

God's Mandate in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy

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1. Introduction

In *The Lord of the Rings*, “there were kings once upon a time, they say! For it is said in old lore: *The hands of the king are the hands of a healer*. And so the rightful king could ever be known.” (860). Aragorn, a legitimate king, healed the sick thanks to the power of the kingsfoil. Similarly, there are some records in which Henry I , II , and Edward I healed the sick with the king's hands. Edward II made rings that cured people who had epileptic seizures. In the Middle Ages, there was the idea that God had granted earthly power to the monarch, just as he had given spiritual authority and power to the Church. For example, Richard I of England declared at his trial during the diet at Speyer in 1193: ‘I am born in a rank which recognizes no superior but God, to whom alone I am responsible for my actions,’ and it was Richard I who first used the motto “Dieu et mon Droit” (“God and my right”) which is still the motto of the Monarch of the United Kingdom. Beauregard explores Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of Roman Catholic theology, concentrating on several essential points of difference in theological doctrine, sacramental liturgy, and devotional practice. Based on the philosophy of Roman Catholic theology, the aspect of politics will be examined in this paper. God's mandate is compared and contrasted regarding the kings' concepts of God's mandate, the people's concepts about it, and the effects of God's mandate in Shakespeare's second tetralogy.

2. The kings' concepts about God's mandate

Firstly, the perspectives of God's mandate of *Richard II*, *Henry IV and V* will be examined. Richard II believes God gives his position and his throne is never taken away, as quoted below:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
 Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
 The breath of worldly men cannot depose
 The deputy elected by the Lord.
 To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
 God for His Richard hath in heavenly pay
 A glorious angel. Then, if angels fight,
 Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right. (3. 2. 52-62)

Richard II is anointed, so if somebody is against Richard II, which means "They break their faith to God as well as us." (3. 2. 101), claims Richard II. No man "can gripe the sacred handle of the sceptre" (3. 3. 80) of Richard II and he states below:

Yet know: my Master, God omnipotent,
 Is mustering in His clouds on our behalf
 Armies of pestilence, and they shall strike
 Your children, yet unborn and unbegot,
 That lift your vassal hands against my head
 And threat the glory of my precious crown.
 Tell Bolingbroke – for yon methinks he stands –
 That every stride he makes upon my land
 Is dangerous treason. (3. 3. 85-93)

Despite the threats of Richard II, Bolingbroke seizes the throne from Richard II. However, the quotation above remains in the heart of Bolingbroke, influencing his sons. Henry IV keeps feeling guilty because he also thinks Richard II relates to God, and he himself is a convict of a treason charge.

As a result, Bolingbroke is a part of the assassination of Richard II. Still, Bolingbroke devotes himself to God. He says to his uncle's remark, "the heavens are o'er our heads." (3. 3. 17), "I know it, uncle, and oppose not myself against their will." (3. 3. 18-19), which shows his obedience to God's will. In another scene which depicts the treason of Aumerle, Henry IV says to his aunt, whose son is the traitor, "I pardon him, as God shall pardon me." (5. 3. 130), which can be called redemption, and this redemption coming from his guilty expands to a crusade:

Shall now in mutual well-beseeming ranks
 March all one way and be no more opposed
 Against acquaintance, kindred and allies.
 The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife,
 No more shall cut his master. Therefore, friends,
 As far as to the sepulchre of Christ
 (Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
 We are impressed and engaged to fight)
 Forthwith a power of English shall we levy,
 Whose arms were moulded in their mothers' womb
 To chase these pagans in those holy fields
 Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,
 Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed
 For our advantage on the bitter cross. (1.1. 14-28)

Henry IV tries to expiate his crime with a crusade. However, civil wars

prevent him from going to Jerusalem during his era, which he thinks is like a punishment. Henry IV longs for the end of civil wars and going on a crusade instead:

Now, lords, if God doth give successful end
To this debate that bleedeth at our doors,
We will our youth lead on to higher fields
And draw no swords but what are sanctified. (4. 3. 1-4)

Though Henry IV could not make it, he dies in the room called Jerusalem (4. 3. 362-378). Till the very last of his life, he longs to be acquitted like “How I came by the crown, O God forgive, and grant it may with thee in true peace live.” (4. 3. 347-8). Henry IV hands over his crown to Henry V after repenting his accession.

Unlike Henry IV, Henry V believes his throne is authorized and approved by God:

My due from thee is this imperial crown,
Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
Derives itself to me.
Lo where it sits,
Which God shall guard; and put the world's whole strength
Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honour from me. This from thee
Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (4. 3. 172-8)

Henry V is a legitimate heir because he is the oldest son of Henry IV, and it is a peaceful transfer without violence. Henry V says, “We are no tyrant but a Christian king,” (1. 2. 242), and claims his right to occupy France:

But this lies all within the will of God,
 To whom I do appeal, and in whose name
 Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on
 To venge me as I may, and to put forth
 My rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause. (1. 2. 290-4)

Henry V repeats that marching in France is God's will like above. The chorus of *King Henry V* backs up, calling him "the mirror of Christian kings" (2. 0. 6). Though there are many worships for Henry V, he says: "We must bear all. O hard condition," (4. 1. 230) "Must kings neglect that private men enjoy! And what have kings that privates have not too," (4. 1. 234-5). Henry V confides his agony as a king. He is also alone because there are no other kings in the nation, meaning no other people understand his duty. However, Henry V achieves personal growth keeping making efforts. He prays to amend his father's sin when he is in trouble in outnumbered battle.

Not today, O Lord,
 O not today, think not upon the fault
 My father made in compassing the crown.
 I Richard's body have interred new,
 And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
 Than from it issued forced drops of blood.
 Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
 Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
 Toward heaven to pardon blood; and I have built
 Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
 Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do,

Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
 Since that my penitence comes after all,
 Imploring pardon. (4. 1. 290-302)

On the way to the battle, Henry V says, "Now, soldiers, march away, and how thou pleasest, God, dispose the day!" (4. 3. 131-2). Henry V leaves everything to God's will. After the miraculous victory, "Praised be God, and not our strength, for it!" (4. 7. 86) says he as well. Henry V is humble and gets back glory to God.

O God, thy arm was here;
 And not to us but to thy arm alone
 Ascribe we all. When, without stratagem,
 But in plain shock and even play of battle,
 Was ever known so great and little loss
 On one part and on th'other? Take it, God,
 For it is none but thine. (4. 8. 107-113)

Henry V says, "God fought for us." (4. 8. 121), and his army does all holy rites (4. 8. 123) after fighting.

Therefore, Richard II takes his throne and God's support for granted, so his sorrow is quite deep after losing them. Henry IV keeps feeling guilty about usurping the crown from Richard II, who is anointed. Consequently, he is obsessed with going to Jerusalem. Henry V decides to advance his army to France, for which he believes he has the proper purpose and reason approved by God.

3. The people's concepts about God's Mandate

Next, the perceptions of people about God's Mandate will be examined. Richard II is regarded as God's substitute. When Gaunt thinks Richard II is responsible for his brother's death, Gaunt says,

God's is the quarrel, for God's substitute,
 His deputy anointed in His sight,
 Hath caused his death, the which if wrongfully,
 Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
 An angry arm against His minister. (1. 2. 37-41)

Gaunt gives up his revenge because he considers Richard II as God's substitute. Against Bolingbroke's remark, "In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne.", Bishop Carlisle says,

And shall the figure of God's majesty,
 His captain, steward, deputy elect,
 Anointed, crowned, planted many years,
 Be judged by subject and inferior breath,
 And he himself not present? O, forbend it, God,
 That in a Christian climate souls refined
 Should show so heinous, black, obscene a deed.
 I speak to subjects, and a subject speaks,
 Stirred up by God, thus boldly for his king. (4. 1. 126-134)

Bishop Carlisle sacrifices himself to defend Richard II. Richard II is revered as the same as God, so people around him are scared to reach out to him.

Bolingbroke rises in revolt against an almost God-like figure, which is very imprudent, and he cannot escape the charge of treason. Before Bolingbroke becomes a king, his uncle York says, "I am no traitor's uncle, and that word 'grace' in an ungracious mouth is but profane." (2. 3. 88-9). After Bolingbroke called "ungracious and profane" becomes a king, Northumberland greets King Henry IV like; "First, to thy sacred state wish I all happiness." (5. 6. 6). While Bolingbroke turns into King Henry IV, the behaviours and remarks of people change; however, Henry IV never gives his guilty up.

I know not whether God will have it so
 For some displeasing service I have done,
 That, in His secret doom, out of my blood
 He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me; (3. 2. 4-7)

Hal (Henry V) was a disgrace when he was young, so Henry IV regards his eldest son as revenge and a scourge for him. However, Henry IV gives Hal his last message,

Come hither, Harry; sit thou by my bed
 And hear, I think, the very latest counsel
 That ever I shall breathe. God knows, my son,
 By what bypaths and indirect, crook'd ways
 I met this crown; and I myself know well
 How troublesome it sat upon my head.
 To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
 Better opinion, better confirmation,
 For all the soil of the achievement goes
 With me into the earth. It seems in me

But as an honour snatched with boist'rous hand,
 And I had many living to upbraid
 My gain of it by their assistances,
 Which daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed,
 Wounding supposed peace. All these bold fears
 Thou see'st with peril I have answered,
 For all my reign hath been but as a scene
 Acting that argument. And now my death
 Changes the mood, for what in me was purchased
 Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort.
 So thou the garland wear'st successively; (4. 3. 310-330)

Henry IV claims his way to snatch the crown has been seen to be violent by people, and the death of Henry IV amends the situation, which can give peace and success to the accession of Henry V.

Henry V used to be said as "a good shallow young fellow. 'A would have made a good pantler; 'a would a' chipped bread well." (2. 4. 239-240) by Falstaff; however, once he is enthroned as the monarch, the national religious members all stand by him. The Bishop of Ely calls Henry V "a true lover of the holy Church" (1. 1. 23), and the Archbishop of Canterbury says:

The breath no sooner left his father's body
 But that his wildness, mortified in him,
 Seemed to die too; yea, at that very moment,
 Consideration like an angel came
 And whipped th'offending Adam out of him,
 Leaving his body as a paradise
 T'envelop and contain celestial spirits.

Never was such a sudden scholar made,
 Never came reformation in a flood
 With such a heady currence scouring faults,
 Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness
 So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
 As in this king. (1. 1. 25-37)

The church members believe Henry V will become a very honourable king, and they encourage the king to march into France. The Archbishop of Canterbury claims that the King has a rightful claim on France, “Gracious lord, stand for your own, unwind your bloody flag, look back into your mighty ancestors.” (1. 2. 100-102), and promises the support, “In aid whereof we of the spiritualty will raise your highness such a mighty sum as never did the clergy at one time bring in to any of your ancestors.” (1. 2. 132-5). Henry V wins the war even though he is outmatched and outnumbered. The victory brings him a French queen, who says:

God, the best maker of all marriages,
 Combine your hearts in one, your realm in one!
 As man and wife, being two, are one in love,
 So be there 'twixt your kingdoms such a spousal
 That never may ill office or fell jealousy,
 Which troubles oft the bed of blessed marriage,
 Thrust in between the paction of these kingdoms
 To make divorce of their incorporate league;
 That English may as French, French Englishmen,
 Receive each other. God speak this amen. (5. 2. 353-362)

The happy ending of Henry V is that the king gets France and the French

queen, which are all approved by God according to the Chorus.

Hence, Richard II is anointed; however, he uses God's mandate for an evil purpose, like,

Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
 To help him to his grave immediately!
 The lining of his coffers shall make coats
 To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars.
 Come, gentlemen, let's all go visit him.
 Pray God we may make haste and come too late! (1. 4. 59-64)

Shakespeare gives the reason to rebel against the legitimate king. Richard II has to be judged by his people. Still, Henry IV feels guilty, so he keeps amending, which can give the era of Henry V legitimacy and blessing. As previously quoted, Henry V does charities to gain pardon for his father's sin. Beauregard implies that the dead Henry IV is in Purgatory and can be helped (31). These accumulated good deeds by Henry IV and V lead to the great victory against France.

4. The effects of God's mandate

Devotion to God and success are parallel in Shakespeare's second tetralogy. It is especially pronounced in *Henry V*, in which the French king and Dauphine hardly mention God, which makes Henry V distinguished. Instead, Dauphine chooses "faith and honour" (3. 5. 27) on earth, and he mocks Henry V. In Shakespeare's history, people can learn theological lessons and cause and effect in one's behaviour. Campbell wrote, "Private persons can also learn from history lessons fundamental in a theocracy – and very popular in England:" (37).

Richard II falls from power and talks to his queen,

And cloister thee in some religious house.

Our holy lives must win a new world's crown,

Which our profane hours here have thrown down. (5. 1. 23-5)

Richard II ascribes his evil acts in the past to his current situation. On the other hand, Henry V proclaims when Henry IV dies.

And, God consigning to my good intents,

No prince and peer shall have just cause to say,

'God shorten Harry's happy life one day!' (5. 2. 142-4)

God's mandate requires righteousness, and whenever justice is, there is support from God. Baker claims that,

Shakespeare's history plays are theatrical investigations of the complex interactions of faith and politics rather than reenactments of historic conflicts safely resolved by a divine province for whom England is the Renaissance equivalent of God's chosen people. Religious belief, religious leadership, and even religious language emerge in these plays as potent devices by which those in or out of power seek to gain or keep influence. (60-61)

As seen above, Shakespeare inserted theological lessons into the histories, in which the kings with God's mandate were supposed to act like God, and people followed them. Once the king ignores God's mandate, such as Richard II, people know he has to pay the price.

5. Conclusion

God's mandate has been examined in Shakespeare's second tetralogy. Richard II regards himself as a king with God's mandate, believing he is always right since God is behind him. Richard II cannot keep being God's substitute; finally, some people, including Henry IV, cannot live up to it anymore. Henry IV is obedient to God but not to Richard II with God's mandate. This contradiction causes Henry IV agony, and he longs to go crusade. Henry V has religious beliefs and good intentions. He has a strong backup of churches. Henry V defeats France, which is the result of the work of all of England and God. These histories can be read as theological lessons in which people expect a great religious king brings miraculous victory and a better world.

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