne at the expense of the crown. After such unscrupulous conduct, and even with his blackened honor veiled with the borrowed robes of majesty, it is not in the least surprising to hear John spurn religion. At once his irreligion becomes the explanation of his lack of moral restraint. Thus John's irreligion has already been remotely

⁵⁵See Plate II, p. 70,

motivated at least by implication, and it presents a clearer and fuller view, but by no means a different or incongruous view, of his character.

The fact that John so definitely ignores the excommunication in his defiance speech to Pandulph but at the same time builds up a defense against deposition, which supposes excommunication, certainly implies a disregard for the excommunication and also for religion. Therefore, John's outburst of irreligion in his boast is exactly what is expected when Philip applies the spark. Thus this speech in the manner interpreted is likewise proximately motivated.

John's boast supplies also the motivation for the excommunication, which immediately follows. In the excommunication John is at once excommunicated and deposed. According to the law and custom,⁵⁶ the ban of excommunication was first applied so that the royal offender might repent, for by the excommunication he was barred from the sacraments and the other consolations of religion; if after a year the king was still contumacious, he was deposed. But Shakespeare combined the two censures—not without an important precedent—and, consequently, there was required stronger motivation. By stressing the irreligion of John, it becomes at once apparent that to withhold the deposition for a year would be merely so much trifling. Of course, it would also have delayed the play. The accentuation of John's irreligion provided the necessary strengthening of the motivation. It is the absence of this motivation in *The Troublesome Raigne* which helps to create the impression that John's excommunication and deposition is unjustifiable. Furthermore, in *The Troublesome Raigne* the same note of irreligion is not implied in John's defiance speech, because John makes himself spiritual head of the Church. Thus, in Shakespeare the element of irreligion, which is implied in John's defiance and emphasized in his

⁵⁶See p. 90 f.

boast, provides the motivation for the excommunication and deposition. With the proper motivation of the ban, the incident fulfills the requirements of dramatic justice, and thus by the elimination of the element of propaganda, the play gains at once in artistic finesse.

Again, this exhibition of irreligion, although so manifest, does not violate artistic restraint, for, in the first place, the speech is spoken to Phillip and not to Pandulph, and, in the second place, it is essentially a boast. John's passions are still running high, but it is rather haughty conceit than intense rage that is dominant. In this way the necessary artistic restraint also has well been preserved.

The speech motivates likewise, Philip's subsequent breaking of the peace. One cannot miss the note of defiance to Philip. By the fact that John himself is shoving the question of Philip's constancy to the fore, one feels that John is stretching the interpretation of the articles of peace. This certainly weakens the advantage that the peace gives John.

The scorn of Philip reveals John's attitude as very fickle, for he seems much inclined to his former defiance of France. Thus, as far as fidelity to John is concerned, there is some motivation for Philip's subsequent breaking of the peace. This aspect of John's character is also quite different from the John of *The Troublesome Raigne*, and it shows Shakespeare's John again morally inferior.

D. THE AUDIENCE. Protestants as well as Catholics would most likely have understood John's boast as disavowal of religion. Even if they had missed the implications in this respect contained in John's defiance, Philip's reminder to John, "you blaspheme in this", would certainly have aroused their attention to John's attitude. The mention of the word "curse" was commonly understood to mean excommunication, for it is not only repeatedly used in this scene, but also writers like Foxe and Holinshed use it in this sense. Catholics in particular would have understood that excommunication is not taken away for a price, but

that sincere repentance was the sole condition for absolution. Although Protestants had no relish for papal excommunications, they nevertheless recognized a form of excommunication within their own ranks. Article thirty-three of the thirty-nine articles reads,

That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church, and excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful, as an Heathen and Publican, until he be openly reconciled by penance, and received into the Church by a Judge that hath authority thereunto.⁵⁷

Thus, Protestants too would have grasped the disregard for religion that is contained in John's scorn for the ban of excommunication, and John would have been as deserving of excommunication in their eyes as in the eyes of the Church. Finally, the reference to religion as "iugling witchcraft" would have been considered as irreligion by Protestants and Catholics, for, though the Elizabethan era had its vices, irreligion was certainly not one of them.

Conclusions

1. John's boast is in keeping with his character: hitherto he has disregarded moral principles in asserting his title to the throne; now in his attempt to maintain his title to the throne he shows what is but the complement of his disregard of moral principle: namely, a disregard of religious principles.

2. In Shakespeare John is not a Protestant hero as in *The Troublesome Raigne*, but he is pronouncedly irreligious. The irreligion is implied in his defiance and asserted in his boast. In this Shakespeare clearly conforms to Holinshed.

⁵⁷*The Book of Common Prayer* (London, n. d.)

3. This interpretation seems to be thoroughly consistent with the requirements of dramatic art.

4. In view of the religious situation of those days, this interpretation could readily have been understood by both Catholics and Protestants, and the character of John would probably have been equally despicable to both.

5. A review of the evidence in the case revealed nothing to indicate that Shakespeare was inimical to the Church. However, in view of the fact that *The Troublesome Raigne*, which presents John as a Protestant hero, was apparently never suppressed, Shakespeare could safely have followed it even in the character of John; the fact that he definitely changed John's character in an essential point may indicate that he wished to conform more strictly to history in this regard, or that he was bent on eliminating Protestant propaganda for artistic reasons, or that he wished to be fair or even favorable to the Church. His conformity to history and art seems sufficiently conclusive, but that he wished thereby to be fair and even favorable to the Church is not conclusively evident, though the presumption stands in favor of a positive conclusion.

6. Whatever may have been Shakespeare's personal reason in depicting the character of John in such a vicious manner, this portrayal of him is certainly favorable to the Catholic Church, since the gross wickedness of John justifies all the more the action of the Church against him.

THE BAN AGAINST KING JOHN

Pand. Then by the lawfull power that I haue,
 Thou shalt stand curst, and excommunicate,
 And blessed shall he be that doth reuolt
 From his Allegiance to an heretique,
 And meritorious shall that hand be call'd,
 Canonized and worship'd as a Saint,
 That takes away by any secret course
 Thy hatefull life.

Can. O lawfull let it be
 That I haue roome with *Rome* to curse a while,
 Good Father Cardinall, cry thou Amen
 To my keene curses; for without my wrong
 There is no tongue hath power to curse him right.

Pan. There's Law and Warrant (*Lady*) for my curse.

Canf. And for mine too, when Law can do no right.
 Let it be lawfull, that Law barre no wrong:
 Law cannot giue my childe his kingdome heere;
 For he that holds his Kingdome, holds the Law:
 Therefore since Law it selfe is perfect wrong,
 How can the Law forbid my tongue to curse?

Pand. *Philip of France*, on perill of a curse,
 Let goe the hand of that Arch-heretique,
 And raise the power of *France* vpon his head,
 Vnlesse he doe submit himselfe to *Rome*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAN AGAINST KING JOHN

The decree excommunicating King John contains four distinct elements: the excommunication itself, the deposition, the declaration of forfeiture of life and the invitation to Philip of France to execute the ban. In the First Section, therefore, the nature of the law of excommunication will be briefly examined, particularly in its application in Shakespeare's time. The Second Section will treat of tyrannicide and the killing of heretics. In the Third Section the decree against King John, as it appears in Shakespeare, will be critically examined together with its immediate effects.

1. *Excommunication*

Excommunication is a censure by which one is excluded from the communion of the faithful and is deprived of many spiritual goods according to the nature of the excommunication.¹ Prior to Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), the word "anathema," when contrasted with excommunication, meant major excommunication; Gregory IX, however, declared that the term "excommunication" without any modification meant major excommunication, and the word "anathema" was then understood to refer to a more solemn pronouncement of the sentence.² Such then was the meaning of the

¹*Codex Iuris Canonici* (Rome, 1918) Canon 2257 n. I. Whenever the present law is merely a precise statement of the old law, the present law will be used. Any critical edition of the *Code* will state the sources for each canon,

²Francis Hyland, *Excommunication: Its Nature, Historical Development and Effects* (Washington, 1928) 24.

word "anathema" before and after King John, and the word still signifies the most solemn pronouncement of excommunication.³

Excommunication traces its origins to apostolic days. St. Paul and St. John clearly speak of it. This same doctrine is restated by many Fathers of the Church, and it is incorporated in the decrees of the Popes and Councils of the Church.⁴ Since both Scripture and Tradition in Catholic belief, are sources of divine revelation, this disciplinary regulation has divine sanction.

It is only reasonable that the varying conditions of the ages required some variation in the manner in which this divine regulation should be applied. The Catholic Church, therefore, has at various times specified the manner in which the ban of excommunication was to be imposed. In making these specifications the Church has never in any way changed the end or purpose of this disciplinary regulation as set down in Scripture and Tradition. It is this divinely sanctioned disciplinary regulation, as specified by the Catholic Church, that will hereafter be referred to as the law of excommunication.

What then is the purpose of excommunication? Since excommunication is a censure, its primary purpose is medicinal. It aims in the first place at correcting a person for some external, grievous, contumacious sin.⁵ In the second place it purposes to heal the wound inflicted by the sin on

³Codex, Canon 2257 n. 2. "In the New Testament, anathema designates separation from God, or from the society of the faithful (Rom. IX, 3; Gal. I, 9). But he who is separated from God is cursed, hence the word is also employed as a malediction (I. Cor. XVI, 22)"—Hyland, *Excommunication*, 23. Thus, Pandulph's words: "Thou shalt stand curst, and excommunicate", at once take on a fuller meaning.

⁴Hyland, *Excommunication*, 16-18. Since the idea of excommunication has sound scriptural sanction, it is not surprising that Elizabethan Protestants had regard for it even to the extent of embodying it in the Thirty-nine articles. See Art. 33 of the *Thirty-nine Articles*, *Infra* p. 94.

⁵Codex, Canon 2242 n. 1.

the public good, and, so far as possible, to preserve the public good from such ills. The purpose of excommunication is accomplished by depriving the excommunicated person of the reception of the sacraments and from other spiritual privileges, and in general by cutting him off from communication with other members of the Church.⁶ When the purpose of the excommunication has been achieved and the excommunicated is sincerely repentant, absolution by competent authority cannot be denied.

As noted above, one incurs excommunication for some external, grievous, contumacious sin. This obtains even though the commission of that sin may not be notorious. However, those whose excommunication was public and notorious were publicly to be shunned by all; those privately excommunicated were to be secretly avoided. Those nominally and publicly excommunicated, whose excommunication was by its nature considered major, had to be avoided in *divinis* and *humanis* under pain of incurring a minor excommunication.⁷ In the Middle Ages, the obligations of avoiding the excommunicates were very strictly enforced, for the wife and children, the servants and subjects of the excommunicated came under the obligation.⁸ Gregory VII in 1079 mitigated this law by admitting necessity and even a "certain utility" as excusing causes.⁹ Martin V, in 1418 ruled that only those had to be shunned who were nominally and publicly excommunicated. This distinction and this regulation remained in vogue until the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1918.¹⁰

⁶*Ibid.*, Canon 2267 ff.

⁷C. 29, X, *de sententia excommunicatiionis*, V. 39: *Corpus Juris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) II, 864.

⁸Hyland, *Excommunication*, 37.

⁹*Ibid.*, 39. The nature of the law suggests the reason that William the Conqueror and his successors claimed the right of approval of sanction before any of their subjects should be excommunicated. The same stipulation is contained in the Constitutions of Clarendon (January, 1164). See Ellis, *Anti-Papal Legislation*, 33.

¹⁰Hyland, *Excommunication*, 43,

From what has been said, some significant points may be noted with reference to the law of excommunication in Shakespeare's day. Nominal and public excommunication cut off the one excommunicated from the reception of the sacraments, from the spiritual society of the faithful and from the social and civil society of the faithful even in purely profane matters, exception being made only for a wife or husband, children, servants and subjects when necessity or a "certain utility" demanded it. Any of the faithful, who knowingly violated this ban with respect to one nominally and publicly excommunicated, incurred by this very fact minor excommunication.

Since excommunication is a censure, it is always essential that the one excommunicated be contumacious.¹¹ One is considered contumacious, who at least implicitly contemns the authority of the Church, in that he does not abstain from the sin, although he is aware that the sin has been prohibited under censure by the legitimate superior.¹²

One who had been excommunicated for contumacy in refusing to renounce heresy, of which he had been suspected, was condemned as a heretic after one year.¹³ The heretic was then to be handed over to the secular authority for punishment. By virtue of their oath of office, by which the secular authorities publicly bound themselves to exterminate all heretics from the land subject to their jurisdiction, the secular authorities were constrained under pain of like censure to take the necessary action against these heretics designated by the Church. If a temporal lord neglected to take such action after having been duly admonished, he incurred excommunication. If the temporal lord spurned to satisfy the demands, the Pope might within a year absolve his vassals of their allegiance and declare his territory open to invasion by Catholics, who acquired title to the land upon

¹¹Canon 2241 n. 1.

¹²Canon 2242.

¹³C. 7 in VI., *de hereticis*, V., 2: *Corpus Juris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) II, 1008.

exterminating the heretics. In this procedure the rights of an overlord of a delinquent were to be respected, which implied that the entire procedure was to be placed in his hands.¹⁴ This law was made in 1215, and it obviously applied to feudal days, when every nation acknowledged the supreme authority of the Pope. Now, this law formed the basis of procedure in the excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570.¹⁶

The Bull *Regnans in excelsis* contained at once Elizabeth's excommunication and her so-called deposition.¹⁶ She was excommunicated as a heretic and as a fosterer of heresy. That the bull should also contain her deposition was a very unusual circumstance. However, in consideration of the fact that the Pope, the supreme Legislator in the Church, issued the bull, it is ridiculous to speak of this change in procedure as uncanonical. The fact is that Elizabeth's excommunication was considered by the English Hierarchy as early as 1559.¹⁷ In the succeeding years it had frequently been a matter for papal consideration and it was openly discussed at the Council of Trent. The bull was throughout these years delayed, not because there was doubt of Elizabeth's heresy, but because Philip of Spain and the Emperor Ferdinand insisted on its being inopportune. Elizabeth herself expected it and feared it; she doubtless knew that it was frequently considered and from her policy, she seems to have been fully aware of the reasons for its delay. Thus her excommunication, as a warning, would have been nothing more than a meaningless official formality. What is more, in the winter of 1569-1570 action was required not threats. Consequently, there was good reason for the change in procedure.¹⁸ However, this change became one of

¹⁴C. 13, X., *De haereticis*, V., 7: *Corpus Juris Canonici* II, 754, 755.

¹⁵Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 79.

¹⁶"Regnans in excelsis", *Bullarium* (Naples, 1882) VII, 810-811.

¹⁷Meyer, *op. cit.*, 25-26.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 82.

the points on which the bull was vehemently attacked. Protestants interpreted it as a definite indication of ill-will and lack of consideration for Elizabeth. Since the luckless Catholics, and not Elizabeth, bore the brunt of the excommunication, feeble consciences were on the lookout for proofs to declare the bull invalid. The apparent legal flaw was, of course, not overlooked. Actually the division of English Catholics into reconcilables and irreconcilables centered on the question of the validity of the bull.¹⁹ Thus, with Elizabeth's excommunication and deposition establishing an important precedent, Shakespeare was justified from a canonical point of view in uniting in one sentence the excommunication and deposition of King John. Those in the audience, who were acquainted with the canonical procedure in the matter would not have considered John's excommunication and deposition as legally unusual on account of the important Elizabethan precedent. Let it be observed that these conclusions are not contingent upon the personal sentiments of the audience in respect to Elizabeth's excommunication, but they refer merely to the objective fact that Shakespeare is here following an established form.

Elizabeth's excommunication presents another interesting point that has bearing on this study. The Bull prescribes that not only all nobles, subjects and people, but also all others who are in any manner under oath to her government, are absolved of their oaths, and all these were forbidden under pain of a similar sentence of excommunication to obey her admonitions and laws.²⁰ This phase of the ex-

¹⁹*Ibid.*¹⁹, 81.

²⁰Paragraph 5 of the bull reads as follows: "Et item proceres, subditos et populos dicti regni ac ceteros omnes, qui illi quomodocumque iuraverunt, a iuramento huiusmodi ac omni prorsus dominii, fidelitatis et obsequii debito perpetuo absolutos, prout nos illos prae-sentium auctoritate absolvimus; et privamus eamdem Elisabeth prae-tenso iure regni aliisque omnibus supradictis; praecipimusque et interdicimus universis et singulis proceribus, subditis, populis et aliis praedictis ne illi eiusve monitis, mandatis et legibus audeant obedire. Qui secus egerint, eos simili anathematis sententia innodamus" *Bullarium*, VII, 811.

communication then applied likewise to foreign princes. They were not only absolved of their oaths to Elizabeth and her government, but they were also liable to a similar sentence of excommunication if they disregarded the bull. Here again, Shakespeare's play is perfectly in harmony with recognized canonical procedure. The parallel is perfect even to the important detail of threatening Philip of France with excommunication if he did not break his peace with John.

It is clear then that wherever Shakespeare applies the law of excommunication in *King John* it is strictly according to recognized canonical form.²¹

2. *Tyrannicide and the Killing of Heretics*

In the age of the Renaissance, when sword and dagger were proper articles of a gentleman's apparel, murder, whether by duel or otherwise, was frequently committed even on slight provocation. Assassination as a political means was often employed, and it was commonly considered justifiable. In 1415, the Council of Constance attempted to check the evil by condemning the following proposition:

Any vassal or subject can lawfully and meritoriously kill, and ought to kill, any tyrant. He may even, for this purpose, avail himself of ambushes, and wily expressions of affection or of adulation, notwithstanding any oath or pact imposed upon him by the tyrant, and without waiting for the sentence or order of any judge.²²

This condemnation may have checked some of the wild speculation on the question, but it did not put a stop to poli-

²¹For a full discussion of the law of excommunication and of its application to the Elizabethan period, See William Cardinal Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence of English Catholiques* (Ingolstadt, 1584), esp. pp. 95-118.

²²Henrico Denzinger, & Clemens Bannwart, *Enchiridion* (Freiburg, 1908) 235.

tical murders. Up to the Protestant Reformation the motives for political assassination were usually confined to reasons of state.²³

With the Protestant Reformation religious hatred and considerations of ecclesiastical state-craft were frequently confused with the political motive in justifying murder. Of the reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox—all justified tyrannicide in various forms.²⁴ In the reign of Edward VI, Poynt, the Protestant Bishop of Winchester, wrote in his short *Treatise of Politique Power*, "The manifold and continual examples that have been, from time to time, of the deposing of Kings, and killing of tyrants, do most certainly confirm it to be most true, just, and consonant to God's judgment."²⁵ It was but in the next century that the Puritan Milton drew largely upon the works of these reformers, particularly on those of Knox, in order to justify the Puritan action in the execution of Charles I.²⁶ Now, in Elizabethan days, Puritanism was already a power to be reckoned with; and with its strength continually increasing it became a great menace in the 1590's. Though the vast majority remained within the established church, it constituted the radical element that aimed at its complete transformation. The fundamental political doctrines were inimical to the whole structure of Tudor government.²⁷ Their opposition to the established church finally brought action from the government against them. In 1590 John Udall was imprisoned under sentence of death, but died before execution. In 1592 three Puritans, Coppinger, Arth-

²³Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 266-267.

²⁴H. G. Ganss, "Jesuits and Tyrannicide", *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 27 (1902): 341-343.

²⁵T. B. P., "Catholic Writers on Tyrannicide", *The Month* 41 (1873): 285.

²⁶John Milton, "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates", edited by William Haller, *The Works of John Milton* (New York, 1932) V, 1-59.

²⁷John B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth: 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1936) 151.

ington, and Racket, were accused of plotting to take the Queen's life, and Racket was accordingly executed. In the following year Barrow and Greenwood who were Separatists, were executed for seditious words, and likewise John Penry for his share in the Marprelate movement.²⁸ In view of the fact that the Puritans were followers of Calvin and Knox and in view of the fact that the Separatists, who formed the spearhead of Elizabethan Puritanism, held that the connection between Church and state was unscriptural and ought to be abolished,²⁹ the action of these radicals becomes readily understandable. Moreover, the extreme harshness and severity of the laws against the Catholics in 1591 and 1593 is attributed to the influence of Puritans in the government.³⁰ Therefore, from the attitude of the leaders of Protestantism on the question of political and religious murder, and from the actions of the radical Protestants, which seem significant of the extremity of their view on the question, it might at least be deduced that moderate Protestants did not consider an extreme statement on the matter as shockingly unusual.

It must always be kept in mind that the religious persecution of Catholics by Protestants was to a great extent carried out under the veil of governmental legal sanction.³¹

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁰ Meyer, *op. cit.*, 349 f.

³¹ "To that heerin the kingdom of England is farre more absolute than either the Dukedome of Venice is, or the kingdome of the Lacedemonians was. In warre time, and in the field the Prince hath also absolute power, so that his word is a law, hee may put to death, or to other bodily punishment, whom he shall thinke so to deserue, without processe of lawe or forme of Iudgement. This hath beene sometime vsed within the realme before any open warre, in sudden insurrections and rebellions, but that not allowed of wise and grave men, who in that their iudgement had consideration of the consequence and example, asmuch as of the present necessitie, especially, when by any means the punishment might haue been done by order of lawe." Sir Thomas Smith, *The Common-wealth of England* (London, 1594) 56.

Elizabeth and her government were shrewd enough to make it appear that the executions of Catholics were not for their religion and faith but for treason against the state.³² In that way their deaths did not have the appearance of a martyrdom or of a religious murder, but, as it were, of due punishment.³³ But in spite of Elizabeth's and Burghley's subterfuges, both at home and abroad the issues were considered as essentially religious.³⁴ Elizabeth and Burghley claimed and exercised the power of burning heretics,³⁵ but they were careful not to exceed public sentiment in the matter. The fact that they could proceed to the lengths that they did in regard to Catholics indicates the general callousness of the time in respect to such executions. Elizabeth was always meticulous about appearances, but one glance behind the scenes will show how lightly death was discharged. The following is an undated letter from Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Robert Cecil:

Sir,—It can be no disgrace if the killing of a rebel were practised, for you see that the lives of anointed Princes are daily sought, and we have always in Ireland given head-money for the killing of rebels, who are ever-more proclaimed at a price. So was the Earl of Desmond, and so have all rebels been practised against. Notwithstanding I have written this enclosed to Stafford, who only recommended me that knave upon his credit. But for yourself you are not to be touched in the matter. And for me, I am more sorrye for being deceived than for being declared in the process.³⁰

³²Meyer, *op. cit.*, 156 f.

³³As a matter of interest, in Burghley's book, *The Execution of Iustice in England* (London, 1583), each page is headed with the caption: "Execution for Treason and not for Religion."

³⁴Meyer, *op. cit.*, 187, *passim*. Conyers Read, *The Tudors* (New York, 1936) 196-197.

³⁵J. H. Pollen, *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1920) 7. Francis Kett was burnt in the castle ditch at Norwich, 1589, for alleged heresies against the divinity of Christ. See *Dictionary of National Biography*.

³⁶J. H. Pollen, "The Politics of English Catholics during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth", *The Month* 100 (1902): 78.

It was a time of intense political treachery. Not only in England, but in almost every country in Europe there were politico-religious executions and murders, and the dagger of the assassin was frequently employed against the great. In 1572 the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Night occurred. The Prince of Orange was assassinated on July 10, 1584. In 1587 Mary of Scotland was executed and the following year witnessed the assassination of Henry Duke of Guise and his brother Cardinal Charles de Guise. Philip II of Spain made much use of assassination to attain his purposes. In fact, there were very few princes in all Europe, who so rose above their age as to keep their hands clean.¹⁷

It is necessary to have this general background in mind in order better to understand the declaration of the forfeiture of John's life which Shakespeare attaches to the excommunication. It is important to observe that the killing of John is announced to be a meritorious act and that his killing may be accomplished by "any secret course." The problem must therefore be considered from the aspect of excommunication.

As mentioned above, the law of excommunication, which still obtained in Shakespeare's time, was made in 1215, and it clearly takes into account the feudal system.³⁸ In the sixteenth century it became impossible to carry out the law in all its details, for contumacious heretics were much too numerous. According to the law, it was the duty of the state to execute the heretics. Henry VIII observed this aspect of the law before he himself came under the law, and thereupon he executed Catholics as heretics for not recognizing his newly claimed spiritual authority. Although Mary the Catholic was very zealous in exterminating the heretics, heresy was already too widespread. But, under Mary, the law was the guide and the executions followed upon due process of law. The immediate effect of these executions was

³⁷Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church*, 267.

TMSee p. 90-91.

not so aggravating as is often assumed. It was only when Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* "canonized" the heretics as martyrs that a more drastic reaction set in. It is hardly to be doubted that Elizabethans generally understood that Mary acted according to the law of the Catholic Church, and that in doing so, she was prompted by religious motives.³⁹

Elizabeth's excommunication occurred in 1570. It is only a dozen years later that the government begins to show concern about designs on the Queen's life. Once Pius V had excommunicated Elizabeth, he not only called upon Catholic sovereigns to invade England and depose the Queen, but he also encouraged conspiracies and rebellions. But there is no evidence that he approved her murder or advocated it as meritorious.⁴⁰ However, Pius' successor, Gregory XIII (1572-1585) alone among the popes of the counter-reformation regarded assassination, when employed in the Church's service as a work pleasing to God. For this study it is necessary to observe the nature of the evidence in which Gregory's approval is manifested.

In 1580 Dr. Humphrey Ely was sent to the papal nunciature at Madrid by English noblemen, who had agreed to murder Elizabeth. Realizing the danger to their own lives in such an attempt, they requested at least verbal assurance of the Pope that they would not commit sin. On Nov. 14, 1580 the Nuncio, Bishop Sega, accordingly wrote to the Cardinal of Como the Secretary of State to the Pope. In the letter he states that he, when asked, had assured the English Catholics that they need not regard the murder of Elizabeth as a sin, since the bull of excommunication permits all the Queen's subjects to take up arms against her. He promised nevertheless to consult the Pope on the matter. He encouraged them in their enterprise and, in conclusion, asked absolution in case he himself had gone too far in the matter. On Dec. 12, 1580, the Cardinal of Como wrote the following letter to Bishop Sega in Madrid:

³⁹John H. Pollen, *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1920) 7.

⁴⁰Meyer, *op. cit.*, 267.

Since that guilty woman of England rules over two such noble kingdoms of Christendom and is the cause of so much injury to the Catholic faith, and loss of so many million souls, there is no doubt that whosoever sends her out of the world with the pious intention of doing God service, not only does not sin but gains merit, especially having regard to the sentence pronounced against her by Pius V of holy memory. And so, if those English nobles decide actually to undertake so glorious a work, your Lordship can assure them that they do not commit any sin. We trust in God also that they will escape danger. As far as concerns your Lordship, in case you have incurred any irregularity, the pope bestows upon you his holy benediction.

On the arrival of this letter from Rome, Ely went to Rheims. Apparently the conspiracy was dropped, for there is no further evidence on the matter.⁴² However, Ely, who was an Oxford scholar, remained at Rheims, and was ordained priest on April 14, 1582. On July 12, 1586 he went to Pont-a-Mousson to take up the professorship of canon and civil laws,⁴³ after having been professor at Rheims also.⁴⁴ Now under the circumstances, the papal approval for the assassination of Elizabeth, as a consequence of her excommunication, could hardly have found a more favorable channel for its promulgation throughout all England, for it was at Rheims that priests were being constantly educated for the English mission. The Pope's approval was not simply confided to Ely. Dr. Allen was informed directly by Segga as to this approval.⁴¹ Furthermore, according to Segga's letter to the Cardinal of Como, the Jesuits were also interested in the question and it is more than likely that they were duly informed of the papal answer. The extent to which

⁴¹Meyer, *op. cit.*, 269-271. For the original correspondence, see pp. 490-491.

⁴²J. H. Pollen, "The Politics of the English Catholics during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth", *The Month* 99 (1902): 606.

⁴³"Humphrey Ely", *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴⁴Pollen, *op. cit.*, 606.

⁴⁵Pollen, *op. cit.*, 99 (1902): 605.

this approval was actually made known in England is a matter of conjecture.

On May 2, 1583, the Nuncio Castelli in Paris wrote to the Cardinal of Como that the Dukes of Guise and Maine had a plan for killing Elizabeth, and the Nuncio stated that he told them, "I believed the Pope would be glad that God should chastise that enemy of his in any way, but it would not become him to procure her punishment by those means." The Cardinal's reply to the Nuncio Castelli, dated Rome, May 23, 1585 is as follows:

I have told the Pope what you wrote to me about the affairs of England, and he cannot but think it well that that country should be freed by any means whatsoever (*in qual si sia modo*) from⁴⁶ oppression and restored to God and our holy religion.

There can be no doubt then about the approval the Pope had given on the question. Gregory XIII was unable to rise above his age. Spanish influence on the papacy was strong throughout his pontificate. Under the great Sixtus V (1585-1590) the papacy was freed not only from Spanish influence but also from Spanish views on bloodshed.⁴⁷ Several proposals were made to Sixtus V for the assassination of Elizabeth. Sixtus not only rejected these offers, but, as any modern Pope would do, he called Pisany, the French Ambassador at Rome, and requested that his government should warn Elizabeth of the danger in which she was placing herself by her religious policy, which could only result in the formation of plots against her life. Though Gregory's medievalism was completely laid aside by the papacy, Gregory's views still persisted abroad.⁴⁸

It should be remarked that all principles concerned—Gregory XIII, who was a lawyer, the Cardinal of Como, who was secretary of state, Sega, the Nuncio at Madrid,

⁴⁶Pollen, *op. cit.*, 99 (1902): 607 f.; Meyer, *op. tit.*, 271.

⁴⁷Meyer, *op. cit.*, 273.

⁴⁸Pollen, "Politics of English Catholics", 100 (1902): 80.

Castelli, the Nuncio at Paris, and Ely, who at that time already was a doctor of canon and civil laws⁴⁹—seem to have had no scruples whatever in regarding such a deed as canonically justified. Their view of the question may be explained on the grounds that excommunication in canon law corresponded to outlawry in civil law. In fact, according to an old decree of Urban II (1088-1099), juridically it was not considered homicide to kill an excommunicated person. Nevertheless the offender was subject to punishment, lest the discipline of the Church should suffer, because such a deed might readily be prompted by impure motives.⁵⁰ But this decree could hardly be construed as an endorsement of murder. However, from Sega's letter and also from that of the Cardinal it is clear that they considered such a deed justified, because the bull of excommunication gave leave to all the Queen's subject to take up arms against her. Thus Elizabeth's assassination seems to have been considered as a natural and evident deduction from the bull of her excommunication. Elizabeth's sentence of excommunication and deposition followed only after a formal trial, and in consequence it seemed to matter little how the sentence was carried out. As one would-be assassin put the case in April 1580, "it made little difference whether the slaughter were done by the expedition of an army, or in secret by a clever ruse."⁵¹ Therefore, in consideration of those treacherous times, it is quite understandable that many should ignore all distinction in the choice of means, and that many should consider Elizabeth's secret murder by far the most practical.

As early as 1581 there are alleged plots against the Queen's life, and this continues until 1587.⁵² Some of these

⁴⁹*Douay Diaries: The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay* (London, 1878) 166.

⁵⁰*Deoreti Grat.*, pars, ii., causa xxiii., qu. V., c. 47.: *Corpus Juris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1839) I, 816.

⁵¹Pollen, "Politics of English Catholics", 99 (1902): 604.

⁵²*Ibid* 99 (1902): 603, and 614 and 100 (1902): 71-87.

plots are genuine, some doubtful and some definitely sham. However this may be, there are certain general features about these plots, which features often recur in the various court proceedings. Rome and Rheims are referred to as the hot-beds of conspiracy against England and Elizabeth in terms which admit of no dispute.⁵³ In almost every case Jesuits, seminary priests or higher Churchmen are alleged to have had a hand in the plot.⁵⁴ Moreover, on April 1, 1582 the Queen issued a proclamation which declared that Jesuits and seminary priests sought to attack the throne and even to take her Majesty's life.⁵⁵ Thus every plot, whether sham or genuine, appeared to be a direct attempt to carry out the bull of excommunication and deposition.

In 1593 and 1594 there was another wave of conspiracies against the Queen's life. To establish their genuineness is beside the present purpose. Certain statements in the records, however, are of interest. It is alleged in three confessions concerning the killing of the Queen that a certain Father Holt assured the plotters that their contemplated deed was good.⁵⁶ In the proceedings against Dr. Lopez, who was accused of having intended to poison the Queen, the Jesuits and seminary priests are once again accused of being the instigators against the Queen's life, and it is definitely asserted that all rebellions, treasons and devilish practices were originally caused by the bull of Pius V.⁵⁷ Whatever may be the truth of these records, it is once again maintained that the plots against the Queen's life were caused directly by the bull and that these attempts had at least quasi-official sanction.

Another important aspect in the case is the attitude of the non-political Catholic group. Early in 1585 they ad-

⁵³Meyer, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁵⁴Pollen, *op. cit.*, 99 (1902): 600 f.

⁵⁵Meyer, *op. cit.*, 146.

⁵⁶*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series: 1591-1594* (London, 1869): ccxlvii, 78; ccclix, 98, 117.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, ccxlvii, 97, 102, 103.

dressed a *Petition of Loyal Catholic Subjects to the Queen*. The document was signed by prominent Catholic laymen. In the strongest terms the petitioners protested their loyalty: ". . . yt . . . be our verye bounden duety irrevocablye to beare to your right excellent Majestie all loyaltie, faythe, and Christian obedience, as to our undoubted rightfull, and onlye souergne. .. " This certainly indicates their views with regard to the bull of excommunication and deposition. But more interesting is the manner in which they proceed to clear themselves of any suspicion of plots:

We for our partes utterlye denye that either Pope or Cardynall hath power or authorities to commaunde or lycence any manne to consent to mortall Synne, or to committe or intend anye other Acte Contra Jus Divinum. Much lesse can this desloyall, wicked, and unnaturall purpose by any meanes be made lawfull, to wytt. That a native borne subiect may seek the effusion of the sacred blood of his annoynted Sovereigne.⁵⁸

This document was framed as the answer of the non-political Catholics to the plots and attempts on the Queen's life. At the same time they appeal to the Queen that they might not be subjected to the new and "heavie yokes." which were even then being fashioned by Parliament. This statement is an unmistakable reference to a definite papal command or license, and it can hardly be doubted that it refers to Gregory's approval through the Cardinal of Como. Since the document is essentially a petition for mercy, its strong disavowal and repudiation of the authority of the Pope in this particular is readily understandable.⁵⁹

It is significant too that later pleas for toleration made by the non-political Catholic party urge the Council to dis-

⁵⁸Wilbur K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (London, 1932) 400.

⁵⁹Incidentally, the assertion of the sacredness of an anointed sovereign stresses again the prevalence of this theory at the time, and reconfirms the interpretation of King John's defiance as given above by showing how obvious such an interpretation was in Shakespeare's time.

tinguish between sedition and sincere religious conviction, devoid of political interests.⁶⁰ The document, signed by the thirteen secular priests in 1603, echo the same sentiments.⁶¹ Finally, in the same year, even Dr. Humphrey Ely asserted the same sentiments.⁶² Without a doubt he regretted his unfortunate visit to Segá, the Nuncio at Madrid.

The above exposition of tyrannicide and of the execution of heretics emphasizes certain facts pertinent to this study.

1. Tyrannicide was expressly and officially condemned by the Catholic Church.

2. Some canonists and ecclesiastics within the Church believed that the killing of Elizabeth was not against any divine or ecclesiastical law but actually in keeping with the decree of her excommunication and deposition.

3. The papal endorsement stated that such a deed was licit and meritorious in whatsoever manner accomplished in consideration of the bull of Pius V.

4. Important personages in Rheims, Paris, Rome and Madrid were fully acquainted with the papal endorsement. These cities being the chief avenues of Catholic influence in England at that time, the papal endorsement had the most favorable opportunity then existing for its promulgation in England.

5. From the actions of the English government and the non-political Catholics as well as from certain public records and from an express proclamation, the papal endorsement must have been known to some extent in England.

6. Both in England and on the continent, the papal endorsement is either directly or indirectly looked upon as a specific effect of the bull of excommunication, and no other reason for the endorsement is even implied.

⁶⁰Jordan, op. cit., 412.

⁶¹See p. 73.

⁶²Jordan, op. cit., 417.

7. While the non-political Catholics in England strongly repudiated the papal endorsement, they do not state it to be a libel or a slander, nor do they question its authenticity.

8. In view of the severity of the old law and practice regarding heretics; in view of the similar theory and practice,—particularly regarding tyrannicide—that obtained among Protestants; in view of the intense political and religious animosity of the time; and in view of the widespread practice of political murder, the papal endorsement was not in itself considered unusual or extraordinary, but in its specific application to Elizabeth it was heartily detested by loyal Englishmen.

9. The fact that the papal endorsement was aimed at a very popular Queen made its specific application a menace to Catholics⁶³ and a threat to the stability of the Established Church. Consequently, Catholics and members of the Establishment looked upon any attempt on the life of the Queen as most undesirable and reprehensible.⁶⁴

3. The Decree

*King John*⁶⁵

Then by the lawfull power that I haue	172
Thou shalt stand curst, and excommunicate	173
And blessed shall he be that doth reuolt	174
From his Allegiance to an heretique	175
And meritorious shall that hand be call'd	176
Canonized and worshiped as a Saint	177
That takes away by any secret course	178
Thy hateful life	179

⁶³None of the plots was ever a serious danger to the life of Elizabeth, for all attempts upon her life were consistently abortive. Meyer, *op. cit.*, 273.

⁶⁴After 1580 secret societies were formed. Their members swore to protect the Queen with life and limb, and to pursue her enemies with all their might, even to their complete extermination. Meyer, *op. tit.*, 274.

<i>Philip of France</i> , on perill of a curse	191
Let goe the hand of that Arch-heretique	192
And raise the power of <i>France</i> vpon his head	193
Vnlesse he doe submit himselfe to Rome	194

(HI, i.)

*The Troublesome Raigne*⁶⁶

Then I, *Pandulph of Padua*, Legate from the Apostolic See, do, in the name of Saint *Peter*, and his successor, our Holy Father, Pope *Innocent*, pronounce thee accursed, discharging every of thy subjects of all duty and fealty that they do owe to thee, and pardon and forgiveness of sin to those or them whatsoever which shall carry arms against thee, or murder thee: this I pronounce, and charge all good men to abhor thee as an excommunicate person.

Meaning of Words

Line 173, *curst*: "Excommunicated," "anathematized."⁶⁷

Line 175, *heretique*: This name is technically correct according to the old law and according to the bull excommunicating Elizabeth.⁶⁸

Line 176, *meritorious*: The same word is used in the Cardinal of Como's letter to Bishop Segar: "*non sola non peccaria ma anco meriteria*."⁶⁹

Line 177, *Canonized and worshiped as a Saint*: In consideration of the papal endorsement, this phrase is quite readily understood. It would then be just another case of Judith being canonized and worshipped as a saint for cutting off the head of Holofernes. (*Judith*, xvi, 24-27). A number of

⁶⁵*Folio* (1623) 9. See Plate III., p. 86.

⁶⁶Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 493.

⁶⁷*New English Dictionary*.

⁶⁸See p. 90.

⁶⁹Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 491. For a discussion of this correspondence, cf. *infra* p. 98 f.

cases⁷⁰ touch upon this aspect in similar or identical terms as in Shakespeare, and in each instance it is set forth as an official or semi-official promise. In the letter of the Cardinal of Como to Bishop Segna the undertaking is called "so glorious a work."⁷¹

Line 178, 677 *any secret course*: In the letter of the Cardinal to Segna, no reference is made to the manner in which the deed was to be accomplished. However, in the Cardinal's letter to Castelli, the Nuncio at Paris, the phrase is used "by whatsoever means" (in qua si sia mode),⁷²

Comments

A. THE NATURE OF THE SPEECH. The speech is undoubtedly given as a formal pronouncement: "Then by the lawful power that I haue." The language is such that the tempo is necessarily retarded, and this characteristic adds a note of awe and solemnity. While the words are as strong as their tremendous significance, there is nothing that would indicate passion, but rather calm deliberation and firmness are manifest throughout.

B. THE CONTENTS OF THE SPEECH. Pandolph excommunicates John from the body of the Church. As in the bull against Elizabeth, deposition is immediately followed by the absolution of John's subjects from their allegiance, because John is formally declared a heretic. Not only are those subjects who revolt acclaimed as blessed, but it is also specifically declared that he who takes away John's life by any secret course is doing a meritorious act. This forfeiture of life was not specified in the bull against Elizabeth, but, as already pointed out, many made this inference from the bull,

⁷⁰See the case of Anthony Tyrrel: Meyer, *op. cit.*, 154, 268 and 272; the case of Dr. Parry, *Ibid.*, 269, 272 and J. H. Pollen, *The Month* 100 (1902) 72-77; the confession of Hugh Cahill (Feb. 21, 1594), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, ccxlvii, 78; and the case of Dr. Lopez (Feb. 28, 1594) *State Papers Domestic*, ccxlvii, 97.

⁷¹See p. 99.

⁷²See Seep. 100.

and, what is more, the papal endorsement was generally looked upon as a specific effect of her excommunication. Consequently, the excommunication of John follows exactly that of Elizabeth. Objectively then, Shakespeare's treatment of the excommunication is consistent with the procedure of the Church at that time.

The bull of Elizabeth's excommunication absolves likewise all others who are under oath to her government. This point is not included in the excommunication of John, for Philip of France, who in this respect is the acting agent, is present. Naturally then this phase of the deposition is addressed to him. Just as all those who keep their oath to Elizabeth's government fall under the ban of excommunication according to the decree against Elizabeth, so here Philip is threatened so that if he keeps his oath and thereby preserves the peace with John, he also will be excommunicated. Confused at the suddenness with which the decision has been thrust upon him, Philip declares his perplexity (line 221). In reply Pandulph reminds him that the perplexity caused by an excommunication is far worse (lines 222-223). The subsequent appeal of Philip (lines 224-252) shows his unwillingness to break the peace; but at the same time, in spite of his previous unfaithfulness to Constance and Arthur, he shows a deep reverence and concern for the excommunication now menacing him. In vain he tries to find some loophole to preserve his newly made peace with John. But in answer to this long speech, Pandulph reminds him of his duty to the Church which is of a higher order than the obligations of a peace founded on John's treachery and fickle fidelity (lines 253-261). Philip realizes the undeniable truth and the plain fact contained in Pandulph's words, still he clutches at a last straw of compromise:

I may dis-ioyne my hand, but not my faith. (262)
Loathe as he is to break the peace, Philip is nevertheless unwilling to disavow his religion. The stressing of his strong preference for peace emphasizes all the more the deep religious significance of the excommunication. Philip had

broken his faith with Constance when tempted by glorious

peace wholly advantageous to him, but even at the cost of such a peace he would not add to that first sin, the sin of irreligion, by braving the excommunication. The contrast between Philip and John becomes a contrast between religion and irreligion,—as John himself had put it—a contrast between friend and foe.

Before comparing Shakespeare's treatment with that in *The Troublesome Raigne*, a few remarks on the contents of the corresponding section in *The Troublesome Raigne* are necessary. The treatment of the excommunication and the absolution of the subjects from allegiance to John is in general according to the bull against Elizabeth. However, the anonymous author apparently never studied a Catholic catechism for he speaks of "pardon and forgiveness of sin to those or them whatsoever which shall carry arms against thee, or murder thee. . . ." Perfect contrition and sacramental confession are the only means for the forgiveness of sin. However, the Church does grant indulgences, which Protestants from the beginnings of Protestantism have wrongly construed to mean forgiveness of sin.⁷³ An indulgence is not a pardon of sin, but a remission of punishment due to sins already forgiven.⁷⁴ Now, a crusade indulgence (that

⁷³Nikolaus Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses* (Paderborn, 1923) III, 516 f. Bernard J. Otten, *A Manual of the History of Dogmas* (St. Louis, 1925) II, 369-370.

⁷⁴An indulgence is the extra-sacramental remission of temporal punishment still due to sins which have already been forgiven. The doctrine of indulgence presupposes the doctrine of the dispensing power of the Church as well as the doctrine of the communion of saints, for by virtue of the power of the keys the Church in granting indulgences simply applies some of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints for a good and reasonable motive. Obviously then, an indulgence is not a permission to sin, not a remission of past or future sin, and not an absolution from censure or excommunication. This in brief, is the Catholic doctrine on indulgences.—J. M. Herve, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Paris, 1932) IV, 421 f.; *Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini* Sessio XXV, Cap. xxi (Leipzig, 1839) 100. By the end of the thirteenth century, this doctrine of indulgence was already clearly and definitely enunciated. Franz Beringer, *Die Ablassse, ihr Wesen und Gebrauch* (Paderborn, 1921) I, 9

is, a plenary indulgence or a remission of all punishment still due to sins already committed) was granted on Sept. 24, 1583 to all who confessed their sins and took part in the proposed enterprise against England.⁷⁵ At Christmas 1586 this crusade indulgence was renewed.⁷⁶ If there be any connection between this crusade indulgence and the "forgiveness of sin" in *The Troublesome Raigne*, which is very likely, it would seem that the anonymous author was imbued with this doctrinal characteristic of early Protestantism. But to go on. In answer to the excommunication in *The Troublesome Raigne* John tauntingly remarks: "So, Sir, the more the fox is curst, the better 'a fares: if God bless me and my land, let the Pope and his shavelings curse, and spare not."⁷⁷ To this the Cardinal makes no response, but turns to Philip:

Furthermore, I charge thee, *Philip*, King of *Fraunce*, and all the Kings and Princes of Christendom, to make war upon this miscreant. And whereas thou hast made a league with him, and confirmed it by oath, I do, in the name of our foresaid Father, the Pope, acquit thee of that oath as unlawful, being made with an heretic. How say'st thou, *Philip*, dost thou obey?

It is noteworthy that mention is made only of Philip being absolved of his oath to John. According to the law, by keeping his oath Philip would incur at least minor excommunication, or if the situation would demand it, even formal and nominal excommunication. But to follow the bull against Elizabeth, Philip should be threatened with a sentence such as John incurred. However, in *The Troublesome Raigne* Philip yields without a struggle and therefore he

⁷⁵Meyer, *op. cit.*, 286.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 318.

⁷⁷This is in keeping with the boast of Elizabeth, Burghley, Bacon and others that God blessed the Queen and the land in spite of the Pope's excommunication. See Meyer *op. cit.* 287-289.

needs no threat. In this way Philip's yielding to Rome is made to appear very contemptible, especially since John's remark, "Obey the Pope, and break your oath to God"? is strongly tinged with Protestantism and Philip allows it to pass unanswered.

In comparing the same episode in the two plays, a few important facts come to light. When speaking of the reward of him who will carry out the sentence against John, Shakespeare drops the phrase "pardon and forgiveness of sin", which is according to the Protestant conception of the Catholic idea of indulgences, and instead, Shakespeare uses the word "meritorious" which in reference to a good act is technically sound Catholic moral theology. In *King John* the manner in which Pandulph calls upon Philip to break his peace with John, that is, by threatening Philip with a like sentence, is strictly according to the decree against Elizabeth. In this way Shakespeare is able to contrast the reaction of the two Kings with regard to the same ban. Herein lies an essential difference in treatment, for just as John's character was changed for the worse by his irreligion, so Philip's character is changed for the better by his regard for spiritual values even in the face of natural sentiment and political advantages. It should also be noted that once the decree against John has been pronounced, the John of *The Troublesome Raigne* is flippant, whereas Shakespeare's John is almost completely silenced: in fact, he says not a word to the Cardinal, but utters only two lines in a decidedly altered tone. In the one he requests Philip's answer: "*Philip*, what saist thou to the Cardinal!, (line 202); in the other he merely observes Philip's reaction when Constance presses her case to the fore: "The king is mould, and answers not to this." (line 217). Thus there is an essential difference in content and treatment between the two plays.

With reference to both content and treatment of this episode in Shakespeare's *King John*, it is again quite evident that the critics have been out of touch with the times

particularly in regard to the various aspects of excommunication.

C. THE PLOT. The plot becomes again more involved, and this is accomplished by broadening the issue. The contumacy of John which justifies the excommunication has been stressed in John's defiance and boast. The Langton case, which actually occasioned the excommunication is shoved to the background by John's extreme expression of irreligion. In this way not only the excommunication is thoroughly motivated, but also the far reaching significance of the excommunication is brought out from its negative aspect.

Both the anonymous author of *The Troublesome Raigne* and Shakespeare found it necessary to unite the excommunication and deposition as in the decree against Elizabeth. To have separated the two would have unduly prolonged the play and retarded the action to no purpose.

The full decree as uttered by Pandulph to John and Philip contains four elements: excommunication, deposition, forfeiture of life and a demand to break the peace. As a result every one present on the stage is deeply affected by this decree. Although the conflict of passion, emotion and sentiment that follows is keen, not a single one questions the fact or the validity of the law. Not even Elinore protests the threat against her son's life. All are concerned with Philip's obedience or disobedience to the law. Apparently it is for John's sake that Elinore wants peace, whereas Constance wants war for Arthur's sake. Austria and Lewis urge obedience to the Church. Womanly sentiment causes Blanch to choose peace. Faulconbridge seems quite indifferent to the main issue, but continues to taunt Austria as before. Actually the only reason given favoring disobedience is that of emotion and sentiment by Blanch. No phase of the decree is called into question, but one and all accept the law and one and all accept the effects of the law as a matter of course.

It would be most ridiculous, not to say unnatural, to suppose that the Cardinal's words to Philip—just four lines—calling upon him to break his peaceful relations with John, would have been sufficient in itself to stir up such a turmoil: to threaten the newly made peace, to endanger the royal marriage on the very wedding day. Those words did stir up the turmoil, not because they were uttered by a Cardinal, but because the Cardinal acted with the authority of the Church, and his words, therefore, signified the operation of a law that none present would contest. Consequently, it was not the Cardinal himself that actually demanded the breaking of the peace, but it was the law, which demanded respect and observance, regardless of the Cardinal's own personal character and personal sentiments. In fact, it can hardly be said that up to this point the Cardinal reveals any of his personal feelings and sentiments on the matter. He merely performs the formal duties enjoined upon him by his office of Legate.

Again, the full operation of the law provides the motivation for the subsequent part. Unless the law be duly respected, the subsequent breaking of the peace would not be properly motivated. Thus the law provides the remote motivation and the proximate motivation lies in the decision of Philip. The conflict in Philip between his unwillingness to break the peace and his obedience to the Church emphasizes the cost of this obedience and accentuates all the more his devotion to the Church and religion. In this way the extreme contrast on the basis of religion and irreligion is provided in order to justify the breaking of the peace and the resumption of the war.

D. THE AUDIENCE. There is strong reason to believe that Shakespeare's audience understood this episode in the manner interpreted, for in consideration of the religious situation of the day, this interpretation is certainly the most obvious. Catholics and Protestants knew the Church law, if not directly at least from its operation in Elizabeth's case, which had been so widely advertised. It has also been

shown that the general public would hardly have been shocked or surprised at the declaration that the killing of John was a meritorious act. The audience would simply consider this as a specific effect of excommunication since John was denounced as a heretic. Now, all this is confirmed by the manner in which the various characters likewise react on the stage. Indeed, not a reproachful word is uttered on the stage against the Cardinal, the law or the various phases of the law, which would indicate that the audience of Shakespeare's day understood the entire episode in the same way.

Conclusions:

1. Objectively taken, Shakespeare's treatment of the excommunication and deposition is strictly in keeping with established ecclesiastical procedure. The declaration that John's life is forfeited, is founded on an unusual but important and generally known fact of that day, and since this was generally looked upon as an effect of the excommunication, there is good reason for saying that in this regard Shakespeare is also conforming objectively with a practice which for a time had recognition by ecclesiastical authority.

2. A comparison with *The Troublesome Raigne* reveals that Shakespeare eliminated the Protestant elements of *The Troublesome Raigne*, made his treatment of the excommunication conform with the procedure of the Church and used words and phrases which are in keeping with Catholic theology. The comparison shows also that Shakespeare blackened the character of John but strengthened and ennobled the character of Philip.

3. By fulfilling the requirements of art, Shakespeare's treatment of the episode is in every regard elevated, consonant with the event and deeply respectful of the

4. The fact that the characters duly respect the Church's law; the fact that the motivation accentuates the superiority of the spiritual cause, and the fact that the contrast between religion and irreligion is so strongly developed to justify Philip's breaking of the peace at the request of the Church—all contribute to set forth the claims of the Church and religion in a very favorable light.

CARDINAL PANDULPH'S SPEECH ON OATHS

Pand. So mak'it thou such an enemy to faith,
 And like a ciuill warre scist oath to oath,
 Thy tongue against thy tongue. O let thy vow
 First made to heauen, first be to heauen perform'd,
 That is, to be the Champion of our Church,
 What since thou sworst, is sworne against thy selfe,
 And may not be performed by thy selfe,
 For that which thou hast sworne to doe amisse,
 Is not amisse when it is truly done:
 And being not done, where doing tends to ill,
 The truth is then most done not doing it:
 The better Act of purposes mistooke,
 Is to mistake again, though indirect,
 Yet indirection thereby growes direct,
 And falshood, falshood cures, as fire cooles fire
 Within the scorched veines of one new burn'd:
 It is religion that doth make vowes kept,
 But thou hast sworne against religion.
 By what thou swear'it against the thing thou swear'it,
 And mak'it an oath the iuretie for thy truth,
 Against an oath the truth, thou art enure
 To sweare, sweares onely not to be forsworne,
 Else what a mockerie should it be to sweare?
 But thou dost sweare, onely to be forsworne,
 And most forsworne, to keepe what thou dost sweare,
 Therefore thy later vowes, against thy first,
 Is in thy selfe rebellion to thy selfe
 And better conquest neuer canst thou make,
 Then arme thy constant and thy nobler parts
 Against these giddy loose suggestions:
 Vpon which better part, our prayers come in,
 If thou vouchsafe them. But if not, then know
 The perill of our curses light on thee
 So heauy, as thou shalt not shake them off
 But in despaire, dye vnder their blacke weight.

CHAPTER V

CARDINAL PANDULPH'S SPEECH ON OATHS

The hesitancy of Philip of France to break his oath with King John elicits from Cardinal Pandulph a *long* speech on Philip's obligations to the Church. This particular speech has been the object of much criticism from almost every conceivable aspect. Therefore, in this chapter the doctrine of oaths, as enunciated by the Catholic Church, will first be discussed, and thereupon the entire speech will be examined in every detail.

1. *The Doctrine of oaths*

An oath is the calling of God to witness the truth.¹ In itself it is an acknowledgement of God and His infinite attributes, for God, Who knows the secrets of the human heart, is called upon to put His seal on human veracity. In this way, greater certainty is given to a statement made under oath, for he who takes the oath puts himself under the extra obligation of religion. The swearer, as it were, places himself under bond to God and makes himself liable then to greater punishment from God if he knowingly swears falsely. In this way greater certainty is given to human veracity.²

It becomes evident at once that both Catholics and Protestants, and for that matter all who believe in God as the Supreme Being realize to some extent the grave sanction of

¹*Codex Juris Canonici* (Rome, 1918) canon 1316 n. 1.

²Eduardus Genicot and J. Salsman, *Institutiones Theologiae Moralis* (Louvain, 1931) I, n. 298.

an oath and the grave obligation that the very nature of an oath imposes. The conception of an oath is so elementary that it might readily be assumed that an Elizabethan audience fully understood this simple concept. This assumption is sufficiently justified by many of Shakespeare's plays.

The Church's doctrine on oaths is nothing else than a logical deduction from the concept of an oath, and a practical application to varying conditions. Nevertheless, it may rightly be called Catholic doctrine, since the Church has been so specific and consistent in the teaching of this doctrine.

The point of interest here is the promissory oath. A promise is a contract by which some one gratuitously obliges himself to give, do or omit something. The obligation arising from a promise is one of fidelity or of justice.⁰ When the promise is made under oath, the obligation of religion is added to that of fidelity or of justice.⁴

If a promise, which directly involves the injury of others, or prejudices the commonweal or one's eternal salvation, is confirmed by an oath, the promise does not thereby acquire any justification.⁵ From this it is clear that an oath does not change the essence of a promise, but it is rather superadded to it. Consequently, the promissory oath follows the nature of the promise.⁶ If then the obligation of the promise should cease, the promissory oath would be meaningless and, therefore, not binding. In consequence, the same conditions under which a promise ceases to bind applies also to the promissory oath.⁷

The obligation imposed by a promissory oath ceases:

1. if it is remitted by him in whose favor the oath is made;
2. if the object promised under oath has sub-

³Genicot, *op. cit.*, I, n. 606.

⁴Canon 1317 n. 1.

⁵Canon 1318, n. 2.

⁶Canon 1318 n. 1.

⁷Canon 1318 n. 1.

stantially changed, be it that changed circumstances have made it either sinful or entirely indifferent, or be it that it impedes a higher good; 3. if the purpose or condition for which the oath was taken fails; 4. if competent authority annuls, dispenses or commutes the object.⁸ The competent authority here referred to is ultimately the Apostolic See.¹ It will become quite evident that it is the second point that Shakespeare uses in order to show that Philip's oath to King John has ceased.

This doctrine, although technically formulated into specific laws by the Church, is hardly more than a logical deduction from the concept of an oath. Moreover, this doctrine is frequently very practical and, therefore, it is known at least in a general way, if not in a clear and specific manner. Furthermore, it has already been shown that the oath of allegiance caused strained consciences as well as hardships and troubles for many Elizabethans, and consequently the doctrine of oaths must have been intensely vital in that day.¹⁰

Shakespeare uses this doctrine of oaths in other plays. It will be sufficient to cite but one apt example. In *'Henry VI* old Salisbury joins the rebellion against King Henry. The king then upbraids him for his faithlessness and disloyalty in his old age. To which Salisbury replies:

Salisbury:

My lord, I have considered with myself
The title of this most renowned duke;
And in my conscience do repute his Grace
The rightful heir to England's royal seat.

K. Henry:

Hast thou not sworn allegiance unto me?

Salisbury:

I have.

⁸Canon 1319.

⁹Canon 1320.

¹⁰See p. 59.

K. Henry:

Canst thou dispense with heaven for such an oath?

Salisbury:

It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
 But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.
 Who can be bound by any solemn vow
 To do a murderous deed, to rob a man,
 To force a spotless virgin's chastity,
 To reave the orphan of his patrimony,
 To wring the widow from her custom'd right,
 And have no other reason for this wrong,¹¹
 But that he was bound by a solemn oath?

In this passage the concept of an oath is clearly stated. The oath is not merely a solemn promise made to the king, but a promise in which God stood as witness, from which fact a special obligation towards God arose. "Canst thou dispense with heaven for such an oath."¹² Then Salisbury states the ground on which he justifies his infidelity to the king. "It is a great sin to swear unto a sin", for this implies an evident mockery of God. "But greater sin to keep a sinful oath", for to the mockery of such an oath, the sinful execution of the promise is added. Then Salisbury points out by many examples that an oath does not justify a sinful deed.¹⁸

This doctrine Salisbury applies to his own case. At one time he had solemnly and apparently in good faith taken an oath to remain faithful to Henry as his king. But since taking this oath Salisbury has concluded that Henry was not "rightful heir to England's royal seat". In Salisbury's eyes, to support Henry is to support an unjust cause, and consequently to remain true to his oath would be to sin. Here then is clearly enunciated the vital point in this examination.¹⁴

¹¹II *Henry VI*, V, i, 175-190.

¹²Canons 1316 and 1317 n. 1.

¹³Canon 1318.

Thus Shakespeare himself was familiar with this doctrine of oaths, and the fact that Shakespeare used the same doctrine as mentioned above shows that the audience also must have been familiar with it.

2. *The Speech*

Part I. - Lines 263-265 a.

*King John*¹⁵

So mak'st thou faith an enemy to faith,	263
And like a ciuill warre setst oath to oath,	264
Thy tongue against thy tongue.	265

(III, i.)

Remarks on Context

Philip of France had sought the advice of Cardinal Pandulph in the hope of finding some compromise in his present dilemma. In the foregoing speech Pandulph had shown the superiority of the claims of the Church over against the fickleness of John. Still Philip vainly argued: "I may disioyne my hand, but not my faith." In this way Philip himself proposed the issue of his fidelity to the Church and his fidelity to John. Thereupon Pandulph shows in the light of the doctrine of oaths that the two obligations are irreconcilable. He begins his reply with the concept of faith, suggested by Philip's remark.

Meaning of Words

Line 263, *faith*: "Fidelity." Philip's fidelity to John is contrary to his fidelity to the Church, for at his coronation Philip, like other Christian kings, took an oath to keep and defend the Catholic faith.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Folio* (1623) 10. See Plate IV p. 116.

¹⁶ William Cardinal Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence of English Catholics* (Ingolstadt, 1584): 112-114.

Paraphrase

Your fidelity to the latter oath is inconsistent with your fidelity to a former oath. You have then created a civil war within yourself by taking an oath against a previous oath. Your tongue, therefore, denies its own statement.

Comments

1. These lines contain the proposition of the entire speech. This proposition will be further elucidated and proved in the following lines.

2. Pandolph does not deny that the second oath was taken in good faith. But since that oath was taken, circumstances have changed, so that the two oaths conflict. By his coronation oath Philip swore to defend the Church. To keep his second oath would be sinful, for by keeping the peace with John he is not defending the Church.

3. I have not found a single emendation or comment on these lines.¹⁷ It would appear then that the critics did not consider them obscure. This seems quite important, since these lines contain the proposition of the entire speech.

*Part II. - Lines 265 b - 278.**King John*¹⁸

O let thy vow	265
First made to heauen, first be to heauen perform'd,	266
That is, to be the Champion of our Church,	267
What since thou sworst, is sworne against thy selfe,	268
And may not be performed by thy selfe,	269
For that which thou hast sworne to doe amisse,	270

¹⁷Furness, likewise, has neither emendation nor comment. See *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 218.

Is not amisse when it is truely done:	271
And being not done, where doing tends to ill,	272
The truth is then most done not doing it:	273
The better Act of purposes mistooke,	274
Is to mistake again, though indirect,	275
Yet indirection thereby growes direct,	276
And falshood, falshood cures, as fire cooles fire	277
Within the scorched veines of one new burn'd:	278
(III, i.)	

*Proposed Emendations*¹⁹

Line 271, 7s *not* - Is *most* by Hanmer, Hudson, Wordsworth, Nielson; *Is yet* by Pope, Warburton, Capell; *Is't not* by Johnson; *Is but* by Collier, and White; *Is done* by Spedding.²⁰

Line 271, *done*: - *done?* by Johnson.²¹

Meaning of Words:

Line 265, *vow*: This word has the same significance that the word "oath" has in line 288. If the word "oath" had been used, it would have produced an iteration with the foregoing line. However, the argument would not be changed if "vow" were taken in its literal sense, for a vow is a promise made to God, whereas an oath is a promise made to any one, but sealed by calling God to witness. Both beget an obligation towards God.

Line 266, *heauen*: Under James I a law was passed which forbade the use of the name of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost in any stage plays.²² Consequently, the Folio usually substitutes the word "heauen" for the word

¹⁹Only such emendations are noted as clearly influence the meaning of the passages concerned.

²⁰Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 218.

²¹*Ibid.*, 218.

²²Virginia C. Gildersleeve, *Government Regulations of the Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1908) 19-20.

"God", although the change does violence to the meter. In this case, the word "God" would certainly particularize the concept more than the word "heaven". But even though the word "God" be preferable here, the word "heaven" would not lessen the gravity of an oath, for Christ said: "But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God." (*Mat.* vi, 34).

Line 267, *Champion*: The kings of France had the official titles "Eldest Son of the Church" and "Most Christian King". There seems to be no historical foundation for considering "Champion of the Church" as an actual title.²³ It would seem that Shakespeare does not intend this to be a title at all, since other words, obviously not titles, are also capitalized in the *Folio* of 1623, Whether this then is to be taken as a title or not is only a matter of casual interest; the meaning Shakespeare evidently intended is that in this quarrel between the Church and King John, Philip was to champion the cause of the Church, and to this end he was bound by some previous obligation.

Line 268, *since*: This word has temporal meaning. By virtue of the meter it is emphasized. Its strong position is to mark the transition of the thought to the second oath. Line 270, *For*: With this word the proof of the foregoing statement is introduced.

Line 270, *that*: Not the oath itself, but the promise, which was sealed by the oath, is meant: "that which thou hast sworn to do amiss".

Line 271, *truly*: *The New English Dictionary* lists the following meanings as being in good usage before, during and after Shakespeare's time: a. in accordance with a rule or standard; exactly, accurately, precisely, correctly; b. rightly, justly, duly; as it ought to be; c. rightfully, legitimately. Therefore, there is full justification for accepting this word in the same sense as the word "truth" (line

273) is taken, and furthermore, as pointed out below, both the sense and the logic—not to mention fairness—demand that it be taken in this sense.

Line 273, *truth*: *The New English Dictionary* lists several meanings, any of which would yield a very reasonable interpretation: a. One's faith or loyalty as pledged in a promise or agreement; a solemn engagement or promise, a covenant, b. Agreement with standard or rule. c. Conduct in accordance with the divine standard.

Line 275, *indirect*: The following meanings have also been taken from *The New English Dictionary*: a. Of actions and feelings: not straightforward and honest; not fair and open; "crooked", deceitful, corrupt, b. Not taking the straight or nearest course to the end in view; not going straight to the point; not acting or exercised with direct force. No matter what meaning may be preferred, the meaning must be taken purely *objectively*, that is, not involving any formal sin. This will be shown a few lines below.

Line 276, *indirection*: a. Indirect movement or action a devious or circuitous, course to some end; round-a-bout means or method, b. Want of straightforwardness in action an act, or practice, which is not straightforward and honest; deceit; malpractice. As an instance of this latter meaning, *The New English Dictionary* quotes this passage of *King John*. Whatever meaning may be preferred, it also must be taken *objectively*.

The words "indirect", "indirection" and "falshood" (in both instances in line 277) must be taken *objectively*. "Objectively" is used here in contradistinction to "subjectively." Thus a man may kill another by accident. Objectively he was the cause of the others death, but not subjectively, since the killing was unintentional. This common distinction applies to the case in hand.

When Philip swore to John to keep the peace, he was certainly acting in good faith, as far as his oath to defend the Church was concerned. But after swearing to John,

circumstances arose that made the keeping of his second oath sinful. Thus, objectively (without any formal guilt) he has sworn to something sinful. To this then the word "indirection" refers, as well as the first word "falshood" in line 277.

The words "indirect" and the second "falshood" must likewise be understood objectively. These words refer to Philip's infidelity in the matter of keeping the oath. Consequently, to break that oath is only objective infidelity (without any formal guilt) since the bad oath does not oblige him. An identical case occurs later in the play, when Hubert breaks his oath to John with reference to Arthur. Hubert's infidelity to his oath certainly did not make him subject of any formal moral guilt.

Therefore, the words "indirect" and "indirection" as well as the two uses of the word "falshood" must be taken objectively as not involving any formal sin or guilt. This sense is demanded not only by the speech itself, but also by the entire situation.

Paraphrase:

Your first oath should be fulfilled first, that is, to be the champion of the Church. The oath, which you took since, is actually sworn against yourself, because to fulfill this latter oath would be to act contrary to your first oath. This latter oath is fulfilled rightly only when it is in accordance with the law (truly). Now, according to the law, this latter oath may not be fulfilled at all, because it tends to evil. Consequently, the law is most observed by not fulfilling the latter oath. Since you have inadvertently mistaken the purpose of that latter oath, the better act is to relinquish that purpose. Though this be only an indirect way of fulfilling the first oath, yet by this indirection you are once more aiming directly at fulfilling the first oath. The material falsehood you committed by the second oath is righted by another material falsehood, that of being unfaithful to the

second oath. (The illustration that fire cools fire is drawn from popular belief. The figure, however, is very apt in this place: Philip inadvertently burnt himself by his oath to John; by infidelity to that oath, he will burn himself again, but morally it will cool the burn.)

Comments:

All the emendations of line 271 give a meaning directly opposite to the meaning of the line in the *Folio* text. In each case the emendation seems to have been made because the word "truly" was misconstrued.²⁴ Besides these emendations overlook the connective force of the word "and" in line 272. The result at best is the placing of opposite statements in juxtaposition, and thus the sequence of the argument that actually prevailed in the unemended text is completely destroyed.²⁵

Some apparently conceive of a quibble in the words "is not amiss" and "truly done". However, they overlook the fact that for a logical argument one must proceed step by step. Thus the general principle is first given: an evil promise is not amiss when fulfilled in accordance with the law (lines 270-271). The next logical step is the demands of the law: anything that tends to evil is contrary to the law (line 272). The conclusion is then made: the law is observed when the evil promise is not fulfilled (line 273).

Vaughan says, "The quibble of the Cardinal's argument lies in identifying *doing the truth* with *truly doing* what one has sworn."²⁶ Indeed, there would be a quibble, if

²⁴See also, John Mason, *Comments on the Last Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* (London, 1785) 156-157; and Nicolaus Delius, *Shakespeare Werke* (Elberfeld, 1872) II, 594.

²⁵See, for instance, Henry Pye, *Comments on the Commentators* (London, 1807) 142; and Joseph. Ritson, *Remarks Critical and Illustrative* (London, 1783) 81-82.

²⁶Henry H. Vaughan, *New Readings in Shakespeare's Tragedies* (London, 1886) 44-45.

"truly" and "truth" were not taken in the same sense, as an adverb and as a noun respectively.

Finally, in viewing these critical observations as a whole, three points become noteworthy: 1. those who hold that this passage contains a quibble are not agreed upon the nature of the quibble; 2. those who favor emendations and those who prefer the less obvious meanings of words and phrases, seem to base their judgment of the passage rather on subjective opinions and standards than on objective norms; 3. those²⁷ who have taken the passage as it stood in the 1623 *Folio* and adhered to the more obvious sense of the words and phrases, have arrived at a just and reasonable interpretation of the passage, although some still maintain that the passage shows a deliberate effort to stultify—a general objection that will be considered at the end of this chapter.

Conclusion

From all that has been said, it is very evident that the doctrine of this passage is completely in harmony with the Catholic doctrine of oaths. This doctrine is presented with such close sequence of thought and precise logic, that all charges of rationalizing become but meaningless and unfounded accusations. Moreover, the fact that like words are invariably taken in an identical meaning, and that all words are simply interpreted in keeping with the facts of the case, definitely refutes any insinuation of sophistry. Consequently, neither in the thought nor in its presentation is there anything disreputable. This passage, far

²⁷Irving and Marshall, *Works of Shakespeare* (New York, 1888) III, 222; E. H. Seymour, *Remarks, Critical, Conjectural and Explanatory, upon the Plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1805) I, 233; William Arrowsmith, *Editor of Notes and Queries and Singer* (London, 1865) 6; Johann Raich, *Shakespeare's Stellung zur Katholischen Religion* (Mainz, 1884) 158; and Sir Philip Perring, *Hard Knots in Shakespeare* (London, 1885) 147-148.

from stigmatizing and branding the Cardinal with ignominy, actually redounds not only to the honor of the Cardinal and of the cause he represented, but also to the fairness and respectability of Shakespeare himself.

Part III.—Lines 279-289.

*King John*²⁸

It is religion that doth make vowes kept,	279
But thou hast sworne against religion:	280
By what thou swear'st against the thing thou	
swear'st,	281
And mak'st an oath the suretie for thy truth,	282
Against an oath the truth, thou art vnsure	283
To sweare, sweares pnely not to be forsworne,	284
Else what a mockerie should it be to sweare?	285
But thou dost sweare, onely to be forsworne,	286
And most forsworne, to keep what thou dost	
sweare,	287
Therefore thy later vowes, against thy first	288
Is in thy selfe rebellion to thy selfe:	289

(HI, i.)

*Proposed Emendations*²⁹

Line 281, *what* - *that* by Hanmer, Marshall; *which*, by Capell, White, Dyce, Rolfe.

Line 281, *thing . . . swear'st* - *thing . . . swear'st by* by Capell, Marshall.

Line 283, *the truth*, - *that truth* by Hanmer; *the proof* by Staunton (a conjecture); *the ttest* by Hudson; *the truth* by Herr; *the oath* by Kinnear.

Line 283, *vnsure* - *untrue* by Hanmer.

²⁸*Folio* (1623) 10. See Plate IV, p. 116.

²⁹Only those emendations are noted which clearly influence the meaning of the passages concerned.

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Line 284, *To sweare*, - *Who swears by Capell, Hudson In swearing by Herr.*

Lines 284-285, *to be . . . should - to seem . . . will* by Herr.³⁰

Meaning of Words

Line 279, *religion*: Man's relation to God, whence arise certain duties and obligations.

Line 281, *what*: the promise (by what thou swear'st).

Line 281, *thing*: the oath (against the thing thou swear'st).

Line 282, *suretie*: "pledge".

Line 282, *thy truth*: The word "truth", as used above, means the proper observance of the law. Now, since "truth" is modified by "thy", it is to be taken subjectively, that is, with reference to Philip. Therefore, it means Philip's proper observance of the law or his fidelity.

Line 283, *oath*: Philip's second oath, as in the foregoing line.

Line 283, *the truth*: the proper observance of the law.

Line 283, *Against an oath the truth*: This is clearly an instance of elliptical language. In, such a case the words omitted are usually understood from the preceding line.³¹

Thus, if it be assumed that the words left out are "and mak'st", because the foregoing line reads "And mak'st an oath the suretie for thy truth", the elliptical phrase becomes quite clear: "and mak'st against an oath the truth." If this line, then, be taken in conjunction with the foregoing line (282),—for, being an ellipsis it naturally stands in close relation to it—the meaning then is an exact statement of the moral confusion caused by the very nature of Philip's second oath: You make an oath the surety for your fidelity, and you make the proper observance of the law militate against that oath. This is also in perfect

³⁰Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 226-227.

³¹See Edwin A. Abbott, *A Spakespearean Grammar* (London, 1901) n. 382 f.

agreement with line 281, for this is the exact situation created when the promise sworn is against the very idea of an oath. Furthermore, this meaning agrees with the following lines. In the subsequent part, it is not necessary to prove the statement of line 282, for every oath is a surety for one's fidelity. But the statement in line 283 that Philip has made the proper observance of the law against the oath itself is the crucial point and should be demonstrated. Admirable to say, this is precisely what is proved in the following four lines. Since then the subsequent four lines are devoted to the demonstration of the elliptical phrase, the idea could well enough be conveyed by such an ellipsis. What is more, by stating the situation (lines 282-283 a) in such cryptic language, the moral confusion, occasioned by the oath itself, is brought out, and whether the audience understood its actual nature or not, it nevertheless most certainly conveyed the idea that Philip's latter oath created a real moral confusion.

Line 284, *To swear*: This phrase is to be taken in an absolute sense, that is, that the oath is sworn even though the fulfillment of the oath be now or will be contrary to the law, such as Herod's oath.³² This is the only reasonable meaning of the sentence: "Thou art unsure to swear", and this meaning is borne out by the assertion, which immediately follows: "swears onely not to be forsworne." Philip's insistence that he is bound under oath to John makes it appear that he swore absolutely, which may never be done, for in this consists the mockery. The entire argument is based on the immorality of swearing absolutely.

Line 284, *swears*: There is no subject expressed. This may be a printing mistake. But the line gives sense, for it is evident that Pandulph is simply stating a general principle, and therefore, some such word as "one" may be understood.

³²Mat. xiv, 1 f.

Line 284, *forsworne*: To swear immorally, that is, in such a manner that it is against the very concept of the oath. An oath may then be immoral on account of its object in two ways: 1. if the object itself is sinful; 2. if the object will be fulfilled, even though it becomes sinful. This latter applied to Philip's case.

Line 285, *mockerie*: The mockery consists in the taking of an oath to do something bad regardless of its morality. The fact, that one is thus willing to do something bad, if the promise so demands, shows that the person has a bad will. To call God to witness such a bad will is certainly a mockery. Consequently, when one swears, it must always be with the assumed reservation that if the promise sworn becomes bad it will not be fulfilled. To swear without such an assumed reservation would be to swear absolutely as noted above.

Line 286, *thou*: This word has the emphasis according to the meter. Lines 284-285 is a statement of the general principle involved. Therefore in Lines 286-287 the application is to Philip.

Line 286, *forsworne*: In the same sense as line 284. Philip has previously argued that he is bound by oath to John in spite of the fact that it is against the law to fulfill that oath. Philip, therefore, gave reason for Pandulph's assuming that in swearing peace with John, he swore absolutely. Line 287, *most forsworne*: A sin is intensified when material guilt is added to the evil intention. Therefore, by fulfilling the bad oath, Philip intensifies the sin already committed by swearing immorally (absolutely).

Line 288, *therefore*: This introduces the conclusion of the entire argumentation.

Line 289, *rebellion*: This word in the conclusion has close reference to "civil war" in the proposition. The two main arguments, with their subsidiary arguments and explanations proved this state of moral rebellion: the first by showing that the ends of the two oaths conflict; the second that in the latter oath itself there was a conflict.

Paraphrase

It is man's obligation to God that makes vows kept. But you have sworn against your obligation to God by swearing to a promise, which promise is contrary to the very act of swearing; and thereby you make such an oath the surety for your fidelity, and at the same time you set the right observance of the law against the oath itself. You are unsure to swear absolutely. One swears only with the implied reservation that he does not oblige himself to do -evil; otherwise such an oath, since it binds one to evil, would certainly be a mockery to God. But you swear absolutely, so that, when swearing, you have the intention of fulfilling the promise, even though its fulfillment becomes evil. Consequently, you swear only to swear falsely, and your evil intention in the act of swearing is intensified by keeping such an oath. Therefore, thy later oath, being against the first is in thyself rebellion to thyself.

Comments

Some³³ seem to think that Shakespeare's argument is thus: It is the Catholic Church that doth make vows kept. Now, this latter vow is against the interests of the Catholic Church. Therefore, this latter vow is invalid. There is nothing in the speech to indicate that Shakespeare had such an argument in mind. Apparently this misunderstanding comes from a wrong conception of the word "religion." The word "religion" is certainly not taken to mean the Catholic Church, nor does such a meaning receive any confirmation from *The New English Dictionary*. Religion is a relation towards God, and therefore, any one who believes in

³³See, for instance, Henry Irving and Frank Marshall, *The Works of William Shakespeare* (New York, 1888) III, 222; and E. W. Sievers, "Shakespeare und der Gang nach Canossa", *Engliache Studien* 20 (1805): 228-230.

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God, whether Catholic or not, has some kind of religion. It is obvious then that the word "religion" is not limited simply to the Catholic Church. The confusion may have arisen from the fact that Catholics hold that Christ has given the Catholic Church the power to loose and to bind in matters of oaths and vows. However, this loosing and binding by the Church is a judgment consequent upon the act itself. The actual obligation still arises from the act itself, from the fact that God was called to witness. Thus Catholics and non-Catholics may validly take an oath.

Conclusion

In this interpretation all emendations have been rejected. Each word has been interpreted in that sense which seemed most obvious in itself and which seemed most consistent with the argument, with the speech as such and with the entire situation. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that an interpretation, yielded by such a process, must be the correct interpretation. Now, this interpretation, when compared with the doctrine of oaths, shows not even the slightest discrepancy. Consequently, in the matter of doctrinal content there is no evidence that Shakespeare was attempting to vilify the Cardinal or the Catholic Church.

Part IV.—Lines 290-297.

*King John*³⁴

And better conquest neuer canst thou make,	290
Then arme thy constant and thy nobler parts	291
Against these giddy loose suggestions:	292
Vpon which better part, our prayrs come in,	293
If thou vouchsafe them. But if not, then know	294
The perill of our curses light on thee	295

³⁴*Folio* (1623) 10. See Plate IV p. 116.

So heauy, as thou shalt not shake them off 296
But in despaire, dye vnder their blacke weight. 297

(III, i.)

These lines hardly require detailed examination, for not a single adverse criticism respecting them has been found. Nevertheless, a few pertinent facts should be noted.

In the foregoing lines Pandulph shows satisfactorily that duty and the law demand that Philip breaks his oath with John. In concluding his speech he naturally exhorts him to observe the law as the nobler course in spite of the temptations to the contrary, which temptations, are based on emotion and policy, certainly not on principle. The fact that this exhortation is based mainly on principle is noteworthy. The entire speech is based on the principles of the doctrine of oaths, and, consequently, Pandulph appeals to the "nobler parts", conscience and honest conviction in the exhortation. To this end he adds also the urgent solicitations of the Church, not in a mandatory manner, but rather with due regard for Philip's royal dignity: "If thou vouchsafe them." However, he concludes by reminding the king of the excommunication, and he reminds him in particular of the peril of dying without being reconciled to God. Indeed, this peril is always great in case of excommunication, for excommunication always presupposes contumaciousness in sin. Therefore, if a man is so resolute in sin that he willingly faces the ban of excommunication, he may readily remain in his sinful state, and thus die in despair. It is to this peril that Pandulph refers, and it should be noted that the word "perill" holds the emphatic position in the line. Pandulph then does not threaten Philip with the actual curse of dying in despair—a curse which is inimical to the very nature of the Catholic Church—but he warns him of the peril of dying in despair.

These lines then are in keeping with the entire speech, and in no way do they misrepresent the doctrine of the Church. They clearly set forth the dilemma that confronts Philip, and both the good and the bad are presented in their

true colors. Such an accurate presentation of the moral side of the case is certainly not discreditable to the character of the Cardinal nor to the Church.

Comments on the Speech

A. THE NATURE OF THE SPEECH. The nature of the subject treated in the speech is abstract and philosophical. However, it was the logical and convenient subject for motivating Philip's subsequent action. That it is treated in a philosophical manner is not at all surprising, for this would 'be most natural to a churchman. In fact, the perfect logic of the speech shows Pandulph to be a man of education and culture, and the philosophical manner—a fact to be presented below—in which Pandulph handles the abstract argumentation, is certainly characteristic of a trained philosopher.

Besides a possible printing mistake, which has already been pointed out, there is a certain stylistic flaw in the speech which must be taken into account. In the minor parts the language becomes somewhat abstruse. This abstruseness seems to have been a failing of Shakespeare at the time. Witness, for instance, the following lines of Constance:

Oh, if thou grant my need,
Which onely liues but by the death of faith,
That need, must needs inferre this principle,
That faith would liue againe by death of need:
O then tread downe my need, and faith mounts vp,
Keep me my need vp, and faith is trodden downe.
III, i, 211-216.

Consequently, it would be unfair to say that in this abstruseness, which is limited only to the minor parts of Pandulph's speech, Shakespeare had intended to besmirch the character of the Cardinal.

B. THE CONTENTS. In studying the contents of the speech, I found that the entire speech was arranged on a well-formed, truly scholastic framework. While the scholastic framework is quite apparent, the speech is, of course, adapted to the situation.

Proposition: line 263-265a.

I Argument—From the conflicting ends of the two oaths.

Major: lines 265b-267.

Minor: line 268.

Conclusion: line 269.

Minor is proved:

Major: lines 270-271.

Minor: line 272.

Conclusion: line 273.

II Argument—From the nature of the second oath in as much as it is contrary to the nature of a valid oath.

Major: line 279.

Minor: lines 280-281.

Explanation of Minor: lines 282-283a.

Minor is proved :

Major: lines 283b-285.

Minor: lines 286-287.

Conclusion: lines 288-289.

Motives: lines 290-297.

While this diagram of the speech seems quite correct in all its details, nevertheless the interpretation is in no way dependent on this plan.

Cardinal Pandulph's argument on the question of oaths is based on the fact that Philip has been previously bound by oath to support the cause of the Church. The King of France and the Duke of Austria have also been bound by oath to support the cause of Arthur. Thus in identically the same manner Philip was forsworn in regard to Arthur. This fact is brought out in numerous lines by Constance. Constance argues as an afflicted mother; Pandulph as a Churchman. Both argue the same point. Yet some critics allow Constance's argument but reject Pan-

dulph's as invalid. It seems that the only reason that should make Pandulph's argument unsound is the fact that he is the representative of the Catholic Church.

C. THE PLOT. If Shakespeare intended to make Pandulph's speech ridiculous, then there would be no motive for Philip's change of mind. Thus the play would seriously suffer, for both the first half of the play and the second clearly hinge on this question.

Moreover, if this argumentation were not sufficiently clear or not convincing, then as motivation this speech is absolutely useless, for before the speech, Philip's sentiments are strongly in favor of John, whereas after the speech Philip is definitely set against John. Motivation, therefore, demanded that this speech be sufficiently clear and convincing to the audience, otherwise there would be a technical error. Is this master of drama to be charged with a serious technical error, for the sake of attributing to him some partisan prejudice? Where in all the plays of Shakespeare is it evident that he sacrifices his art for the sake of advocating partisan opinion?

D. THE AUDIENCE. It is noteworthy that the speech is not so abstract nor the arguments so profound that the salient points of the speech are obscured. Thus, if the speech were delivered properly, it would be difficult to find many even in the present-day audiences, who would not grasp the meaning of the following lines:

So mak'st thou faith an enemy to faith,
And like a ciuill warre setest oath to oath,
Thy tongue against thy tongue. O let thy vow
First made to heauen, first be to heauen perform'd,
That is, to be the Champion of our Church,
What since thou sworst, is sworne against thy selfe,
And may not be performed by thy selfe, ...

It is religion that doth make vowes kept,
But thou hast sworne against religion:

Therefore thy later vowes, against thy first,
Is in thy selfe rebellion to thy selfe:

And better conquest neuer canst thou make,
Then arme thy constant and thy nobler parts
Against these giddy loose suggestions:
Vpon which better part, our prayrs come in,
If thou vouchsafe them. But if not, then know
The perill of our curses light on thee
So heauy, as thou shalt not shake them off
But in despaire, dye vnder their blacke weight.

These lines constitute the major part of the speech as well as the major arguments, and these lines have suffered least from misinterpretation. Consequently, what constitutes the main argumentation, Shakespeare set down in language that is not difficult to understand.

Conclusion

1. In every detail Cardinal Pandulph's speech is perfectly in keeping with the doctrine of oaths as enunciated by the Catholic Church.
2. The entire plot as well as the artistic motivation of the scene demand that the speech be delivered with the dignity proper to a high ecclesiastic.
3. The content and the form of the speech show clearly to the advantage of the Cardinal.
4. There is very good reason to believe that the audience understood the speech in the manner interpreted, and, what is more, the plot demanded that the speech be understood in this manner.
5. There is no evidence to indicate that Shakespeare wished to vilify or ridicule in any regard the character of the Cardinal or the Catholic Church. But on the contrary, the soundness of the Cardinal's doctrine and the respect and reverence shown to his words point once again to the conclusion that Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in *King John* was duly respectful.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHARACTERS AND THE PLAY

The chief passages bearing upon the religious question in *King John* have already been investigated in detail. In this chapter the various characters will be discussed in their relation to the present subject. In the First Section the character of King John will be carefully scrutinized. In the Second Section the character of Cardinal Pandulph will be considered particularly from the attitude of the respective characters towards the Cardinal. In the Third Section an interpretation will be suggested, which will take into account not only the entire play as such, but also the conclusions resulting from the present study.

1. *The Character of King John*

Shakespeare's King John is by no means a hero. It can hardly be doubted that he is in the truest sense a usurper. The words of Elinore were an admission of her son's guilt and a disclosure of her own unscrupulous and artful intrigue:

Your strong possession much more then your right,
Or else it must go wrong with you and me,
So much my conscience whispers in your eare,
Which none but heauen, and you, and I, shall heare.
(I, i, 40-43)

These words were deeply significant. Any audience would consider them as true, since they came from John's own mother, and, what is more, John himself did not deny them. Moreover, the fact that John was reigning by his "strong

possession" shows that John was therefore king, not by the voluntary choice of the people or by right of decent, but by the fact that he imposed himself upon them by force. This would have been chafing to an Elizabethan audience, or for that matter, to any audience, for human nature, even when shackled by servitude, detests any imposition on its liberties. These words of Elinore were all the more telling with the audience, since they were uttered in confidence as the dictates of her own conscience. Thereafter, Elinore's insinuation of Arthur's illegitimacy (II, i, 122), and her reference to a will (II, i, 192) were so many empty words hurled in haughty defense of her own son.

John himself admitted that he was a usurper by the very fact that he surrendered his French possessions in order to gain Philip's recognition of his kingship in England. This surrender of all the French provinces was certainly treason to the crown; and this surrender probably touched the Elizabethan audience to the quick, for in 1558 England lost Calais, her last stronghold on the continent, and throughout Elizabeth's reign England made various attempts of regaining some foothold on the continent.¹

It is true, John had his followers, and, as Englishmen, they were highly acclaimed

In briefe, a brauer choyse of dauntless spirits
Then now the *English* bottomes haue waft o're,
Did neuer flote vpon the swelling tide,
To doe offence and scathe in Christendome:

(II, i, 72-75)

However, English though they were, they were certainly not representatives of the sound and stable element of the kingdom:

With them a Bastard of the Kings deceast,
And all th'vnsettled humors of the Land,

¹Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 227.

Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,
 With Ladies faces, and fierce Dragons spleenes,
 Haue sold their fortunes at their natiue homes,
 Bearing their birth-rights proudly on their backs,
 To make a hazard of new fortunes heere:

(II, i, 65-71)

The only followers of John, who were important enough to be mentioned were Faulconbridge, Pembroke, Salisbury and Hubert. Thus, throughout John's French campaign, it can hardly be said that John's "strong possession" had any sanction or right proceeding from the free choice of England, whereas John had admitted himself a usurper and proved himself a traitor.²

John's next crime is that of irreligion, as shown above. After the excommunication John is blustering and defiant towards Philip of France, but he has not a word of defiance against the Church. This harmonizes with John's character, for such a man, whose passions rush him from one extremity to another, is likely to be confounded by any firm and steady course taken against him. John defied Philip and would not yield even the town of Angiers; then, merely for Philip's recognition he yielded all his French possessions. In the same way, John defies Pandulph even to the point of irreligion, and yet he is silenced by the excommunication. John shows immediately the effects of the ex-

²After noting the several incidents in *King John*, which emphasize the King's tyranny, it is interesting to observe the definition of a tyrant given by Sir Thomas Smith: "A tyrant they name him, who by force commeth to the monarchy against the wil of the people, breaketh lawes already made, at his pleasure, maketh other without the advise and consent of the people, and regardeth not the wealth of his Commons, but ye advancement of himself, his faction and kindred. These definitions doe containe three differences: the obtaining of the authoritie, ye manner of administration thereof, and the butte or marke wherevnto it doth tend and shoote. So as one may be a tyrant by his entry and getting of the gouernment, and a king in the administration thereof. . . *The Commonwealth of England* (London, 1594) 6.

communication, and his ominous silence is the prelude to his complete submission.

John's next crime is the design upon Arthur's life. Since no critic has volunteered to be the attorney for the defense, at least on this point then his moral depravity is unanimously admitted. However, there is one aspect of this incident that indicates the depth of John's moral depravity. John was unreasonable in his defiance and in his concessions to Philip of France and to the Church. In both cases he was confronted with a power to be reckoned with. But in his commission for the murder of Arthur, who is defenseless and wholly within his power, John reaches the nadir of moral depravity, in which state he is quite capable of the most vile and the most detestable. The arbitrary manner with which John disposes of Peter of Pomfret (IV, ii, 155-157) is a sufficient commentary on his utter ruthlessness.

In due course comes John's submission to the Church. There is nothing surprising in this, for the storm clouds of misfortune have gathered over John. But what is surprising is the fact that John surrendered his crown in submitting to the Church. The surrender of the crown is entirely unmotivated, and nowhere is it stated by Pandulph that such was the demand of Rome. By thus making John proceed to this uncalled for, and unjustifiable humiliation, Shakespeare shows the utter treachery of John's character, for he yielded his crown, not on demand, but simply out of policy.

This episode demands closer observation. As previously demonstrated,³ the crown was not demanded from John, but only his submission. Now, this historical fact may not have been unknown to Shakespeare, for Shakespeare's treatment of the episode is strictly in conformity with the historical fact. It is less probable that this conformity was purely accidental. However, I did not succeed in dis-

³See pp. 30-33.

covering with certainty the source of Shakespeare on this particular point.⁴ It is noteworthy that Holinshed refers to John's surrender of his crown, as being demanded by Rome:

Wherefore shortlie after (in like manner as pope Innocent had commanded) he took the crowne from his owne head,⁵ and deliuered the same to Pandulph the legat;

The paranthetical remark in this quotation from Holinshed seems to be merely an interpretative interpolation, and it may have been dictated by Protestant prejudice. This perenthetical remark appears in both the 1577 and the 1586 editions. Many such insidious remarks mar the pages of the 1586 edition of Holinshed. If Holinshed was actually Shakespeare's historical guide in this play, which assumption is certainly supported by his treatment of the charac-

⁴It is interesting to note that Cardinal Allen states the incident as if the Church demanded the crown of John: "For great iniuries also done to holie Church, and for persecution of Bishops and religious, was *John* one of our kinges of England with his whole land interdicted, and brought (after long strugling against God and the Sea Apostolique) to yield his croune to the courtesie of the Popes Legate, and to make both his Realmes of England and Ireland, tributaries.*"—William Cardinal Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence of English catholiques* (Ingolstadt, 1584) 111. Sir Thomas Smith seems to favor the opposite view of the case: "Although king Iohn (by the rebellion of the Nobilitie, ayded with ye Dauphin of Fraunce his power) to appease the Pope, who at that time possessing the consciences of his subiectes, was then also his enemie, and his most grieuous torment (as some histories doe witnesse) did resigne the crowne to his Legate Pandulphus, and tooke it againe from him, as from the Pope, by faith and homage, and a certain tribute yearly. But that act being neither approoued by his people, nor established by act of Parlement, was forthwith, and euer sithens taken for nothing, either to binde the king, his successors or subiectes."—Sir Thomas Smith, *The Common-wealth of England* (London, 1594) 10.

⁵Raphaell Holinshed, *The Historic of England: The Third Volume of Chronicles* (n. p. 1586) 177. The quotation is identical in the 1577 edition.

ter of John,⁶ then in deleting this interpretation of his favorite historian, Shakespeare showed himself very fair to the Catholic Church.

The treatment of this point by the author of *The Troublesome Raigne* is perfectly in accord with that of Holinshed.

One way is left to reconcile thyself,
And only one, which I shall show to thee:
Thou must surrender to the see of Rome
Thy crown and diadem;

In Shakespeare Pandulph made no such demand, whereas King John expressly asserts that he surrendered his crown voluntarily:

Is this Ascension day? did not the Prophet
Say, that before Ascension day at noone,
My Crowne I should giue off? euen so I haue:
I did suppose it should be on constraint,
But (heau'n be thank'd) it is but voluntary.
(V, i, 25-29.)

In *The Troublesome Raigne* John is loathe to surrender his crown, and it is only under constraint of circumstances that he finally yields to Pandulph's demand. Shakespeare omits the entire scene in which John surrenders his crown to Pandulph. Again, in *The Troublesome Raigne* there is an interval of a long scene between John's submission to the terms of Rome, and Pandulph's return of the crown to John; in Shakespeare both events occurred on Ascension day.⁸ Furthermore, in the twenty-nine lines given to this episode, Shakespeare devotes most of them to the discussion of the terms. The terms, of which Pandulph speaks, relate to the sincerity of John's repentance and the

⁶See pp. 70 f., 80.

⁷Horace H. Furness, *A Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 518.

⁸V, i, 23 and 26.

sincerity of his oath of service to the Pope. But John, is wholly concerned not with his own fidelity, but with repressing rebellion and beating off the French.

In all this, two facts stand out most clearly in Shakespeare's treatment of the event: 1. John's character is in no manner enhanced even by the slightest insinuation that he has been victimized by the Church.⁹ 2. Everything that Holinshed and *The Troublesome Raigne* include which may be interpreted as ignominious to the Church, has been removed or decidedly changed to the advantage of the Church, and there is nothing in Shakespeare's treatment that might be looked upon as disreputable to the Church. Indeed, Shakespeare has been so favorable to the Church in the presentation of this episode, that it would be difficult to present it in a more favorable manner without substantially changing the historical fact itself.

It should be noted that before John's submission to the Church, the Church kept aloof from the question of John's right to the kingship. The question of John's usurpation was an internal affair, and the Church's decision was not requested in the matter. Naturally, then, the Church did not enter into the question. The restoration of the crown to John did not imply that the Church sanctioned John's usurpation, for with the death of Arthur, John had ceased to be a usurper, as far as the law of lineal descent was concerned.

John's submission bears certain marks of insincerity. Faulconbridge in a rather heated speech (V, ii, 174-175), which will be considered later, gives some indication of

⁹It should be noted that immediately after John's surrender, Faulconbridge makes a ringing speech to rally the shattered spirits of John (V, i, 43-61). Then John tells Faulconbridge of his suit for peace through his submission to the Pope. Faulconbridge's reaction is not against John's submission to the Pope, but against the prospect of peace with the invading Lewis. The bravery of Faulconbridge emphasizes by contrast the despicable cowardice of John. It is impossible for any audience to miss this interpretation of John's action. See J. Dover Wilson, *King John* (Cambridge, 1936) 174-175.

this. The Church, however, accepted John's word of honor and his oath, and any indication of insincerity then simply adds to his guilt. In fact, there is nothing to indicate John's sincerity, and, after all that has gone before, John's external submission seems nothing more than one of his schemes of treachery. But before John can conclude this little game, death catches up with him.

The death of John comes as a welcome relief. Since, so much has been said about his being poisoned, the circumstances of his death must needs be investigated. Before beginning this investigation, certain very obvious facts, which have often been ignored, must be noted: 1. It is purely an assumption, unsubstantiated by any reference in the play, that there is any connection between John's alleged poisoning and his excommunication. 2. It is a like assumption that there is any connection between John's alleged poisoning and his order for the looting of the monasteries. 3. Before John comes to the monastery, he is already burning with a fever:

This Feauer that hath troubled me so long,
Lyes heaueie on me: oh, my heart is sicke.

(V, iii, 3-4.)

Aye me, this tyrant Feauer burnes mee vp,
And will not let me welcome this good newes.
Set on toward *Swinsted*: to my Litter straight,
Weakness possesseth me, and I am faint.

(V, iii, 14-17.)

4. John's malady is the same after as before the alleged poisoning—he complains of a burning fever. 5. There is no specific mention of the monks purpose in the alleged poisoning.

The incident of the alleged poisoning is related by Hubert:

Hub.

The King I feare is poyson'd by a Monke,
I left him almost speechlesse, and broke out
To acquaint you with this euill, that you might
The better arme you to the sodaine time,
Then if you had at leisure knowne of this.

Bast.

How did he take it? Who did taste to him?

Hub.

A Monke I tell you, a resolued villaine
Whose Bowels sodainly burst out: The King
Yet speakes, and peraduenture may recouer.

(V, vi, 23-31.)

After stating what he considers the correct story of John's death, Holinshed then cites the following story as less probable:

There be which haue written, that after he had lost his armie, he came to the abbeie of Swineshead in Lincolnshire, and there vnderstanding the cheapeness and plentie of corne, shewed himselfe greatlie displeased therewith, as he that for the hatred which he bare to the English people, that had so traitorouslie reuolted from him vnto his aduersarie Lewes, wished all miserie to light vpon them, and therevpon said in his anger, that he would cause all kinds of graine to be at a farre higher price, yet manie dales should passe. Where vpon a monke that heard him speake such words, being mooted with zeale for the oppression of his countrie, gaue the king poison in a cup of ale, wherof he first tooke the assaie, to cause the king not to suspect the matter, and so they both died in manner at one time.¹⁰

As to Shakespeare's narration of the story, it is particularly noteworthy, that the report of the poisoning incident is given as a conjecture—the "I fear" is not in *The*

¹⁰Raphaell Holinshed, *The Histone of England*: (n. p., 1586) 192.

Troublesome Raigne,¹¹ but it was inserted by Shakespeare as Brother Leo has already pointed out.¹² This conjecture is uttered by Hubert, who actually accepted the commission to kill Arthur; and it seems then rather humorous that Hubert, of all men, calls the monk a "resolved villaine". Finally, it is most remarkable that the monks bowels almost immediately burst out, whereas John's fate is slower and less violent.

The reaction of Faulconbridge is quite matter-of-fact. It is only when Hubert tells him that the lords have returned and have been pardoned by the King, that Faulconbridge's anger is aroused:

With-hold thine indignation, mighty heauen,
And tempt vs not to beare aboue our power.
(V, vi, 37-38.)

Subsequent to Hubert's conjecture, there are three references to poison: one by Pembroke and two by John himself:

Pern:

His Highnesse yet doth speak, & holds beleefe,
That being brought into the open ayre,
It would alley the burning qualitie
Of that fell poison which assayleth him.
(V, vii, 6-9.)

John:

Poyson'd ill fare: dead, forsooke, cast off,
(V, vii, 35.)

¹¹It is hardly necessary to state that in *The Troublesome Raigne* the incident of John's poisoning is greatly elaborated and actually presented. John becomes a martyr in England's cause; once more he despises Rome, and with prophetic eye he beholds a greater John in the person of Henry VIII.

¹²Brother Leo, *Contrast in Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (Washington, D. C., 1915) 76.

John:

The salt in them is hot.
 Within me is a hell, and there the poyson
 Is, as a fiend, confin'd to tyrannize,
 On vnrepreeuable condemned blood.

(V, vii, 45-48.)

In these three references there is no mention of poison having been administered by a monk.¹³ Thus, Shakespeare presents the incident as a conjecture or a surmise, and he makes the conjecture less credible by the circumstances with which he surrounds John's death.

There is another curious point to be noted in regard to the same incident. Neither Holinshed nor the anonymous author of *The Troublesome Raigne* mention the monks bowels bursting out. Grafton and Foxe¹⁴ mention this point, but both expressly state that their accounts are taken from certain writers, as if they themselves are somewhat incredulous. Why then does Shakespeare mention the point? It would seem that the only reason Shakespeare mentions this peculiar aspect is to ridicule the entire story of the alleged poisoning. Indeed, when Shakespeare wrote *King John* the story was generally under suspicion by the chroniclers. As mentioned Grafton and Foxe show some hesitancy in accepting the story. Holinshed and Stow¹⁵ attribute John's death to an ague which was aggravated by his greedy eating of peaches and drinking of new cider. Holinshed accords only a secondary place to the story given above. Only a few years after Shakespeare's *King John* Samuel Daniel discredited the poisoning story entirely.¹⁶

¹³Some have attempted to diagnose John's malady. Furness quotes various theories. See: *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) 402 f.

¹⁴Richard Grafton, *Chronicle or History of England* (London, 1569) 246. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London, 1837) II, 341.

¹⁵Raphaell Holinshed, *Op. tit.*, 192. John Stow, *The Annals of England* (London, 1592) 255.

¹⁶Samuel Daniel, *The Complete Works* ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1896) V, 67.

And to top it all, both Grafton and Holinshed seem much inclined—if the story be true—to look upon the monk as a patriotic fellow, and in view of John's detestable character, it is quite likely that an Elizabethan audience would also favor the monk.

Even if it be assumed that Shakespeare was gullible enough to believe this story, just what would it prove concerning Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church? A single nameless monk is by no means the Catholic Church. Yet critics have nodded their heads very knowingly. The whole incident of the alleged poisoning is veiled with such an elaborate web of absurdities that as evidence of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church, it is utterly valueless.

John dies as he has lived. There is not a prayer on his lips, nor does he seek the consolations of the sacraments of the Church. On the other hand he is too self-centered to think of the Church, the French or his own country, as in *The Troublesome Raigne*. The best comfort Salisbury can offer the young Prince Henry is a poor commentary on John's arbitrary reign:

Be of good comfort (Prince) for you are borne
To set a forme vpon that indigest
Which he hath left so shapelesse, and so rude.
(V, vii, 25-27.)

All the various events of the play seem purposed to illustrate the various aspects of John's moral depravity. In studying the imagery of Shakespeare, Caroline Spurgeon¹⁷ arrives at the same conclusion from wholly different premises. The imagery that Shakespeare uses in reference to John produces, often in a subconscious way, feelings of horror, disgust and contempt for his despicable majesty. Furness likewise points out that John is so morally de-

¹⁷Caroline F. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (New York, 1936) 248-249.

based by Shakespeare that there is not a single redeeming trait in his character.¹⁸ Richard III and Macbeth are ruthless and cruel, but at least they show the steady hand of purpose, that demands our regard and interest. But John is wholly without strength of character and utterly contemptible.

Shakespeare realized that John was too wretched to be the mouthpiece of English nationalism. King John could not have uttered Faulconbridge's ringing speeches of patriotism and nationalism without evident insincerity. Still to write a historical play without a trumpet of patriotism would be unthinkable and unpardonable. Shakespeare was constrained to supply the note of nationalism. King John was impossible; Hubert and the other lords were mere parasites; Faulconbridge was the logical man. For this reason Shakespeare built up the character of Faulconbridge and he made him the personification of his country.

In portraying King John in his villainy, Shakespeare places the Catholic Church against a background which inevitably shows her object, purpose and policy not only as fully justifiable but also as commendable. The circumstances of the plot necessarily demand an exhibition of the coercive powers of the Church, but beneath it all there is evident her bedrock foundation of principle and the profound significance of her spiritual authority. Such a ruthless tyrant as King John can cause but a surface ripple on the deep bosom of her calm.

2. *Cardinal Pandulph and the Other Characters.*

Cardinal Pandulph is the official representative of the Church, and by virtue of his office he must be accorded the same high regard which is due the Church. He may have personal traits and idiosyncrasies, for which due allowance

¹⁸Horace H. Furness, *A Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) xi.

must be recognized. But his general character reflects to a great extent upon the Church, for the presumption stands—a *fortiori* in art—that a representative is chosen because of his particular aptitude to represent a government in a given case. Moreover, in all things that pertain directly to his office, his actions may rightly be presumed to have the official sanction of the Church. Consequently, the general personal character, as well as the official capacity of the Cardinal Legate in *King John*, reveals to a great extent Shakespeare's definite attitude towards the Catholic Church in that play.

The Cardinal has been sent to England for the express purpose of defending the rights of the Church against King John in the Langton case. This is his official capacity. It is not for him to interfere in any internal affairs, but with unswerving purpose he must carry out the object of his mission. By virtue of his office, he mingles with quarreling kings and enraged royalty. He may not espouse their cause, nor may he be guided by their personal interests and grievances, although at times their cause is identified with the cause of the Church. He may not become a tool for furthering the cause of the English nor of the French nor of any others. He is strictly the Cardinal Legate commissioned to protect the rights of the Church in the Langton case.

In the Cardinal's relations to the various characters, the great issues that are at stake not only reveal the innermost feelings of the various characters to the Church, but also offers ample opportunity to present the Church in a disparaging or in a favorable light to the audience. Therefore, these relations of the various characters to the Cardinal will be carefully examined to discover not merely the personal feelings of the respective characters, but particularly the general manner in which the cause of the Church has been presented. The most important relations have already been examined—John's defiance and boast, the excommunication, the Cardinals explanation of oaths and

certain pertinent aspects of John's character—and it was found that the Church was presented in a consistently favorable light. It still remains to examine certain minor relations between Cardinal Pandulph and the other characters.

Philip—Pandulph

The royal purple and the kingly crown are not the least marks of the kingship of Philip of France. There is noble purpose and high resolve in his demands on King John (II, i, 89-109, 112-117). Although John has appeared quite unexpectedly (II, i, 80), Philip proves himself John's equal in the battle that ensues. As a diplomat, Philip completely outwits John, even without the advantage of a victory. His every utterance is marked with dignity. Although he betrays the cause of Arthur for the sake of his own interests—far-reaching, indeed,—yet he is not without redeeming qualities. He demands some provisions for Arthur, and he shows disgust for his part in this ignoble pact (II, i, 545-549.) Later Philip admits his royal pledge to Constance, and he actually assures her that he will still redeem his pledge (III, i, 96-98). From these words it would seem that his plans were deeper than the mere happenings disclose.

The command of the Church that Philip of France should break his peace with King John is contrary to the plans and policy of the French king. It is precisely at this point that Philip pays his great tribute to the fairness of the Church and to her high authority. He not only asks the Cardinal, the representative of a partisan claim in the dispute, to advise him in the matter, but he also follows the Cardinal's, counsel, although it be wholly contrary to his ambitions and quite averse to purely human sentiments. Backed by a character that is not unspotted, but by no means devoid of honor, Philip of France, not only shows his deep respect for the Cardinal, but emphasizes most ad-

mirably his high regard for the Catholic Church by his manifestation of his faith and confidence in her principles and judgement and by extending to her his wholehearted and disinterested service, at her command. Shakespeare has based Philip's compliance with the Church's request entirely on his obligation of conscience. Thus, the entire incident does honor to the Church, even though the interests of England are thereby jeopardized.

Lewis—Pandulph

Lewis, the Dauphin, belongs to the class of Hotspur. He is young, fiery and warlike. The vehemence of his spirited nature is well emphasized when he advocates immediate war on his own wedding day (III, i, 204-206, 300, 317-318). The defeat of the French forces after the excommunication brings confusion into the heart of the youthful Prince, and the expedition of John strikes his mind with utter amazement (III, iv, 10-14). With leaden feet he shuffles to the dungeon of shame and despair (III, iv, 107-111). All this is characteristic of a high spirited youth whose rosy philosophy of life is shaken to its very foundation at the first shock of failure. The Cardinal consoles the young Prince, and "with a prophetic spirit" points out how the present victory of John will redound to John's own discomfiture whereas the Prince's defeat may readily become the stepping stone to England's throne for the Dauphin Lewis (III, iv, 124-159). In this speech Pandulph proves himself a farsighted statesman, who has an imagination keen enough to see eventualities which subsequent events prove to have been no mere surmise. That Pandulph points out these eventualities in order to raise the drooping spirit of the Dauphin is just clear sighted wisdom, which is neither unethical nor immoral, and which only a fool would discountenance in the great game of international chess.

Accordingly the Dauphin Lewis had landed his forces in England, and with many English lords fighting under

his banner, he cherished high prospects of victory. In the face of such high ambitions, Pandulph's announcement of John's reconciliation and his request that Lewis should, therefore, desist from further warfare (V, ii, 68-77), destroyed with one blow the castle of his most favored dreams. Such a blow to his youthful spirits naturally had a tremendous reaction. The reaction of Lewis at the instance of throwing aside his opportunities and his ambitions was certainly characteristic of a highly spirited youth. Lewis considers externals only: the indignity of an apparant retreat, the vast possibilities of the powers at his command, the prospect of a kingly crown,—not the question of moral right. With his usual wisdom and self-composure, Pandulph allows the youth to vent his willful feelings in a tirade of words (V, ii, 78-108). Then, when the youth is breathless, Pandulph coolly remarks, "You looke but on the out-side of this worke." (V, ii, 114). But the headstrong youth will pause for no deliberate reflection.

This scene is said to reveal again the sentiments of Shakespeare, in much the same manner as John's defiance and boast. If this be true, it would be interesting to know just how Lewis could have reacted without revealing Shakespeare's sentiments. If Lewis would have immediately terminated the war at Pandulph's suggestion, this instance would probably have been catalogued among "the fatal influences of Rome". But no matter what suppositions may be made, the entire scene gives a purely natural character delineation, and it is quite essential to the plot that Lewis was made to react in this manner. If in this case Lewis is the mouthpiece of Shakespeare's innermost feelings, what evidence is there to indicate this? However, there is evidence to indicate the contrary, for in spite of all the bravado that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Lewis, the great dramatist crowns the ambitions of the headstrong youth with defeat. And what is more, Shakespeare was too great a student of human nature to express his views through the irate words of a youth, and still vainly hope

to influence the public. In view of Lewis' worldly motives in strongly rejecting Pandulph's proposals, and in view of the defeat of Lewis' designs, it is an ungrounded assumption to say that Shakespeare reflected his own innermost convictions in the indignant words of the impassioned Lewis.

Furthermore, Pandulph's action towards Lewis could not have been otherwise if the Cardinal's course were to be in harmony with sound principle. When Pandulph encouraged Lewis to continue the war against John, John was in the eyes of Christendom deposed as an excommunicate and a heretic. Consequently, Pandulph was fully justified in showing Lewis the English throne as the goal of his ambition. However, when Pandulph returned the crown to King John, the Cardinal did the only proper thing. John had been in possession of the crown before the excommunication. When John was reconciled to the Church, he was still in possession of the crown. Since John was once again within the communion of the Church, Pandulph was constrained to return the crown to John, for it was not his business to interfere with the royal succession to England's throne on ground that pertained merely to the internal politics of the Island Kingdom. Thus Pandulph acted strictly according to principle, and by token of the same principle Pandulph was constrained to bid Lewis return in peace to France. With John's reconcillation Lewis' claims to the English throne ceased, and with the crown within his grasp, Lewis was loathe to admit that his position was now untenable. Pandulph's words at once take a deeper meaning: "You looke but on the out-side of this worke." Acquainted as they were with the law of excommunication, Elizabethans would doubtlessly have looked upon Pandulph's attitude towards Lewis, not in any way as capricious, but as fully in harmony with the law and certainly as most favorable to English nationalism.

As the play processes, the power of the Dauphin in England is weakened by the return of the English lords to

their allegiance and by the loss of the fresh supplies on Goodwin Sands (V, v, 10-13). Before this, the French had been in the ascendancy in England (V, i, 30-36; V, v, 1-8). But, while the English gained by the return of the lords, Faulconbridge lost half the English power in the Lincoln Washes (V, vi, 39-40). Thus, the two forces are somewhat balanced with the Dauphin holding an important part of England. It is then that the Cardinal arrives from Lewis with honorable terms of peace (V, vii, 81-86). Seemingly Pandulph has succeeded in dissuading Lewis from the invasion of England. But be this as it may, the fact that the Dauphin has "put his cause and quarrell to the disposing of the Cardinall" (V, vii, 91-92), shows that the Dauphin Lewis did hold the Cardinal in high esteem.

Thus Shakespeare presents again the Cardinal as acting strictly in accordance with his mission and in accordance with the laws and principles of the Catholic Church, and in doing so, he presents the Catholic Church as fair and just to the nations of the world.

Constance—Pandulph

Constance is a widow, whose only son, the legitimate heir to the English throne, has been deprived of his inheritance by the usurping John. The sole ambition of the Lady Constance is to see her son crowned king of England. The position of Constance and Arthur is at once pitiable and pathetic. The fact that the King of France accepts a most favorable peace, contrary to his sworn promise to her and much to the detriment of her cause, seems like robbing the widow and the orphan. In this way the cause of Arthur gains the sympathy of the audience, for he is simply the helpless victim, whose inheritance has become the spoils of ambitious kings.

It is at this juncture that Pandulph comes upon the scene. The Church's quarrel with King John aroused new hope in the heart of Constance. Here was her opportunity

to use the Church as her ally in fostering her cause. She does not appeal to the Church to arbitrate in her son's behalf, but she attempts to associate her quarrel with the quarrel of the Church against King John. When, therefore, Pandulph utters the decree of excommunication against John, Constance interrupts the Cardinal with her attack on John, before Pandulph can call on Philip to execute the ban of excommunication. Pandulph perceives that Constance is attempting to link her cause with the cause of the Church:

O lawfull let it be
That I haue roome with *Rome* to curse a while,
Good Father CardinaJl, cry thou Amen
To my keene curses; for without my wrong-
There is no tongue hath power to curse him right.
Ill, i, 179-183.

Pandulph, therefore, says to her:

There's Law and Warrant (Lady) for my curse.
Ill, i, 184.

Indeed, there is a world of difference between the Church's cause and that of Constance: Pandulph excommunicated John in the name of the Church, because God's work was being frustrated; whereas Constance cursed John for a purely human grievance, which by no means justifies cursing. When Constance continues her tirade, Pandulph simply ignores her, and calls upon Philip to execute the excommunication against John. This incident may easily be colored to the detriment of Pandulph's character by a third-rate actor, but his action towards Constance is certainly just, wise and most expedient.

After the capture of Arthur, Constance is inconsolable. Her long rambling, bitter speeches show that her grief is well within the confines of hysteria. She herself remarks,

When there is such disorder in my witte:
III, iv, 102.¹⁸

Philip is indulgently sympathetic towards her; still she persists in her distraught state. Philip finally tells her,

You are as fond of greefe, as of your childe.
III, iv, 92.

Pandulph, however, shows wisdom as well as a psychological understanding. He is brief and to the point in his two remarks to Constance:

Lady you vtter madnesse, and not sorrow.
III, iv, 43.

You hold too heynous a respect of greefe.
III, iv, 90.

Pandulph's words clearly show that he understood the hysteria of Constance. No matter what interpretation might be imposed upon Pandulph's words, it cannot be denied that he used masterful psychology in those two sentences.

Although Constance is inclined to upbraid the Cardinal for not being more sympathetic in her grief, it is difficult to see under the circumstances that she exceeds the limits of due respect. However, in whatever this disrespect might consist, it can certainly not be construed as indicative of Shakespeare's attitude towards the Cardinal. In the first place there is nothing to indicate this, and in the second place, in view of the distraught condition of Constance, this supposition is totally absurd.

The key to Pandulph's attitude towards Constance is the fact that Pandulph is the Legate of the Pope, commissioned to settle the Langton case. If Pandulph had es-

¹⁹See also, III, iv, 44-60.

poused the cause of Arthur, or sympathized with Constance or in any way favored Arthur's accession, he would have compromised himself in the eyes of John and thereby frustrated the purpose of his own mission, Constance's reaction towards Pandulph is but natural though actually of little or no importance in the plot. Pandulph, however, could not have acted otherwise in the interest of his own mission and in the interest of the plot. Thus, Pandulph's attitude towards the cause of Arthur is simply political prudence and wise discretion.

In interpreting the relation between Constance and Pandulph, there is no objective evidence that would prove disparaging- to the character of the Cardinal or of the Catholic Church.

Faulcon bridge—Pandulph

It has often been said that Faulconbridge is the only character in *King John* who looks upon life as it is, that he is the personification of English nationalism and that he expresses the views and opinions of Shakespeare himself. These statements may be quite true, but like all generalizations they seem to define with a single phrase much that on closer observation might be questionable. Since it is difficult to say what degree of certainty may be ascribed to these statements, it has been deemed advisable not to use any of these generalizations in forming conclusions. Moreover, to use these generalizations as a source of inference would rather be begging the question in the present instance. Consequently, these generalizations will be carefully avoided throughout this brief discussion of Faulconbridge.

As far as any direct relation between Faulconbridge and the Cardinal is concerned, there is very little that can be said. Actually, Faulconbridge speaks to the Cardinal but once:

I am sent to speake:
 My holy Lord of Millane, from the King
 I come to learne how you haue dealt for him:
 And, as you answer, I doe know the scope
 And warrant limited vnto my tongue.

(V, ii, 118-123.)

These lines show due respect to the Cardinal, and, I dare say, they exhibit as much politeness and courtesy as Faulconbridge reveals in any of his utterances in the play, if not decidedly more. However, with this the relation of Faulconbridge and Pandulph is by no means fully considered. Since Faulconbridge is not a directive but rather a supporting force in the play, his character and attitude towards Pandulph and the Church is most revealed in his reactions to the events of the play.

In the first scene, Faulconbridge's honest, straightforward but somewhat boorish manner wins for him the favor of King John and Queen Elinor. Ruggedly loyal by nature and warlike in spirit, he shows some of the most noble traits of natural virtue. With the increase of responsibility his character grows, and he becomes in all points the ideal soldier.

Faulconbridge is loyal to King John, but he is not blind to John's faults:

lohn to stop *Arthurs* Title in the whole,
 Hath willingly departed with a part,

(II, i, 562-563.)

Again, as Hubert lifts the dead body of Prince Arthur, Faulconbridge discloses similar convictions:

How easie dost thou take all *England* vp,
 From forth this morcell of dead Royaltie?
 The life, the right, and truth of all this Realme
 Is fled to heauen: and *England* now is left

To tug and scramble, and to part by th'teeth
The vn-owed interest of proud swelling state:
(IV, iii, 142-147.)

His honesty is certainly most honorable, but not always diplomatically most expedient. He despises the cowardly attitude of John (V, i, 45-61; V, ii, 65-76). He defies the Dauphin out of sheer loyalty rather than foolhardy caprice, even though the odds stand against him (V, ii, 127-180). He is deeply moved to hear that the rebellious lords have been pardoned (V, vi, 37-38). These incidents reveal the sterling character of Faulconbridge. Though Faulconbridge has rebuked John, there is no doubt that he is devoted to his King, but, first of all, he is devoted to his country. With good reason, then, John places his fullest confidence in Faulconbridge:

Haue thou the ordering of this present time.
(V, i, 77.)

This was, indeed, a most deserving appointment.

Religion has little or no concern for Faulconbridge. Nevertheless, towards Pandulph he shows no positive disrespect. During the scene of John's excommunication, Faulconbridge says not a word of reproach or indignation at Pandulph's procedure, although he misses no opportunity to show his dislike for the Duke of Austria. Indeed, as far as the relation between Pandulph and John is concerned, Faulconbridge is a quiet observer throughout. This is particularly noteworthy in his reaction to the news that the Cardinal has gone to dismiss the powers of the Dauphin consequent upon John's submission, for Faulconbridge says not a word against John's compromise with the Church but against the compromise with the Dauphin (V, i, 65-76). Moreover, as already pointed out, when Faulconbridge comes to ascertain whether Lewis will retire with his army, he is very respectful towards Pandulph, but at the news

that Lewis insists on continuing the war, he addresses a long defiant speech to Lewis. In the course of this heated speech Faulconbridge says:

for at hand
(Not trusting to this halting Legate heere,
Whom he hath vs'd rather for sport, then neede)
Is warlike *lohn*:

(V, ii, 173-176.)

It should be noted that in the 1623 *Folio* text, this reference to the Cardinal is placed in paranthesis. Evidently Faulconbridge makes the remark in order to impress upon Lewis that John submitted to the Pope not because he was constrained thereto by the Dauphin's invasion. Moreover, the purpose of the entire speech is to show that England is well prepared to meet the French invasion. Furthermore, Faulconbridge is a man of natural virtue with no evidence of any religion, and the fact that he remained faithful to John in spite of the excommunication would indicate that he lacked the understanding of the deep spiritual significance of the excommunication. Consequently, to such a one, not understanding the fundamental principles involved, Pandulph's actions would seem no more than "halting", that is, "vacillating".²⁰ Therefore, this particular remark can not in fairness be construed as expressing an anti-Catholic view of the writer himself.

Just as the word "halting" is taken literally as expressing in Faulconbridge's blunt fashion his honest conviction, so in this same remark the reference to the insincerity of John's submission might rightly be taken as founded in fact. It is interesting to note that in this respect too, Shakespeare's delineation of John's character is in accordance with Holinshed:²¹

²⁰*The New English Dictionary.*

²¹Raphaell Holinshed, *The Historie of England* (n. p., 1586) 183. In the 1577 edition this passage does not have the quotation marks.

KING JOHN'S INSINCERITY

Now King John being advertised of that overthrow, was marvellouslie sad and sorrowfull for the chance, in somuch that he would not receive any meat in a whole daie after the newes thereof was brought unto him. At length turning his sorrow into rage, he openlie said, that since the time that he made himselfe & his kingdom subiect to the church of Rome, nothing that he did had prospered well with him. Indeed he condescended to an agreement with the pope, as may be thought more by force than of devotion, and therefore rather dissembled with the pope (sith he could not otherwise chuse) than agreed to the covenants with any hartie affection.

The saying of
King John.

Plate V.

It should be noted that in the 1586 edition of Holinshed the passage is set off with quotation marks, which may indicate an attempt to present genuine history. This is another incident showing Shakespeare's consistency in moulding King John according to the model of history.

In following history, Shakespeare debased John to the lowest depths; yet he makes the noble Faulconbridge John's greatest support. It became necessary then to harmonize these two characters, because the play *King John* would have been impossible with a debased king and no character to show the noble side of the true Englishman. Faulconbridge, therefore, was a dramatic necessity. Shakespeare harmonized the two characters ranged on the side of England by making Faulconbridge loyal above all to his country and not a party to John's crimes. This harmony was achieved principally on three different points:

1. Although Faulconbridge was indebted to John and Elinor for his high station, Faulconbridge's enmity is directed, not against Prince Arthur, but against the French and particularly against the Duke of Austria.

2. Shakespeare has fashioned Faulconbridge as lacking religion, for during the excommunication scene Faulconbridge alone is not concerned with the religious aspect of the quarrel, but he amuses himself with taunting the Duke of Austria.

3. Before John may suggest the death of Prince Arthur, Shakespeare removes Faulconbridge from the scene.

In this way Shakespeare succeeds in keeping the character of Faulconbridge clear of the crimes of his master. Faulconbridge, being endowed with noble natural virtues, was perhaps the best, safest and most appropriate mouth-piece of Elizabethan nationalism.

Shakespeare removes Faulconbridge from the scene in which Arthur's death is proposed by sending him on a mission to collect money from the monasteries. That Faulconbridge should perform this task as any other business of the king seems quite consistent with his character. Here again Shakespeare is in harmony with history, since John did seize ecclesiastical revenues and monastic property.²² The incident further darkens the character of John. Now, those who wish to interpret Faulconbridge's obedience to John's command in the matter as a sign of anti-Catholic animosity or Protestantism might just as well approve looting in any form. To stretch a point here in favor of Protestantism is playing with a rather dangerous boomerang.

Shakespeare, however, does not present the looting of the monasteries, whereas *The Troublesome Raigne* contains scenes of the looting which are much to the discredit of the monasteries. Many critics have attempted to show that Shakespeare omitted the offensive scene because it would hardly be consistent with good taste and the requirements of art. Brother Leo is of the opinion, that, although this scene as presented in *The Troublesome Raigne* was undeniably in bad taste, it would have been considered good drama

²²Holinshed, *op.cit.*, 172.

by an Elizabethan audience.²³ Similarly, the Countess de Chambrun believes that the comic effect of this scene, which Shakespeare sacrifices, would have had great appeal to the groundlings.²⁴ However, Van der Spec calls attention to the fact that as early as 1592 the play *Thomas Cromwell* indicates a definite change of attitude towards the monasteries.²⁵

Gardiner:

God doth know the infant yet unborne
Will curse the time the Abbies were puld downe.
I pray, now where is hospitality?
Where now may ppoore distressed people go,
For to releeeve their neede, or rest their bones,
When weary travell doth oppresse their limmes?

Act IV, sc. 2.

Whether or not Shakespeare could have amused the audience with a similar scene of loose horseplay, as in *The Troublesome Raigne*, the fact remains that he omitted the scene. Whatever may have been his reason for doing so, the omission of the particular scene from *King John* is in itself definitely favorable to the Catholic Church.

From all that has been said, it is certainly not evident that Faulconbridge is a Protestant hero because he is patriotic. If he is opposed to the Church, he should give some tangible evidence of this opposition. However, the very fact that in spite of his nationalism his reactions to the Church's policy against John are so singularly void of any outburst against the Church shows that his attitude can only be interpreted as an unquestioning respect towards the Church. Thus, in Shakespeare's Faulconbridge, as in his other characters, the great dramatist sustains the same consistently favorable attitude towards the Catholic Church.

²³Brother Leo, *Contrast in Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (Washington, 1915) 76.

²⁴Clara Longworth de Chambrun, *Shakespeare Rediscovered* (New York, 1938) 129.

²⁵Cornelius Van der Spek, *The Chwrch and Churchman in English Dramatic Literature Before 1642* (Amsterdam, 1931) 178.

3. *An Interpretation*

The critics who have ventured an interpretation of Shakespeare's *King John* usually favor either a political interpretation or a religious interpretation based upon the religious divisions of the Protestant Reformation. Certain incidents in the play have been applied to political events in the 1590's; but these alleged political allusions are not so evident, clear or conclusive as one might rightly expect, and almost invariably the purpose of such an alleged allusion is purely a matter of conjecture. As for the religious interpretations, based upon the religious conflicts of the day, these interpretations at their very best can only be secondary, since, as Koppe²⁶ has already pointed out, the Cardinal, who introduces the religious element, arrives only in the middle of the play and his arrival is in no way anticipated. While all of these interpretations tend in some way to throw light upon the problem, no single interpretation is sufficiently flexible to apply automatically to all problems, particularly to the chief ones, with equal force and consistency. For this reason the interpretations are not wholly satisfying, and, therefore, not generally acceptable.

The present interpretation attempts to take all the various factors into consideration without overemphasizing any particular incidents or events. It is simply based on what seems to be most obvious and it has consistency as the guiding principle. The result is rather different from the common interpretations, though it is by no means extraordinary or daring.

It has frequently been said that *King John* is a play without a hero. Some may consider this absence of a hero a notable defect. However, the foundation of the play does not seem to require a hero. No matter how one may con-

²⁶Karl Köppe, *Das Verhältnis von Gibbers, "Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John?" zu Shakespeares "King John"* (Halle a. S., 1901) 33.

ceive of the plot, it would be difficult if not impossible without changing the plot itself to raise any particular character to the status of a hero. How, then, might this peculiarity be explained? Some have sidestepped the question by the simple expedient of claiming that the plot itself is defective. The reason given is generally the purely *a priori* one: that this play belongs to the early periods of Shakespeare's career as a playwright. However, this conclusion might have been the only expedient answer to the question, for I am quite convinced that no matter how much time one may spend in studying this play, as long as he views the play in an anti-Catholic or purely political light, he will hardly grasp the nature of the plot, to say nothing of its full import.

The key to a correct interpretation of *King John* seems to be its title, for it is very probable that Shakespeare purposely called his play *The Life and Death of King John*. In the table of contents of the *First Folio*, the titles of four plays begin with the words "The Life and Death of . . .". But if one turns to the respective plays, he will find that only two plays actually have this peculiar phrasing of the title: *The Life and Death of Richard the Second* and *The Life and Death of King John*. Whatever may have been Shakespeare's purpose in naming *Richard II* in this manner, there seems to be some reason for this particular phrasing of the title of *King John*. A comparison with *The Troublesome Raigne* clearly discloses a contrast. The first part of *The Troublesome Raigne* presents John's various successes, whereas the second part of *The Troublesome Raigne*, beginning with the death of Arthur, shows the reverses of John, which reverses ultimately lead to his death. The same contrast between the successes and reverses, or between the life and the death of John is quite evident also in Shakespeare's play. It is quite reasonable, therefore, to assume that Shakespeare's purpose in naming the play was to state precisely what the title indicates: that is, the life and death of a king. Now, since life and death

are in the hands of God alone, the controlling force throughout the play is Providence. To my knowledge, only one critic, Gentleman, has hinted at such an interpretation: "As to moral, there seems to be no other deduction but this; that King John's crimes having merited his fate, the justice of providential dispensation is thereby vindicated."²⁷ Unfortunately Gentleman did not develop this line of thought. An interpretation based on the doctrine of Providence and of ultimate justice has been ascribed also to *King Lear* by Hardin. Craig.²⁸ Consequently, to use the same key in solving the enigma of *King John* might not be considered extraordinary.

Providence is the ordering of all things according to the will of God.²⁹ God wills the good and permits the evil; He rewards the good and punishes the evil. Whether in this life or in the next, Providence always tends to ultimate justice. What relation then does Providence have with the Catholic Church? It is sound Catholic doctrine that God is ever with the Catholic Church; by virtue of God's indwelling in the Church, the Church cannot err in matters of faith and morals; and by virtue of that same indwelling in the Church, the Church will remain unto the consummation of the world. Consequently, Catholics believe that the Will of God which controls all things in Providence, also controls the destinies of the Catholic Church in a very special manner, so much so that by this special unerring Providence of God the Church not only cannot err in matters of faith and morals but also will continue in her divine mission unto the end of time.

The Catholic Church is also a human institution, and, therefore, she may err in matters other than faith and morals, for instance, in regard to temporal policy. Further-

²⁷Francis Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor* (London, 1770) II, 172.

²⁸Hardin Craig, "The Ethics in *King Lear*", *Philological Quarterly*, ly. 4 (1925): 104-106.

²⁹J. M. Herve, *Mannale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Paris, 1932) II, n. 77f.

more, although the Catholic Church is infallible with regard to faith and morals, she will not always succeed in exercising her divinely given powers in the manner she has previously planned, for she has not been endowed with the gift of knowing future events, a gift which would make it possible to plan properly and effectively. In the exercise of her powers the Church uses prudence and discretion, but she relies entirely on the Will of God for the actual consummation of her work. Such is the theology that underlies Catholic thought in reference to Providence and in the relation of Providence and the Catholic Church.

The application of the doctrine of Providence in *King John* is very interesting. The plot presents the life and death of King John in his ambitious struggle for power. In the opening scene the audience is immediately informed of John's usurpation and of a movement of a foreign power to thrust him from his throne. The balance of the scene is devoted to establishing Faulconbridge's indebtedness to King John and Queen Elinor, and in this way Faulconbridge's loyalty to the King is sealed by personal interests and by the bond of gratitude to John. Thus, a worthy substitute is provided to present that loyalty to England which John has neither the courage nor the moral integrity adequately to portray.

In the second act the powers of France lock in an indecisive battle with the English army in order to overthrow John and place Arthur on the throne. With victory denying her palm to both sides, the champion of Arthur makes a selfish peace with the usurper. The peace between England and France marked a climax in the plot. But the resulting situation was by no means satisfactory. Yet the temporal power could bring about no change, for it was hopelessly entangled in its own meshes. And withal, the usurping king was all the more solidly enthroned by the final issue of the contest. The plot, therefore, demanded the introduction of a strong force opposed to King John, which would renew the struggle against the usurping King

and bring- the plot to a satisfactory ending. Such a strong-force was the spiritual power, which made its initial introduction in the person of Cardinal Pandulph.

With full right and power the Church excommunicated King John, as shown above, but, though the Church took steps to make the excommunication effective of its purpose, the actual consummation of that purpose was brought about by Providence.

From the moment the sentence of excommunication had been launched, events turned against John. Three different persons, each in his own characteristic way, refer to a hidden force shaping the destiny of John. As the battle ensues upon the breaking off of the short-lived peace between Philip and John, the first words uttered are these significant words of Faulconbridge:

Now by my life, this day grows wondrous hot,
Some ayery Deuill houers in the skie,
And pour's downe mischief.

III, ii, 1-3.

After Arthur's death, Faulconbridge makes a similar remark:

He to the King:
A thousand businesses are briefe in hand,
And heauen it selfe doth frowne vpon the Land.

IV, iii, 157-159.

When Faulconbridge hears of the return of the lords and their pardon by the King, he again recurs to the same idea, but in a more Christian vein:

With-hold thine indignation, mighty heauen,
And tempt vs not to beare aboue our power.

V, vi, 37-38.

Faulconbridge notes also that the people are full of fear, not knowing what they fear (IV, ii, 143-146). The prophecy of Peter of Pomfret stresses the fact that John is

struggling against the inevitable hand of Providence. (IV, ii, 151-152). Finally, the five moons, so ominously regarded by Hubert and the people in the street, evidence also the working of a greater than human power (IV, ii, 182 f.) These little references, so characteristic of Shakespeare, are inserted, as it were, to call the attention of the audience to the futility of John's struggle.

Furthermore, from the time of the excommunication, everything that happens, whether victory or defeat, is turned to John's consternation. John defeats Philip, and returns to England, but his power on the continent crumbles; his mother dies and with her dies all hope of regaining his French dominions. He captures Arthur, his rival to the throne and indeed the rightful heir, yet by the imprisonment of Arthur, John loses the good will of his barons. John orders Arthur's death but when the order is apparently carried out, he is confounded. His selfish joy that Arthur still lives is quickly smothered by the news of the boy's actual death. What is more, the barons think him guilty of murdering the boy and for this they revolt. All this betokens the hand of Providence, shown as definitely working against John from the moment of the Church's excommunication.

Although the Catholic Church by her excommunication of John acted strictly in accordance with the powers granted to her by God, still the Church's means to make the excommunication effective—recourse to secular arms and absolution of the barons from their allegiance—were to some extent ineffectual. The power of France was at first defeated, but finally it did become a threat; whereas the barons ignored the absolution from their oath of allegiance, but later, apparently for other reasons, revolted. Nevertheless, the excommunication was successful, due to un-failing Providence. Indeed, Providence brought about far more than was intended by the excommunication, for, without the slightest instance of the Church, John surrendered the crown into her hands. The Church then could return

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the crown to John with full right, for in spite of John's past, he became rightful heir at Arthur's death. But even though the Church had befriended John, Providence was not so kindly disposed to that capricious tyrant. Three things tend to indicate that justice is not satisfied even by John's submission to the Church:

1. John is not sincere in his outward submission to the Church. His insincerity is stated by Faulconbridge (V, iii, 174-176) and confirmed by his lack of all religious regard at his death.

2. Faulconbridge despises John for his cowardice to France (V, i, 65-76), and John does not redeem himself in this respect.

3. Faulconbridge is angered at John's pardon of the English lords (V, vi, 33-38). Their grievances against John have never been wiped out, and, consequently, as long as John lives, their loyalty is not too certain.

It is true, the chances of war have turned in England's favor, and the offer of peace is by no means to her dishonor, yet John does not enjoy the triumph. By a peculiar irony he that had robbed the monasteries and abbeys, was brought to an abbey to die.

In John's death justice is finally satisfied, and the hope of a better England rises with the announcement of a new king. Although Faulconbridge once more blows the trumpet of loyalty to England as the curtain falls, it is the Catholic Church that towers above both nations as the just arbiter in the great conflict and as the dispenser of peace.

The triumph of the Church is not stressed in Shakespeare's *King John*, undoubtedly with very good reason. By not making the Church in a political way ostensibly successful, the actual triumph of the Church is not thrust to the fore and yet through the working of Providence full justice is done. If the triumph of the Church had been emphasized, Shakespeare might have been called to account by the government. Thus, in adhering to history in the

portrayal of John, and in using Providence as the guiding force of the play, Shakespeare made doubly certain of governmental as well as popular approbation.

With Providence playing the leading role in *King John*, Shakespeare could more readily be fair and even favorable to the Church, which fact has been repeatedly pointed out in this work. This inostensibly favorable attitude towards the Church was not impossible at that time, that is, about 1596,³⁰ for the political situation became more favorable to the Church. It is noteworthy that as soon as the preliminaries to the alliance between England and France were set on foot in the summer of 1595, the persecution of Catholics diminished in England. The alliance was actually concluded in May, 1596 and lasted till May 1598.³¹ Though persecution did not entirely cease during this time, it provided an appreciable breathing spell for English Catholics. The same period marked the beginning of a growing religious change in the theatre. While some extreme anti-Catholic features still prevailed in the drama during this period and the succeeding period, Catholic doctrine and Catholic ritual were accorded decent and respectful treatment particularly by the younger dramatists.³²

This interpretation of *King John*, then, is in harmony with the religious situation of these years; it is also in harmony with the new religious attitude towards the Catholic Church in the theatre, and, above all, it is in harmony with those other great Shakespearean dramas which present Catholic scenes and Catholic characters with reverence and respect.

³⁰Horace H. Furness, *Variorum of King John* (Philadelphia, 1919) vii.

³¹Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 369-371; 402. In Dec. 1596, Elizabeth presented Henry IV with the Order of the Garter. See Victor von Klarwill, editor, *The Fugger News-Letters* (London, 1924) 203-204.

³²Cornelius Van der Spek, *The Church and Churchmen in English Dramatic Literature Before 1642*. (Amsterdam, 1931) 177, 88-90.

CONCLUSION

The extreme diversity of opinion concerning Shakespeare's *King John* arose in the main, not from any ambiguity in the play itself, but rather from the tendency of critics to project their own sentiments and the conditions of their own time into the lines of Shakespeare. It is interesting to observe that the greatest diversity of opinion among the critics pertain to the incidents that involve the Catholic Church. This fact is readily explained on the basis of the changing attitude towards the Catholic Church in post-Reformation England. The influence of the Protestant Reformation on Elizabethan religious thought was hardly more than superficial. It consisted mainly in a conformity to governmental regulations in external worship. The Protestant attack on Catholicism in Elizabethan England—whether fulminated from the pulpit, the stage or the press—consisted chiefly in slanderous accusations and vehement invective. The Elizabethan revival of English Protestantism was a curious combination of religious fanaticism and patriotism, a combination which was subject to complete extinction with the coming of a new sovereign to the throne. Nevertheless, the Elizabethan religious change, since subsequent rulers cherished it, had tremendous and far reaching significance, but this significance was by no means generally grasped in the 1590's. The religious thought of the day was still essentially and traditionally Catholic.¹ Now, Shakespearean criticism has been almost wholly in the hands of non-Catholics; and by the time the great Shakespearean critics arrived on the scene, the tra-

¹ Arnold O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916) 36, 68f. 174f. *passim*.

ditional Catholic religious thought in England was for all practical purposes dead. It is not that the critics were out of touch with all religious thought, but their religious thought was simply not Catholic. Not only did they fail to grasp the profound meaning of justification, of sin, of the sacraments, of the Mass, of the Church; but they lacked also the historic Catholic appraisal of such things. Consequently, to these critics, excommunication is little more than an official ostracism from some social group. They do not understand why the threat of excommunication should make a monarch draw his sword, or why fidelity to an oath should make armies join in battle. Indeed, they "look but on the outside of this work."

In the century and a half which separates Shakespeare's *King John* from the critics, England had definitely become a Protestant country, and with the revival of *King John* in 1737, the interpretation of the play was made according to Protestant standards. Editors and commentators, knowingly or unwittingly, inserted their emendations and made their comments according to their respective standards. The various interpretations thus engendered were more or less in the spirit of *Kynge Johan* and *Troublesome Raigne*. This tendency to interpret Shakespeare's *King John* according to Protestant standards has continued more or less prevalent in the field of Shakespearean criticism. Those who preferred to consider the play principally in the light of the political situation endorsed rather than countered the Protestant interpretation. Those who looked upon the play as a dramatic work of art, simply lessened the tension on the religious issue, but did not correct the prevailing Protestant interpretation.

Moreover, there were other circumstances that tended to deceive unsuspecting critics. Since the scientific historical method is of comparatively recent development, the errors of certain historians were accepted by many without question, and many of these errors have a definite anti-

Catholic coloring. With such colored lights focused on Shakespeare's *King John*, it is not surprising that *King John* should appear in varying hues rather than in its true natural light. Some critics, for instance, have mistakenly assumed that the Pope usurped the rights of King John by the appointment of Stephen Langton to the archbishopric of Canterbury; others have assumed that the Pope demanded the surrender of the throne when he insisted upon John's submission to his spiritual authority. These false conceptions of the historical facts clearly influence these critics in the interpretation of *King John*, and, in consequence, their views and opinions had to be discounted accordingly.

In order to interpret *King John* in the manner and spirit in which it was staged, it was necessary to examine the Catholic attitude as well as the Elizabethan attitude on certain important problems of that day. Thus, it was shown that the Elizabethan concept of supremacy was vastly different from that which prevailed under Henry VIII and Edward VI, and that the Elizabethan idea of control of the Church, as excluding spiritual supremacy, was strongly emphasized by Protestants and Catholics alike. Again, an exposition of the law of excommunication in Shakespeare's day, and an examination of Elizabeth's excommunication revealed that in portraying the excommunication of King John Shakespeare followed the procedure against Elizabeth in every detail. Even the forfeiture of John's life, considered as part of the decree of excommunication, was not unfounded historically, for those who advocated the killing of Elizabeth, did so, not on the basis of some loose tyrannicidal principle, but in view of the decree of her excommunication. Finally, an exposition of the Catholic teaching on the doctrine of oaths, particularly from the aspects treated in *King John*, showed that Shakespeare followed Catholic teaching in Cardinal Pandolph's speech on oaths, and that Elizabethans must have been conversant with this doctrine, since Shakespeare repeatedly uses this doctrine in other

plays. Needless to say, a clear understanding of these important Elizabethan concepts contributed much not only for a correct interpretation of the play but also for arriving at some specific solution of the present problem.

In the light of the Elizabethan conception of supremacy, of the law of excommunication and of the doctrine of oaths, every speech and every episode in *King John*, which pertains to the present subject, was examined in detail and from all aspects. The close scrutiny of these speeches and episodes revealed not a single instance in which Shakespeare gives evidence of an inimical attitude towards the Catholic Church, or in which Shakespeare attempted in any way to vilify or ridicule the Catholic Church. A comparison with *The Troublesome Raigne* disclosed that Shakespeare eliminated all anti-Catholic elements and any detail that smacked of Protestantism. In changing the character of John from that of a Protestant hero in *The Troublesome Raigne* to that of a vicious and perfidious monarch as in Holinshed, Shakespeare justified all the more the action of the Church against John. On the other hand, Shakespeare ennobled the character of the King of France by Philip's manifestation of faith and confidence in the principles and judgement of the Catholic Church and by his self-sacrificing devotion and disinterested service even at the loss of a cherished advantage. Indeed, the fact that the contrast between the irreligion of John and the religiousness of Philip is so strongly developed to justify Philip's breaking of the peace at the request of the Church, the fact that the motivation accentuates the superiority of the spiritual cause, the fact that the law of the Church prevailed where arms and statecraft had failed—all contribute to set forth the claims of the Church and religion as superior and in a light by no means unfavorable. The Cardinal, as the representative of the Church, is painted in a manner consistent with his office, and as such he is depicted as a man of wisdom and character: the soundness of his doctrine, his steadfast devotion to

principle and to the purpose of his mission, the respect and reverence shown to his words, and, as the curtain falls, the exalted position he holds as the dispenser of peace between the warring nations reflects a nobility, dignity and grandeur upon him and upon the Church he represents.

The blackening of John's character may have been due to a preference for the historical portrayal of that monarch as given in Holinshed, but then the ennobling of Philip, particularly to the extent of motivating his breaking of the peace by a lengthy presentation of the doctrine on oaths, is historically unfounded. Dramatic contrast and the need of motivation allow sufficient reason for such a development of character and plot. But whether Shakespeare was motivated by a love of art in thus fashioning his play or by a love for the Catholic Church cannot be decided with certainty. Nevertheless, whatever may have been his motive the fulfillment of the artistic requirements resulted in a treatment that was at once elevated and deeply respectful towards the Church.

It might be thought that to present a play favorable to the Catholic Church at a time when that Church was violently persecuted in England would have been dangerous to the author, company and actors, if not actually impossible. Shakespeare, however, has taken ample precautions in this respect. He portrays the character of John on strictly historical lines; he adheres perfectly to established canonical procedure, and he places the directing force of the play into the hand of Providence and not into those of the Church. In this way the favorable attitude in which the cause of the Church is presented is not so pronounced as to be dangerous to the author and to the others concerned.

Since Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church is favorable, it does not necessarily follow that Shakespeare was a Catholic. Although this favorable attitude towards the Catholic Church is not inconsistent with his other plays nor contrary to the known facts of his life,

still Shakespeare may have been prompted by a sense of gratitude to his Catholic patron, the Earl of Southampton, or by a dozen other considerations. Whatever may then have been Shakespeare's personal religious sentiments, it is clear from the present study that Shakespeare's attitude towards the Catholic Church in *King John* is definitely favorable.

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