Kingship in the Middle Ages: Politics, Thought, and Evolution in England, 1422-1509

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Abstract

In fifteenth century England, there were significant changes to the way kingship operated and was viewed. The king's status was reduced and the sacrality of his office damaged. This was not a result of the Wars of the Roses alone. The role of the people within politics grew, and ideas about elective and meritocratic kingship became popular, affecting the strength of the English crown.

It is the argument of this thesis that such ideas were imported from the continent. Although it is generally believed that humanism was absent from England until the sixteenth century, it appears to have been present and influencing existing ideologies in England from the 1430s. The most prominent of these was commonwealth ideology. Under humanist influence, commonwealth ideology in England grew to be a powerful political tool, used by politicians and commonality alike.

The commonwealth appears to have been viewed as the foundation of kingly power. As this thesis argues, ideas about conciliar and elective kingship in favour of the commonwealth temporarily took precedence over divine right and hereditary monarchy. At the same time, there was a rise in populism, and even the lowest members of society believed they had a role in endorsing and validating kingship. Henry VII quickly set about restoring the divinity of the monarchy after he took the throne, but between c.1437 and 1485, kingship was defined not by divinity, but by service to the commonwealth.

This thesis therefore brings the date of humanism in England forward, showing that it was present long before the sixteenth century. It also shows the role of the people within politics, highlights the brief period where ideas of populism and commonwealth were pre-eminent, and shows how kingship evolved during a time of civil unrest and political upheaval.

Abbreviations

Arrivall	*Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV and the Final Recouerie of his Kingdoms from Henry VI,* ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society, 1838)
BL	British Library
CPR	*Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Henry VI Vol. VI, 1452-61,* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1910); *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Henry VII, Vol I, 1485-1494,* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914); *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Henry VII, Vol. II, 1494-1509*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1916)
CSPM	*Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, ed. Hinds, Allen B. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1912), pp. 177-189. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp177-189.
CSPS	*Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Volume 1, 1485-1509*, ed. G. A. Bergenroth, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1862), pp. 167-180. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol1/pp167-180
CSPV	*Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 1, 1202-1509*, ed. R. Brown, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1864), pp. 3-39. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol1/pp3-39
EHR	The English Historical Review
GCL	*The Great Chronicle of London* ed. A. H. Thomas & I. D. Thornley, (London: George W. Jones, 1938)
PROME	*Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval

Vale’s Book *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book* ed. M. Kekewich (Donnington: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1995)

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Introduction

In 1995, W. M. Ormrod described kingship as a subject on which 'almost everyone living in late medieval England may be assumed to have had some opinion'.[1] This was not just the nobility. It extended to the commonality too, and in the fifteenth century, they had greater political influence than has previously been assumed. The 'opinions' Ormrod described were not developed in isolation; they responded to and reflected contemporary context. In fifteenth-century England, this context included a civil war that spanned three decades, the total loss of the intermittent war with France, a child king that grew to be useless, and a crown that changed hands seven times.

Simultaneously, ideas about commonwealth and the role of the people developed and expanded. At the most basic level, the commonwealth was the idea of the realm as a united body. John of Salisbury (d.1180) wrote about this in the twelfth century, stating that though the king should protect the commonwealth, ultimately it was an entity that should be obedient and subjective.[2] By the 1430s, this had changed. Though the concept had been around for centuries, at the beginning of the fifteenth century commonwealth ideology was invoked infrequently in parliament, not cited in rebellions, and rarely used in political texts. From the 1430s onwards, however, it was mentioned often in parliamentary documents, used almost routinely by rebels, and became a staple of political literature. It was a powerful political tool, eventually taking precedence over the king himself.

It was an ideology that became linked to civic humanist ideas of *res publica*. Cicero had defined *res publica* as a community linked by by 'agreement on law and community of interest'.[3] It was a *res populi*, having a focus on the people and the community as a whole. Civic humanists in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries echoed this, emphasising 'the active engagement of citizens united by a concern for the common good.'[4] In fifteenth-century England, republican and commonwealth terminology became synonymous. *Res publica* was often translated as common good or common profit.
Both this ideology and terminology dominated English political discourse from the 1430s to the 1480s. It influenced expectations of kingship, changed the way the commonality interacted with monarchy, and informed key political events during the Wars of the Roses. Despite this, no

[1] W. M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995) p.61.
[2] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* ed. Cary Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.76.
[3] Cicero, *De Re Publica* translated in Early Modern Research Group, 'Commonwealth: The Social, Cultural, and Conceptual Contents of an Early Modern Keyword', *The Historical Journal* 54(3), (2011) p.665.
[4] Cary Nederman, 'Civic Humanism' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humanism-civic/ (2019)

explanation has been sought for how or why commonwealth ideology changed in the fifteenth century, nor has its role in politics and governance been fully acknowledged. With this in mind, this thesis will firstly argue that commonwealth ideology changed in response to humanist influence from Italy. Humanism placed great emphasis on commonwealth, republicanism, liberty, and conciliar rule. All of this can be seen in England from the 1430s onwards. At this point, individuals within the English government were actively pursuing and promoting humanist study. As a result, humanist ideas about commonwealth and rule began to enter English politics, in particular parliamentary proceedings. From here, new ideas altered existing notions of commonwealth in England. Kings began to justify their actions in terms of benefiting the commonwealth, and they acknowledged the role of the public in politics. These ideas filtered down, and by the 1450s and 1460s, the people themselves had taken on this ideology. As this thesis will show, even the peasantry were engaging with kingship and politics, so much so that by 1461, a group of peasants believed they were responsible for putting Edward IV on the throne. By 1483, Richard III was able to base his usurpation of the throne almost entirely on commonwealth ideology, ignoring the divine right of kings completely. Commonwealth ideology, influenced by humanism, therefore greatly affected the fifteenth-century English monarchy and undermined the divinity of the crown.

Ultimately, though, this was only temporary. Commonwealth ideology and humanist notions of meritocratic rule destabilised a monarchy that was already weak, necessitating a Tudor restoration of divine right and authoritarian governance. Thus this thesis will bring the date of humanism in England forward by almost half a century, showing how the intellectual movement affected commonwealth ideology and contributed to a weakening of monarchical authority and divinity. In so doing, it changed fundamental aspects of medieval kingship, but these changes were fleeting. It will be shown how, throughout the 1490s, Henry VII countered this by re-asserting the divine right and authority of the king. By the time of his death, he left behind a stronger, much more authoritarian, and much more sacral throne for his son, Henry VIII, to inherit. This thesis therefore highlights the brief period where commonwealth, meritocracy, and populism were powerful in medieval England, enabling us to better understand medieval monarchy and fifteenth-century English politics.

Definitions

First, it must be established exactly what is meant by the terms ‘humanism’ and ‘commonwealth’. Commonwealth as a term was part of a ‘cluster’ of words that, as both John Watts and David

Rollison showed, in essence referred to a commune or a community.[5] Whilst 'common' grew to be associated with class in the sixteenth century, in the fifteenth century terms such as 'commune', 'commoner' or 'commonalty', did not have any connotations of class.[6] Instead, they were interchangeable from the twelfth century onwards, in reference to a unified body or group of individuals who acted, as Watts described, 'as and thus, *for* a collectivity'.[7] Later, in the fifteenth century, terms such as commonwealth, common weal, public weal, public good, and common good were used as translations for *res publica*. William Worcester, for example, translated *rei publicae* as common profit frequently in his *Boke of Noblesse*.[8] Commonwealth - and other like terms - was thus used to refer to the subjects of the realm united as a political entity.[9] This entity had, at its heart, the shared interests of the people and often drew on republican language.

Fifteenth century understandings of commonwealth also had an element of duty or responsibility contained within them. This seems to stem from humanist influence: as explored in chapter one (pp.36-7) civic humanists placed emphasis on conciliar government, civic duty and the responsibility of each citizen to contribute to the state.[10] In William Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse*, it was the 'duty' of 'every man' to 'labour for the advancement of the common profit'.[11] Whilst commonwealth as an ideology was not new, and had been prominent in the writings of, for example, John of Salisbury, this focus on duty was previously absent. Salisbury, the twelfth century archbishop of Canterbury, also took inspiration from Cicero and ancient authors, but where Worcester focused on the duty of the individual within a commonwealth, Salisbury's c.1159 *Policraticus* described how 'mutual charity reign[ed]' rather than duty or responsibility.[12] The role that the commonwealth occupied within the state also changed. Salisbury, and also Thomas Aquinas, put the commonwealth in a position far below the king. By the mid- and late-fifteenth

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[5] John Watts, 'Public or Plebs: The Changing Meaning of 'the Commons', 1381–1549' in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* ed. Huw Price, John Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p.244; David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) p.252. 'Commonweal' or 'wele' was a term that referred to the welfare of a country or community.

[6] Watts, 'Public or Plebs' in *Power and Identity* ed. Price, Watts, p.244; Thomas Elyot in the 1530s however did see 'common' as relating to class and believed the term 'commonwealth' described a society that was less hierarchal. Elyot was not in favour of this and so proposed the term 'public weal' instead.

[7] Watts, 'Public or Plebs' in *Power and Identity* ed. Price, Watts, p.245.

[8] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.1, f.29, f.30.

[9] 'Commonweal', *Middle English Compendium,* https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED8633/track?counter=7&search_id=25162100 Commonweal is defined by the Middle English dictionary as 'the general welfare of a country or community', 'the common good', 'or a commonwealth and its people'.

[10] For example, Matteo Palmieri believed that civic service was important and one of the most important things a citizen could do, as explored further on pp.33-34.

[11] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.29.

[12] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* ed. Cary Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 142. 'If each person laboured upon his own improvement and counter the affairs of others as outside his concerns, the circumstances of each and every person would be absolutely optimal and virtue would flourish, mutual charity reigning everywhere…'

century however, John Fortescue argued that the king must 'refer' all he did to the commonwealth, and John Alcock believed the king was 'bound' to the commonwealth. In 1450, when William de la Pole was unlawfully executed, his executors defended their actions by stating that the authority of the crown rested not in the king, but in the commonwealth. It was these ideas of conciliar rule and mutual responsibility that defined English commonwealth ideology.

This also links to ideas found within fifteenth century Mirrors for Princes. Earlier authors - like John of Salisbury - used the same classical ideas and philosophers as fifteenth century writers like William Worcester, John Fortescue, and George Ashby. However, in the fifteenth century these ideas were used to support much more civic and republican conclusions. Where Salisbury believed the people ultimately owed obedience and subjection to the monarch, Fortescue wrote that the king must 'refer' all he did to the commonwealth. Writers in the fifteenth century were thus using classical philosophy to emphasise civic ideologies in a way that earlier writers like Salisbury had not.

Thus commonwealth in mid- and late-fifteenth century England grouped the people of the realm and united them as one political body, with shared interest and shared responsibility. This body occupied a position of importance in terms of politics, and became intrinsically linked with discussions of kingship and governance. It also became part of the rhetoric of governance, with commonwealth as a term becoming a keyword exploited by various politicians and noblemen in order to justify their arguments and actions. In this way, commonwealth in fifteenth century England was both a political entity and political ideology, influencing governance during the Wars of the Roses.

The role of humanism in this must also be acknowledged. Reaching a definition of humanism is not easily accomplished, as historians remain conflicted on what exactly humanism entails and encompasses. Definitions are varied and often contradictory, but generally it is defined by the translation of ancient texts, the use of rhetoric, and the focus on reviving ancient style. This is the more traditional interpretation of humanism, but it is not the only one. Hans Baron identified in Florence a 'civic humanism', based specifically on ancient civic ideas, commonwealth, and republicanism. It is the argument of this thesis that this type of humanism was present in England, as there was a focus on classical ideas and political ideologies that directly informed and influenced governance. Baron did not study English humanism, but he claimed that in Florence, the liberty of the state was held in the utmost regard, and ideas about justice and conciliar rule were given precedence. In this, there are hints of secularism, where the role of God and the Church was

reduced, and that of the commonwealth and people was heightened. In fifteenth-century England, there was a similar focus on ancient ideologies and civic values, informed by the study of humanist texts. Of particular importance were ideas about commonwealth, justice, balance, and meritocracy (offices and positions being granted based on skill alone). Though it has been traditionally argued that humanism was completely absent from England until the sixteenth century, this is not the case. In this period, elective kingship in favour of the commonwealth seems to have temporarily taken precedence over hereditary kingship. Although English kingship had been performatively elective since the days of the Anglo-Saxon Witan (with the coronation ceremony always containing some element of acclamation and common assent) this increased in the fifteenth century. The divine right of kings would appear to have been placed on a more equal footing with ideas of meritocracy and conciliar rule, and though no explanation has been sought for this, influence from civic humanism may help to explain this shift.

Fifteenth-century English humanism may therefore be defined as a focus on ancient civic values, derived from humanist texts (specifically those from Florence). Humanism was present in England from at least the 1430s, and as this thesis will show, was used practically to inform political decisions. Commonwealth ideology became part of the rhetoric of governance, with individuals such as Humphrey of Gloucester and Richard of York using such ideology to augment and develop political arguments.

At a time when ideas of commonwealth were being used politically, not just in Italy but in France (the League of the Public Weal was established in 1465), a deeper understanding of English commonwealth ideology is beneficial.[13] English governance was not insular and disconnected from the continent. On the contrary, it was evolving and reacting to popular ideologies and new developments.

Structure

Firstly this thesis will examine commonwealth ideology in England to ask how and why understandings changed. It will use ideas of commonwealth outlined by John of Salisbury as a starting point, because as Susan Reynolds pointed out, it was from the twelfth century when

[13] The League of the Public Weal was an alliance of nobles fighting against the king, Louis XI. It led to the War of the Public Good, a war 'undertaken under the guise of being for the public good of the kingdom'. In reality it was more about the nobility remaining in power, and the focus on the public good was just, as Bakos states, a 'guise'. This is something that can be seen in England and will be explored later in relation to ideas of war and defence. Adrianna E. Bakos, *Images of Kingship in Early Modern France: Louis XI in Political Thought 1560-1789*, (London: Routledge, 1997) p.36.

Salisbury was writing that words such as ‘commons’ ‘commune’ and ‘commonwealth’ began to be used with real frequency.[14] Salisbury, writing during the twelfth-century Renaissance, is a good reflection of how commonwealth was understood, primarily in England but also across the continent, in the earlier middle ages. Thus this thesis will compare the ideologies of Salisbury - and others such as Thomas Aquinas - with fifteenth century ideologies in order to assess how much had changed. It will suggest that, due to similarities with humanist ideals, Italian civic humanism influenced English understandings of commonwealth. Civic humanism put emphasis on the role and wellbeing of the people, and this was at the expense of God. Whilst religion remained important, the focus was less on the afterlife and more on secular ideals like elective governance and meritocratic rule. This affected ideas of commonwealth, putting the people in a position of greater importance. This can similarly be seen in England, where commonwealth ideology was used by those in power to justify their actions and influence governance. This then leads into a discussion of the commonwealth, the power of the commonality, and elective kingship. The commonality themselves held some political power, and this was recognised by both commons and government. Chapter three shows how the commonality had a role in politics, supporting and endorsing kingship. This affected monarchical authority and ideas of divine right. If the king was elected by the people rather than chosen by God, and if his rule was conciliar rather than absolute, there are significant ramifications on the king’s status. In chapter four, it will be suggested that the king was no longer the head of the body politic, with commonwealth ideology and the role of the people taking precedence. In the final chapter, this thesis will consider how Henry VII sought to bolster the monarchy and restore the focus on divine right. Ideas of commonwealth began to return to the earlier understanding as defined by twelfth-century writers like John of Salisbury. Finally, it will conclude that the changes wrought to kingship and governance by commonwealth ideology were significant, but ultimately temporary until re-asserted in the seventeenth century.

[14] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997) p.135. Such terms came to be used ‘generally’ in ‘many areas’. These terms were all used to mean a ‘common rights or common property as well as a group or association of people’.

Both humanism and late medieval English kingship are areas which have received extensive, but generally separate, academic study. Some scholars have considered the connection between commonwealth and kingship, and others the connection between humanism and the Wars of the Roses. The extent of humanist influence on commonwealth ideology, and the subsequent effects on late medieval English kingship, however, has yet to be fully explored. As such, this literature review must look at humanism and kingship as two separate areas of study. Whilst humanism has been an incredibly popular topic for scholars, the majority of works relating to England have focused on the sixteenth century. This fuelled the assumption that humanism was generally absent in England before 1485. This has been challenged in recent years, with the argument that humanism was present in England in the fifteenth century gaining momentum. Kingship is a far broader topic and has given rise to numerous studies on all aspects of monarchy: queenship, masculinity, divinity, authority, strength, weakness, individuality - the list goes on. Specifically relating to English kingship in the fifteenth century, the majority of works look at the strength (or weakness) of the crown during the Wars of the Roses, the power and position of parliament, and the roles and reputations of individual kings. The latter is by far the most fruitful, with numerous biographies exploring how individual monarchs caused, exacerbated, or resolved the issues of the fifteenth century.

Humanism

Humanism is a very broad subject. So broad, in fact, that there have been studies on everything from humanism itself to its influence on dance and cartography.[15] English humanism though has long been an area 'of controversy as far as its very existence is concerned'.[16] Whilst the prevalence of later English humanism, generally ascribed to the sixteenth century, is readily accepted, the 'investigation of early humanism is still at a very tentative stage'.[17] The willingness to dismiss early English humanism as either not present, or not prevalent enough to warrant attention can be ascribed entirely to issues with definition. Some historians insist that humanists needed to

[15] Katharina N. Piechoki, *Cartographic Humanism: The Making of Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019); Jennifer Neville, *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)

[16] Alessandra Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth Century England: The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester,* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) p.17.

[17] Ibid; In 1939, Douglas Bush's *The Renaissance and English Humanism* also claimed that the 'real character 'of English Humanism did 'not definitely emerge until the end of the fifteenth century'. Douglas Bush, *The Renaissance And English Humanism* (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1939) p.70.

understand ancient Latin and ancient Greek. Others are adamant that only imitation of ancient writing styles and ancient rhetoric classes as humanist study. Still more consider humanism as a scholarly exercise in translating and recovering lost ancient texts. Although Paul Oskar Kristeller pointed out in 1962 that, since humanism is so varied, 'we might very well take the view that any definition is acceptable', a different understanding of English humanism has still not been sought.[18] However, as already suggested, English humanism in the fifteenth century can also be defined by its focus on civic ideals and political ideologies, specifically the use of commonwealth. It was used to inform political decisions and influence contemporary politics, and this is something which has largely been overlooked.

The term humanism was coined in 1808 by the German scholar Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766-1848).[19] It was used to describe a 'classical literary education of a particular type', one that rested on the *studia humanitatis*.[20] This was the fifteenth-century term literally meaning the study of the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, history, and poetry.[21] As Lucille Kekewich described, these were 'approached in a spirit of enquiry often entailing little respect for the intellectual authority… [of] the Catholic Church'.[22] However, Jacob Burckhardt in 1860 believed humanism was more than a type of education. Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* remains, for Peter Elmer, '*the* starting point for those studying the Renaissance' since it introduced 'that element of Renaissance culture which has formed the focus of so much... scholarship: the revival of antiquity'.[23] Burckhardt, though, placed more emphasis on the Italian people than the revival of antiquity, believing humanism was a tool used by artists and scholars.[24] For Burckhardt, this was compounded by the corruption of the Catholic Church, necessitating the needs of the individual: 'that religion should again become an affair of the individual was inevitable when the Church became corrupt in doctrine and tyrannous in practice'.[25] Burckhardt, however, kept his focus on Italy, believing that it was the corruption of the Church and influence from the Islamic East that allowed the 'study of man' to be 'fostered by some Italian princes'.[26] This

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[18] Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Studies on Renaissance Humanism During the Last Twenty Years', *Studies in the Renaissance* vol.9 (1962) p.7

[19] Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, *Der Streit des Philanthopinismus und des Humanismus in der Theorier des Erziehungs-Unterrichts unsrer Zeit* (Jena: Frommann, 1808).

[20] James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 2003) p.573

[21] Lucille Kekewich, 'Humanism' in *The Impact of Humanism* ed. Lucille Kekewich (London: Yale University Press, 2000), p.51.

[22] Ibid, pp.51-2.

[23] Peter Elmer, 'Inventing the Renaissance: Burckhardt as Historian 'in *The Impact of Humanism* ed. Lucille Kekewich, (London: Yale University Press, 2000) p.1, p.3.

[24] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990) p.120.; Ibid, p.3.

[25] Ibid, p.313.

[26] Ibid, p.314.

fostered an increased secularism, which led to the growth of ideas about republicanism and more secular governance. This starts to be seen in England in the fifteenth century, but this has not been noted.

Indeed, it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that scholars began to consider humanism outside of Italy. In 1919, John Huizinga looked at humanism in northern Europe, but it was not until later still - 1931 - that English humanism was studied in any real detail. In 1929 Howard Grey had discovered on the 1455-56 Exchequer rolls records of payments to four Greek visitors to England, indicating, he believed, some engagement with classical sources and humanist study.[27] However, W. E. Schirmer's work three years later was the first to study English humanism extensively.[28] Schirmer, like many historians since, concentrated on individuals at the very end of the fifteenth century. His focus on men like William Grocyn (1446-1519), Thomas Linacre (1460-1524), and William Latimer (1467-1545) reinforced the idea that humanism only blossomed under Tudor rule. Though Schirmer s work was later described as the 'best work on the rise of English humanism' by Albert Hyma, it did little to combat the common assumption that English humanism was a largely sixteenth-century movement.[29] Schirmer was critical of men such as Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (1390-1447), because of his inability to speak Greek and the medieval Latin style of his commissioned works. For Schirmer, Greek was essential for humanist study and this highlights one of the issues with studies of humanism. It is difficult to define humanism, and dismissing Gloucester based on his inability to read Greek ignores the fact that Gloucester was one of the first to employ Italian humanists in his household. Schirmer's restrictive definition of humanism meant Gloucester s importance in bringing humanism to England was ignored.

In the 1930s, Elizabeth Cox-Wright critiqued Schirmer. Taking issue with his dismissal of Gloucester, she argued that the duke, and others like Thomas Bekynton (1390-1465) and John Tiptoft (1427-1470), were essential to early English humanism.[30] Though she agreed with Schirmer that humanism was aided by Englishmen travelling to Italy and bringing ideas back with them, she believed this happened in the fifteenth century, not the sixteenth.[31] Ecclesiastical councils were the cause of this - the councils of Constance (1415), Basel (1431) and Ferrara (1438) - since they

[27] Howard Grey, 'Greek Visitors to England in 1455-1456' in *Anniversary Essays in Medieval History by Students of Charles Homer Haskins* ed. Charles H. Taylor & John L. LaMonte (Boston: Haughton Mifflin, 1929)
[28] W. F. Schirmer, *Der Englische Fruhhumanismus* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1931)
[29] Albert Hyma, 'The Continental Origins of English Humanism '*Huntington Library Quarterly* 4(1) (Oct., 1940) p.22
[30] Elizabeth Cox-Wright, 'Continuity in XV Century English Humanism '*PMLA* 51(2) (June 1936) p.371
[31] Ibid

forged links between Englishmen and Italians.[32] She noticed that English humanism was different to that of the Continent, being ‘essentially not concerned with the arts, but practical in the sense of being applied to conduct, to religion, to reform and amelioration’.[33] Especially during the fifteenth century, when the Church was notably absent from the Wars of the Roses, practical ideas about politics and religion, stemming from classical (and secular) ideals, should be noted. Whilst the impact of humanism on religion and the church has been noted, this, too, is mainly restricted to the sixteenth century and beyond.[34] This thesis however will show that fifteenth century ideas of commonwealth, stemming from humanism, perhaps contributed to declining religious influence within the state.

Like Cox-Wright, in 1940 Albert Hyma noted that humanism *was* present in England in the fifteenth century, and was of a more ‘practical nature’.[35] This practicality was also recognised by R. C. Simonini in 1952, when he noted that ‘interest in humanism came almost entirely from the standpoint of politics, theology, philosophy or science’.[36] None, however, attempted to explain why English humanism was more ‘practical’, nor did any acknowledge it as a type of humanism in and of itself. They also did not look at how this influenced contemporary governance, even though individuals such as Gloucester were explicit about how they were using humanist study to inform political decisions.[37]

This type of ‘practical’ and political humanism was at odds with Hanna Gray’s definition of humanism in 1963, though it perhaps does not need to be. She described humanism as a dedication to rhetoric and ‘true eloquence’, and though English humanism was more concerned with what Simonini called ‘the practical potentialities’, this does not erase the role of rhetoric entirely.[38] As this thesis will show, commonwealth ideology was a rhetoric of its own, influenced and inspired by humanism imported from Florence, specifically the civic kind of humanism identified by Hans Baron in 1966.

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[32] Cox-Wright, ‘Continuity ’*PMLA* pp.371-2.
[33] Ibid, p.374.
[34] Peter Matheson, ‘Humanism and Reform Movements’ in *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe* ed. Anthony Goodman & Angus MacKay, (London: Longman, 1990) pp.23-42; Kekewich, ‘Humanism’ in *Impact* ed. Kekewich, p.61. ‘Early reformers such as Desiderius Erasmus… and Sir Thomas More concentrated on establishing the most accurate texts of the scriptures and on attempting to remedy…shortcomings…[in] the Catholic Church.
[35] Albert Hyma, ‘The Continental Origins of English Humanism ’*Huntington Library Quarterly* 4(1) (Oct., 1940) p.22
[36] R. C. Simonini, *Italian Scholarship in Renaissance England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1952) p.2: “Interest in humanism came almost entirely from the standpoint of politics, theology, philosophy or science… English statesmen, scholars, schoolmen and ecclesiastics in general realised the practical potentialities of humanism”. Nevertheless, Simoni claimed humanism in England began in an ‘an almost haphazard and casual way’.
[37] As chapter two will show, Gloucester described Plato’s *Republic* as one of his “counsellors” when receiving a translation of the text from the humanist scholar, Pier Candido Decembrio.
[38] Hanna H. Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24(4) (1963) p.497

Baron defined humanism in a new way altogether, and though he looked only at Italy, his ideas can inform a discussion of English humanism. Baron believed that Italian humanism, in Florence specifically, had a civic slant, making it more 'practical' than artistic. Instead of focusing on the arts, it used ancient ideas of republic and commonwealth to inform fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florentine governance.[39] This is similar to what Cox-Wright, Hyma and Simonini identified in England, but the connection between 'practical' English humanism and Florentine 'civic humanism' has not before been made. A connection between the two would not be surprising: most humanist literature in England during the fifteenth century was imported from Florence.[40] The possibility of civic humanism in England has not been properly considered, and this thesis will remedy this by examining civic humanist influence on English notions of commonwealth. This will bring the date of humanism in England forwards by almost half a century, whilst acknowledging the 'practical' element that Cox-Wright, Hyma, and Simonini identified.

Baron was not without critics. Quentin Skinner, Hanan Yoran, James Hankins and James Blythe have all demonstrated that civic humanism was not unique to Florence, and can be identified in other Italian cities much earlier.[41] Their issue is not with civic humanism itself, though, and this is important to note. Civic humanism has been heavily criticised, but only in terms of dating and originality. Historians generally do not argue that civic humanism did not exist, only that Baron was wrong in ascribing it exclusively to Florence. It is through Florentine humanists, though, and the English importation of Florentine books, that such ideas arrived in England.

The consensus throughout the twentieth century was that humanism was not present in England until the sixteenth century. Walter Ullmann in 1977 believed that humanism was completely absent in fifteenth-century England because it was simply not relevant. He saw in the feudal system (where landholders provided land for tenants in exchange for service) many of the qualities humanists believed made an ideal society, especially cooperation and reliance between the king and his subjects. As a result, he argued that humanism did not take root in England because there was no need for the ideas it offered.[42] This argument, however, does not consider the (admittedly

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[39] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966)
[40] David Rundle, 'Humanism Before the Tudors: On Nobility and the Reception of the *studia humanitatis* in Fifteenth-Century England 'in *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* ed. J. Woolfson, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) p.33.
[41] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought vol.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); James Hankins, 'The Baron Thesis after Forty Years', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995); James Blythe, '"Civic Humanism" and Medieval Political Thought' in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* ed. James Hankins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.32; Hanan Yoran, 'Florentine Civic Humanism and the Emergence of Modern Ideology' *History and Theory* 46(3) (2007) pp.326-344.
[42] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1977)

contentious) idea of bastard feudalism (where tenants would give money rather than service), and arguments that the feudal system had broken down by the fifteenth century. Many historians would argue that by this time, the feudal system was no longer working effectively.[43] Thus the ideas of humanism *were* needed to inform a new political system.

In 1980 Kristeller examined humanism again, focusing this time on the 'European diffusion' of the movement.[44] Whilst he looked at England, France, and Germany, the focus for England remained on the reign of Henry VII and beyond. Geoffrey Elton in 1990 also wrote only about humanism in England in the sixteenth century.[45] Claire Carroll in 1996 claimed England 'lagged behind' humanism on the continent, with no developments until the sixteenth century.[46] In the same text as Carroll, James Hankins similarly suggested that humanism in England produced 'no political thinkers' before the sixteenth century 'who could be ranked with figures like Plato or Thomas Hobbes'.[47] This ignores the presence of several humanists within England in the fifteenth century, such as: William Grey (d.1478), Robert Fleming (1416-1483), who studied humanities under Guarino of Ferrara (1374-1460); Thomas Bekynton (1390-1465), secretary of Henry VI who introduced a classical Latin style to official letters; John Free (1430-65), who lectured in classical studies in Padua; John Doget (c.1435-1501) who translated Plato's *Phaedo*, and John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (1427-1470) who translated many humanist works and whose Latin was so elegant it moved a Pope to tears.[48] Those such as Bekynton and Nicholas Bildeston, dean of Salisbury (d.1441) used humanist study for practical, political purposes - Bekynton to influence the style of official letters and Bildeston to 'improve the standard of his diplomatic language'.[49]

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[43]' Bastard feudalism 'occurred when vassals began offering money instead of armed service to their lord as payment. It was a term and argument begun by nineteenth century historians, particular Bishop William Stubbs in *The Constitutional History of England, in its Origin and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1875); H. S. Bennet, *The Pastons and Their England: Studies in an Age of Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p.4. The feudal system suffered a 'breakdown 'according to H. S. Bennet, which 'left the way open for the advance of ambitious and unscrupulous men'.

[44] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Though and the Arts: Collected Essays,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980). This was an expansion on his article, 'The European Diffusion of Italian Humanism', *Italica,* 39(1) (1962) pp.1-20.

[45] Geoffrey Elton, 'Humansim in England' in *Impact* ed. Goodman & McKay, pp.259-278.

[46] Claire Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries 'in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* ed. Jill Kraye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

[47] James Hankins, 'Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought 'in *The Cambridge Companion* ed. Kraye, p.118

[48] Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.101; Nauert, *Humanism and Culture,* p.102,; Cox-Wright, 'Continuity', *PMLA,* p.373; *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol III* ed. Lottie Helloing & J. B. Trapp, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.299; Grummit, *A Short History*, p.303. Tiptoft's oration in 1460 before Pope Pius II 'allegedly moved the Pontiff to tears for the elegance of its Latinity'.

[49] Weiss, *Humanism*, p.19.

This is much more akin to Baron's civic type of humanism— one focused on ancient ideologies and political ideas, and applied practically to governance. Baron identified civic humanism primarily in Florence, and many of the individuals listed above had connections specifically to Florentine humanists: John Doget, for example, used Leonardo Bruni's translation of Plato when writing his *Phaedo*, and Andrew Holes (d.1470) (who Weiss called 'one of the early leaders of English humanism') lived in Florence in the mid 1400s and kept an open house where Matteo Palmieri and other scholars 'were glad of an occasion to dispute with him'.[50] Further, as will be shown in chapter two, Humphrey of Gloucester specifically read a humanist translation of Plato's *Republic* and claimed to be "counselled" by it. Thus, not only were there several prominent Englishmen involved with humanist study - proving that the movement was not lacking in England - the examples of Bildeston, Bekynton, and Gloucester also prove that humanist study was being used to directly inform contemporary governance. Humanism in fifteenth century England may therefore be defined as the study and use of ancient ideologies and political ideals, deliberately and practically used to influence politics.

Despite this, in 2000, A. J. Pollard argued humanism 'coloured' the view of Renaissance history but, again, only in the sixteenth century, and in 2006, Charles Nauert believed the spread of humanism in England was much slower than it should have been, with England 'unready' for the new learning.[51] These arguments are inherently unfair: the humanist movement had been present and developing in Italy and the continent for much longer. To expect the same level of skill and development from English humanists so early condemns them to failure from the offset. Furthermore, they work with the same kind of restrictive definition that led to Schirmer dismissing Humphrey of Gloucester in the 1930s. Martin Davies placed importance on the 'study, absorption, and imitation of the classics'.[52] In 2003 James Hankins emphasised rhetoric, whilst in 2006, Daniel Wakelin believed humanism, at its core, was a 'self-conscious commitment to return to the classics, or *ad fontes'*.[53] English humanism in the fifteenth century was not completely divorced from these. There was still an 'imitation' of and 'return to' the classics, but this is found in the focus on ancient political ideals and styles of governance. Further, as this thesis will show, commonwealth ideology itself was used as a rhetoric, influencing the way politicians and noblemen presented arguments and

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[50] Peter Murray Jones, 'Doget [Doket], John d.1501' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7766; Weiss, *Humanism*, p.77, p.79.
[51] A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) p.12.; Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.101.
[52] Martin Davies, 'Humanism in Script and print in the Fifteenth Century 'in *The Cambridge Companion,* ed. Kraye**,** p.47.
[53] James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome: Edizione Di Storia E Letteratura, 2003) p.574; Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism*, *Reading and English Literature 1430-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.8.

justified actions. Civic values of commonwealth, justice, balance, and meritocracy were all present in England, and influenced by Italian humanism. English humanism was therefore more civic in nature, with a greater focus on applying classical ideas and humanist ideologies to governance and politics. The lack of flexible definition has led to the belief that humanism did not exist in England before the sixteenth century, but this was not the case— by the middle of the century, humanism had made its way into the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.[54]

It was only in the first decade of the twenty-first century that ideas about humanism in England began to shift. Susanne Saygin in 2001 reopened the debate over Humphrey of Gloucester, arguing that humanism was more than a hobby for the duke and his circle.[55] She argued that humanism and politics were entwined in the early fifteenth century, much like Cox-Wright, Hyma and Simonini had pointed out. Saygin did not connect this to civic humanism, but the political use of humanism by Gloucester aligns with what Baron suggested in 1966. Saygin was followed in 2007 by Daniel Wakelin, who believed that Gloucester was commissioning texts as a humanist and using them for political purposes.[56] With this, the idea that humanism was absent in England until the sixteenth century was challenged.

In 2016, Julian Luxford challenged it further, using cadaver tombs in Suffolk to show that Renaissance styles permeated English society in the fifteenth century, and going further than the top levels.[57] However, in 2017, Dan Seward noted that although humanism was present in fifteenth-century parliamentary proceedings, this was only after 1485.[58] This will be challenged in chapter one, but Seward found 'little evidence' of humanist ideas being used in parliament before a speech given by John Alcock in 1485.[59] This is not the case, and as chapter one will show, humanist terminology was present in parliament from 1437.

Thus studies of English humanism have often been critical, with ideas only beginning to change within the past two decades. It has not yet been considered how humanist ideologies affected

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[54] Nauert, *Humanism*, p.117. As early as the 1450s, the Milanese Stefano Surigone 'lectured at Oxford on humanistic subjects'. Also at Oxford, in the 1480s, Cornelio Viteli, lectured in grammar and taught Greek. At Cambridge, Lorzeno Traversagni taught theology, but also 'lectured on rhetoric and ethics between 1472 and 1482'.

[55] Susanne Saygin, *Humphrey of Gloucester and the Italian Humanists,* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.4.

[56] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.45. Wakelin specifically mentions Gloucester's commission of *On Husbondrie*, a text which perhaps shows Gloucester's ability to govern, which will be looked at more fully in chapter two.

[57] J. Luxford, 'The Double Cadaver Tomb at Denston, Suffolk: A Unique Object of European Significance', *The Ricardian* vol.26 (2016)

[58] Dan E. Seward, 'Bishop John Alcock and the Roman Invasion of Parliament: Introducing Renaissance Civic Humanism to Tudor Parliamentary Proceedings 'in *The Fifteenth Century XV: Writings, Records and Rhetoric* ed. Linda Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017)

[59] Ibid, p.147.

English thought, and this thesis will seek to change this by looking particularly at humanist influence on English notions of commonwealth and governance.

Commonwealth

With its focus on liberty, justice, and the common good, civic humanism seems to have influenced ideas of commonwealth in England. This has not been properly studied, but as this thesis will show, ideas of commonwealth shifted and became more politically significant in the fifteenth century. As argued on pages 9-11, commonwealth ideology in fifteenth century England came to denote a unified political body that contained ideas of civic duty and responsibility. The language and terminology was flexible and often used interchangeably— words such as common profit, common weal, and common good were all used interchangeably with terms such as *res publica*.

Although in the fifteenth century, commonwealth and common weal were interchangeable terms, John Watts saw a distinction between the 'common weal' of the fifteenth century and the 'commonwealth' of the sixteenth century.[60] He believed that in the sixteenth century, 'commonwealth' specifically meant 'a re-imported and revivified consciousness of *res publica*'.[61] Though he suggested that those living in the fifteenth century may have begun to 'see that they lived in, and were protected by, a common weal', it was only those living under Henry VIII that 'can have been in no doubt… they were living in a *res publica*'.[62] Fifteenth century commonwealth ideology did not have the same distinction between commonwealth and common weal, and though Watts saw the real change in ideas of commonwealth occurring in the sixteenth century, significant changes were wrought in the fifteenth century too.

As David Starkey pointed out, commonwealth ideology was used as a political tool in fifteenth-century England. However, unlike Watts, Starkey did not note that commonwealth ideology changed over time. Such ideology, he argued, was important from 'the earliest times, and certainly since Magna Carta'.[63] He did not note the changes in definition and understanding. As chapter one of this thesis will show, however, the writings of John of Salisbury (1120-1180) show that the commonwealth was not the king's priority in previous centuries.[64] The commonwealth ideology of

[60] John Watts, 'Commonweal and Commonwealth: England's Monarchical Republic in the Making c.1450-1530 in *The Languages of Political Society: Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries* ed. Andrea Gamberini, Jean-Philippe Genet, Andrea Zorzi (Rome: Viella, 2011), p.159.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, p.152.
[63] Ibid, p.21.
[64] Ibid, p.21.

the 'earliest times' was markedly different to that of the fifteenth century. There was a greater focus on serving and protecting the commonwealth, which is similar to humanist ideology. In Florence, for example, the humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) believed humanists should use their studies to 'serve' the commonwealth.[65] This was the understanding that developed in England. Further, the fifteenth-century author William Worcester (1415-1482) stated that his understanding of commonwealth was drawn from Cicero, proving that ancient texts were informing these ideals. Still, Starkey did not connect the political use of such ideology to humanist influence.[66] Further, although Starkey noted that commonwealth ideology was a political tool, he did not note that it was used rhetorically to influence governance and politics. Although he posited that there was a 'trace' of humanist influence in the 1450s (citing William Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse*), Starkey - like many others - believed it was only later that it had a 'central role in Tudor discourse'.[67] Starkey did not consider the effects of humanism on commonwealth ideology, nor the wider influence this had on politics, governance, and how individuals interacted with both.

Similarly, in 2002 David Rundle cited the fact that "commonweal" was not a humanist term and believed humanism had no bearing on English commonwealth ideology.[68] Rundle did not note, though, that although "commonwealth" was not a humanist term, it appears to have taken on humanist meaning. Fifteenth-century authors used the term "commonwealth" interchangeably with terms like *res publica.*[69] *Res publica* was a humanist term derived from ancient works of Cicero and Plato. As Skinner pointed out, it was the writings of Cicero and other Roman philosophers that most influenced "civic" humanism (or, as Skinner termed it, 'neo-Roman republicanism').[70] Italian political ideas had, therefore, some influence on fifteenth-century England, yet it has been significantly overlooked.

Only Daniel Wakelin suggested the possibility that such ideas could influence English politics, but he remained tentative. He cited the 'increasing frequency' with which the commonwealth was used politically, but he questioned how much this was due to Italian humanist influence. He admitted that

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[65] Quoted in Roberto Weiss, 'Leonardo Bruni Aretino and Early English Humanism '*The Modern Language Review* 36(4) (1941) p.110.
[66] David Starkey, 'Which Age of Reform? 'in *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* ed. Christopher Coleman and David Starkey, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) pp.19-25.
[67] Ibid, pp.24-5.
[68] David Rundle, 'Was There a Renaissance Style of Politics in Fifteenth Century England? 'in *Authority and Consent in Tudor England: Essays presented to C. S. L. Davies,* ed. G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) pp.23-4.
[69] Watts, 'Commonweal and Commonwealth 'in *Languages of Political Society* ed. Gamberini, Genet, Zorzi, p.153. Watts noted that William Worcester generally translated *res publica* as 'common good'.
[70] Skinner, *Foundation*, p.84; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.ix.

the spread of humanist ideas could 'possibly' prompt concern for the commonwealth, but he did not go any further than 'possibly'.[71] Yet humanism and Italian influence go a long way to explain the new uses of commonwealth ideology. Authors like William Worcester claimed their dedication to the commonwealth came from reading ancient philosophy, and linked themselves to Italian humanist scholars.[72] This suggests Italian influence was more than a possibility, but this is an area that remains understudied.

Like Watts, David Rollison considered the influence of commonwealth ideology on politics, but again the focus was not on the fifteenth century. Unlike others who focused on the sixteenth century, Rollison looked at the fourteenth, claiming commonwealth ideology was used routinely by rebels from 1381 onwards.[73] However, this date may be slightly premature. He studied letters from the Peasants Revolt in 1381 and found 'casual uses' of commonwealth terminology. He believed that this meant the earliest use of commonwealth ideology in a political setting was in 1381.[74] However, this rested much on the use of 'wele' in two letters. Whilst Rollison was correct in pointing out that 'wele came to refer to the welfare…of a country or community', this was the use of *weal*, as in *common weal*.[75] This does not seem to be how the term was used in the letters Rollison cited. One letter from Jack Carter advising the rebels said that 'if the end be wele then all is wele', and a second from John Ball 'greeteth wele all manner men'.[76] In both cases, 'wele' seems to mean 'well' rather than 'weal'. Contrary to what Rollison stated, these letters do not seem to assure 'the rebels of 1381 that it was their duty to rise for the collective wele'.[77] Thus whilst the idea of commonwealth itself was not new to England, how it was used, and what it was understood to mean, certainly seems to have changed. These changes reflect a much more humanist understanding based on ancient philosophy and civic ideologies. There is a gap in the scholarship of humanism and commonwealth in fifteenth-century England. Only Rundle, Starkey and Wakelin have considered the effects of humanism on commonwealth ideology, but they went no further. How this influenced politics and kingship is yet to be explored.

[71] Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature,* p.21
[72] Ibid, p.98-99. Worcester owned a copy of Poggio Bracciolini's translation of Diodorus which had previously belonged to John Free. It contained Free's notes on Pliny, and Worcester added an inscription to the front which emphasises Free's humanist study. Worcester wrote 'of a community of readers fixated by the Italian fashion for antiquity' and 'proudly links himself with the renowned scholars of Italy and with their English followers'.
[73] David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[74] Ibid, p.252.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

In better understanding how ideas of commonwealth shaped fifteenth-century governance, we gain a much fuller picture of politics during the Wars of the Roses. Such ideas were used for political ends by both the commonality and those in power. As chapter three will show, it was used by both peasants and politicians. Megan Leitch believed that this dual use 'shows the slipperiness of the concept' of commonwealth.[78] Such 'ideas of loyalty to king and commonweal [were] rhetorically and conceptually woven together, but [were] deployed by conflicting parties…sometimes detached from the king's interests'.[79] Only Leitch has considered how commonwealth ideology influenced ideas of politics and power, especially amongst rebels and those of lower social status. However, her focus was on how this related to treason, and how commonwealth ideology was 'deployed to wrest control over discourses of treason from the king'.[80] This thesis will take Leitch's study further by suggesting that it was not just ideas of treason influenced by commonwealth ideology, but kingship and governance itself. In doing so, it will hope to build a fuller understanding of how kingship and governance responded to ideas of commonwealth and public power, and how continental ideas influenced English political discourse.

Kingship

This thesis will also contribute to the discussion on English kingship. Scholarship on this is just as wide and varied as that on humanism, but the work of J. R. Green in 1874 was the first to spark significant debate on the nature of English kingship in the late fifteenth century. In *A Short History of the English People*, Green claimed that there was a 'new monarchy' under the Yorkist kings that was founded by Edward IV.[81] Green saw the increased power of the monarchy under Edward IV and the Tudors as a completely different monarchy than before. Geoffrey Elton, writing in 1962 also believed in some kind of new monarchy, but he placed it not in the hands of the Yorkist kings but the Tudors. He claimed that the monarchy had been overhauled, with a 'revolution' in politics that was complete by the 1530s.[82] Both Green and Elton have been discredited by the likes of S. B. Chrimes and A. F. Pollard.[83] In 1989 Anthony Goodman claimed, contrary to both Green and Elton,

[78] Megan Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.31.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid, p.30.
[81] J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London: Macmillan, 1874)
[82] G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: A Study of the Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) p.11.
[83] S. B. Chrimes, *Introduction to the Administrative History of Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952) and *English Constitutional* History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947). Chrimes believed it was a 'grave mistake' to believe Tudor government was a 'fundamental departure from the medieval system'. It was 'not so much new as rejuvenated'; A. J. Pollard, *The Evolution of Parliament*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920) Pollard believed that the change came later and more gradually.

that there was no 'new' monarchy and that the only thing really new about the Yorkists and the Tudors was the 'divine purpose animating their rule'.[84] He argued that from 1461 onwards 'usurping kings proclaimed that they aimed to restore… a shattered relationship between God and the realm'.[85] Goodman did not consider that this 'shattered relationship' could have been a consequence of the new commonwealth ideology in England at the time. Nor did he extend the 'shattered relationship' to the king's divinity, as this thesis will. Most recently, in 2016 A. J. Pollard argued that Edward IV had perfected a medieval style of rule rather than doing anything particularly 'new'.[86]

Debates over medieval monarchy do not just extend to what was new. They also extend to the power and constitutionalism of parliament, the reputations of individual monarchs and the strength of the monarchy. A significant portion of the latter two debates has focussed (mainly negative) attention on Henry VI (1421-1471). He is generally blamed for the outbreak of civil war and for chronically weakening the crown. In 1938 K. B. McFarlane claimed the Wars of the Roses stemmed from the fact that 'Henry VI's head was too small for his father's crown'.[87] He stated that the crown was placed 'upon the head of a baby who grew up an imbecile' and this more than anything else caused the issues of the fifteenth century.[88] This idea that Henry VI was largely responsible for the problems of fifteenth-century England continued. In 1959 A. R. Myers studied the reforms of the king's household in 1471-2, contained in Edward IV's *liber niger*, or Black Book. For Myers, the overhaul of the royal household was necessary due to Henry's reign causing insolvency.[89]

In 1965, J. R. Lander, whilst remaining critical of Henry, acknowledged that the issue was bigger than just one man. The Crown itself was the issue: for Lander, England was one of the shallow little backwaters of monarchy'.[90] It suffered from an 'inherently…ramshackle structure', stemming from the king having incomes that were of 'only limited expansion', and military defence that 'depended on the protection of the sea'.[91] The monarchy might have had strong leaders at the end of the century, but 'to call such a monarchy strong is to mistake shadow for substance'.[92]

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[84] Anthony Goodman, *The New Monarchy: England 1471-1534* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) p.81.
[85] Ibid p.80.
[86] A. J. Pollard, *Edward IV: The Summer King* (London: Allen Lane, 2016) p.8
[87] K. B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Hambledon, 1981) p.239.
[88] Ibid, p.42.
[89] A. R. Myers, *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959)
[90] J. R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses* (Stroud: Sutton, 2007) p.21.
[91] Ibid p.19.
[92] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Lander claimed that Henry VI had 'conspicuously failed' in his duties as king.[93] In 1969, he wrote that under Henry the monarchy 'drifted to almost inevitable disaster'.[94] The idea that the monarchy suffered from weakness was also suggested by A. J. Pollard, but this weakness was not unique to England. Pollard claimed that all medieval monarchies were inherently fragile due to their reliance on 'the personal capacity of individual kings', and England was no more or less weak than anywhere else.[95] England also had the legacy of Edward II and Richard II to contend with, the depositions of the fourteenth century undermining monarchical authority.[96] There was also a precedent for limitations upon English kings, beginning in 1215 with Magna Carta, and reinforced by the parliament imposed by Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester (1208-1265) in the thirteenth century.

All of this means that the weakness of the late medieval English monarchy is generally accepted. It stems from the civil war and economic issues, but also the reliance on the person of the king. Although R. L. Storey argued in 1964 that the Wars of the Roses were an escalation of private feuds and not Henry s fault alone, his sympathy only stretched so far.[97] At the same time, he admitted that Henry was a 'devout and kindly simpleton' which damaged the reputation of the monarchy.[98] Two years later, Charles Ross did not agree that the wars were an escalation of private feuds, but believed they were a direct consequence of the weak monarchy.[99] In 1974 J. W. McKenna claimed Henry was a mix of 'charming indifference and exasperating incompetency', and that he was 'the greatest disaster in saintly royalty since Edward the Confessor'.[100] In 1981, R. A. Griffiths and Bertram Wolffe both contested the idea that Henry was a simpleton. Griffiths pointed out that Henry was a politically active king, but his incompetence meant the 'foundations of stability were cracking'.[101] Similarly, Wolffe believed Henry s rule weakened the crown.[102] In the same year, John Gillingham called Henry VI the 'careless king' who undermined the otherwise strong monarchy.[103] All were correct in asserting that the monarchy was weakened, but the focus on Henry

[93] Ibid, p.15.
[94] J. R. Lander, *Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth-Century England* (London: Hutchinson, 1969) p.68.
[95] A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses: Third Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p.128.
[96] Ibid, p.80. Because of Richard II's deposition in particular, Pollard argued that 'the office [of the king] was weaker in mid-fifteenth century England'.
[97] R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999) p. 33.
[98] Ibid. Storey claimed that under Henry VI "the monarchy virtually fell into abeyance" p.27.
[99] Charles Ross, *The Wars of the Roses: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1986) p.42.
[100] J. W. McKenna 'Piety and Propaganda: the Cult of King Henry VI 'in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. B. Rowland, (London, 1974) p.79
[101] R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: There Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) p.147.
[102] Bertram Wolfe, *Henry VI*, (London: Yale University Press, 1981)
[103] J. Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses: Peace and Conflict in Fifteenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) p.51.

VI alone leaves us with a rather limited understanding. Though the person of the king was weak, other factors certainly played a part. None have yet argued that Henry VI's weakness only created a vacuum for new ideas to fill, and changing ideas about commonwealth, combined with humanist ideas about meritocracy, were all the more relevant given the king's failings.

One of those searching for another explanation for monarchical weakness was A. J. Pollard. His 1988 survey of the wars concluded that 'many circumstances combined to undermine the authority of the crown'.[104] He placed blame not just on Henry but also on economic and financial issues, the loss of the Hundred Years War and 'lurking doubt concerning Henry VI's title' and ability to rule.[105] In the 1990s, R. H. Britnell agreed that the monarchy was weak. Although he emphasised that the issues of the fifteenth century cannot be seen as consequences of economic problems alone, crown revenues were falling. Under Richard II, revenues stood at around £140,000 per year, but this had fallen to £64,000 by 1460. Britnell claimed it was a result of falling wool exports, reducing royal income from customs and landowners, 'partly the result of Lancastrian mismanagement of the royal demesne', but also 'the result of economic factors quite outside any king's control'.[106] Regardless, declining incomes undermined government and weakened the monarchy. Anthony Gross also wrote about the English crown and concluded it was in a 'crisis' in the fifteenth century.[107] More recently, in 2016 Tim Thornton argued that, because of Henry VI's illness, there were 'uncertainties surrounding royal authority at the centre' of government in the 1450s.[108] These were compounded by Richard, duke of York and his attempts at securing a protectorate whilst the king was unable to rule. For Thornton, the early investiture of Edward of Lancaster as Prince of Wales in 1454 was to offset the weakness of royal authority.[109] Consequently, there is a consensus that the medieval English monarchy had been weakened one way or another in the fifteenth century, but the effects of commonwealth ideology and humanism have not been considered. With a greater focus on rule that was conciliar and emphasised the needs of the commonwealth, the divinity of the monarchy was damaged.

This decline in divinity has not been properly explored. Indeed, many consider the fifteenth century to be the beginning of an increase in monarchical divinity, not a decline. However, as this thesis

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[104] Pollard, *Wars of the Roses,* p.81.
[105] Ibid.
[106] R. H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000-1500*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) p.208.
[107] Anthony Gross, *The Dissolution of the Lancastrian Kingship: Sir John Fortescue and the Crisis of Monarchy in Fifteenth Century England* (Stamford: Paul Watkins Publishing, 1996)
[108] Tim Thornton, 'Lancastrian rule and the resources of the prince of Wales, 1456–61 '*Journal of Medieval History* 42(3) (2016) p.396.
[109] Ibid.

will argue, from the middle of the century to at least 1485, the commonwealth appears to have been a bigger priority than divine right. In 2015, Francis Oakley claimed that in the fifteenth century there 'emerged…forms of kingship that were more adequately institutionalised, less subject to limitation by the weakened parliaments and representative assemblies of the era, and more prone to advancing quasi-absolutist claims for the reach of royal prerogatives'.[110] Royal sacrality was 'revivified' and 'certainly more openly acknowledged' in the late fifteenth century, according to Oakley.[111] As chapter four will argue, though, the sacrality of the king appears to have taken a back seat in the mid- and late-fifteenth century. The focus was instead on a monarch who could provide for the commonwealth. Only Goodman noted the damaged relationship with God in the fifteenth century, but even he did not seek explanation for its 'shattered' nature. Leigh-Ann Craig acknowledged that Henry VI's excessive piety undermined the crown, but still argued that for Henry VI's 'devotees', 'kingship may have evoked sanctity'.[112] She did not consider the weakness of the crown and the decline in divinity to be caused by something bigger than Henry's failings.

Despite all of this, Gillingham argued that 'neither in thought nor deed was this a monarchy that was being undermined'.[113] Christine Carpenter also questioned the damage done to the reputation of the crown in this period, arguing that an effective monarchy required co-operation between the king and nobility.[114] Furthermore, in 2002 Michael Hicks claimed that all kings of the period were too dependent on nobles with too much power, but despite this dependency, the monarchy was not weakened.[115] Hicks argued that only an under mighty king had anything to fear from over mighty subjects, and a strong king could keep the nobility in line. However, it seems that even the strongest of kings could not control the nobility completely: Edward IV did much to restore crown authority, but still had to request, on his deathbed, that feuds between members of his court be ended. Whilst he was able to contain the 'incipient rivalry' between his courtiers, 'he neither eradicated nor resolved it', being 'incapable' of solving the problem.[116] Edward had restored crown solvency and made sure his influence was felt in all corners of his kingdom, yet could not completely control his

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[110] Francis Oakley, *The Watershed of Modern Politics: Law, Virtue, Kingship and Consent (1300-1650)*, (London: Yale University Press, 2015) p.154.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Leigh-Ann Craig, 'Royalty, Virtue and Adversity: The Cult of King Henry VI, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 35(2) (2003), p.200; Interestingly, Katherine Lewis argued Henry VI may not have been as overly religious as we might think: Katherine Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013) p.57; Craig, 'Royalty '*Albion*, p.198.
[113] John Gillingham, *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* ed. John Gillingham, (London: Collins & Brown, 1993) p.3.
[114] Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c.1437-1509* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.43.
[115] Michael Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century,* (Abingdon: Routledge. 2002) p.116.
[116] Pollard, *Late Medieval England,* p.314.

noblemen.[117] This was not entirely unique to England. Magnates all over Europe were growing too powerful, weakening crowns on the continent too.[118] This was, therefore, a monarchy weakened by warlords and over mighty noblemen even during periods where the king's personal rule was strong.

The role of the public must also be considered in these arguments, since commonwealth ideology was used by some of these over mighty noblemen to undermine the king. In 1995, Mark Ormrod came close to examining the role of the commonwealth and its relationship to the king, writing about the decline of the monarchy.[119] He claimed that rebellions, revolts, and depositions were the results of kings failing to meet the expectations of their subjects: of the 'personal inadequacies' of Edward II, Richard II and Henry VI, but also 'the over-ambitious and ultimately ruinous foreign policies of Edward I, Edward III and Henry V'.[120] As a result, power shifted:

> away from the monarchy, [with] a new emphasis on the obligations of kingship and a belief that the dynastic principle itself applied only so long as the crown rested on a head large enough to sustain its great weight.[121]

New standards of kingship had been a demand from those below rather than the nobility, with Ormrod describing how kingship began to be 'justified and judged in terms of its capacity to fulfil the expectations and demands of the polity'.[122] The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed 'the emergence of what would now be called public opinion, not merely among the elite but in a wide cross-section of the population'.[123] Though Ormrod did not link this to any cultural movement like humanism, or any changes to commonwealth ideology, he did note that there was 'a sense of common identity in the political life of the realm'.[124] Ormord believed the Hundred Years War and the Black Death were the main catalysts for this change, and though these certainly were instrumental, humanist influence on commonwealth ideology also played a part.

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[117] Ibid, p.297. Norfolk, Suffolk and Howard were placed in East Anglia; Herbert and Shrewsbury in Wales and the Marches, and Gloucester in the North, distributing the king's authority to the furthest reaches of the realm.
[118] Civil war between the Armagnacs and Burgundians in France created issues there, and in Germany throughout the middle ages, the 'throne was held or claimed by members of seven different dynasties, and only once [between 1254 and 1438] did the throne pass from father to son'. Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) p.398.
[119] W. M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) p.15.
[120] Ibid, p.15.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid, p.82.
[123] Ibid, p.7.
[124] Ibid, p.17.

Similarly, in 1996 John Watts looked at political manifestos, tracts and speeches and argued that ideas and principles needed to be put back into the Wars of the Roses.[125] Whilst Watts was correct, he did not consider how these ideas and principles may have been affected by humanism, or how they affected governance. Though he mentioned the importance of the commonwealth, and the importance of humanist influence, they were two very separate subjects. Later, in 2011, he argued that between 1450 and 1530 there was a 'significant revision of ideas of authority', based on changes to the king and his council:

> In the 1450s, the king is supposed to take the advice of noblemen in order to align his rule with common counsel and the common weal… in the 1530s, he should give the government of the common weal…to men with gifts of the mind, and they will deliberate and devise suitable policy for all.[126]

Watts is the only scholar who acknowledged a change in the understanding of commonwealth. In the 1450s, he argued, commonwealth meant the 'well-being of the realm and its inhabitants'. In the 1530s it was a 'tangible thing… the political community itself'.[127] However, the commonwealth as a political community seems to have developed much earlier than this, as chapter three of this thesis will show. Thus humanist ideas of commonwealth were affecting English governance and kingship throughout the fifteenth century, but scholars have not focused enough on this.

Paul Strohm, in 2005, did argue that humanism influenced the governance of England, focusing on the role of Richard, duke of York (1411-1460).[128] Strohm believed the middle of the century ushered in a specific type of rule, which he termed *politique. Politique* was applicable not 'only to those who make generous arrangements for the good of all, but also to those who make the best possible arrangements for themselves'.[129] He looked at the breaking of oaths and promises, particularly by York and his son Edward IV (1442-1483), and saw a pre-cursor to the Machiavellian Moment which J. G. A. Pocock identified. The Machiavellian Moment was a type of ruthless government and 'pragmatic political discussion'.[130] For Strohm, Edward IV and Richard of York's willingness to break oaths and act ruthlessly for their own ends was a kind of 'pre-Machiavelian behaviour', amounting to a 'revolution' in English politics.[131] Strohm did not consider, though, how

[125] John Watts, 'Ideas, Principles and Politics' in *The Wars of the Roses,* ed. A. J. Pollard (Basingstoke, 1995) pp.11-33
[126] Watts, 'Commonweal and Commonwealth 'in *Languages of Political Society* ed. Gamberini, Genet, Zorzi, p.149.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft Between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005)
[129] Ibid, p.5.
[130] Ibid, p.1.
[131] Strohm, *Politique,* p.5.

this affected kingship. Further, he restricted it to the Yorkist kings, and did not look at the role of commonwealth ideology. However, Strohm showed that English governance was changing and responding to continental ideas, even if he did not extend this discussion to kingship itself.[132]

Most recently, *The Routledge History of Monarchy* tackled several areas of kingship and rule. Most relevant to this discussion, Cathleen Sarti wrote about the history of deposition in which she argued that a discussion of deposition 'reveals the complicated structure' of pre-modern monarchy, a structure in which 'all inhabitants, from the monarch to the peasants, were necessary'.[133] She also pointed out that the British Isles (though it was less commonly used in Scotland) seemed to have its own method for deposing monarchs, by disguising the deposition as an abdication.[134] Depositions, she claimed, 'were about the concept of good leadership' and 'on the conditions of monarchical rule…thereby contributing to pre-modern state formation'.[135] Other chapters included Paul Webster on the personal piety of English kings (although mainly focused on the kings before the fifteenth century), and Matthias Range on the divine right of kings and in particular, the use of *dei gratia* as a royal title. In 'The Tudor Monarchy of Counsel and the Growth of Reason of State' it was argued that because of the spread of Renaissance humanism, the philosopher was combined with the courtier to create a 'new kind of counsellor, who tempered truthful advice with an awareness of circumstance'.[136] It was also argued in this chapter that 'humanism dominated' expectations of counsel following the Reformation, and that the role of humanism and counsel is largely understudied in the reigns of Henry VII, Edward VI and Mary I. It also pointed out that although humanism had created a new kind of adviser, by the middle of the sixteenth century, because of the rise of Machiavellianism, rhetoric was no longer seen as valuable but instead distrusted, and the courtier 'became the object of deep suspicion'.[137] This is the closest we have come to a discussion on kingship and humanism, but its focus was firmly within the Tudor court of the sixteenth century. Yet many of the same points are applicable; humanism became a desirable trait in ambassadors and court officials in the fifteenth century too.

Hence there is a space for a discussion of humanism, commonwealth, and kingship. This thesis follows on from the work of Roberto Weiss, arguing that humanism was present in England in the

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[132] Ibid, p.1.
[133] Cathleen Sarti, 'Depositions of Monarchs in Northern European Kingdoms, 1300-1700 'in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, ed. Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Zita Rohr, Russell Martin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019) p.582.
[134] Ibid, p.587.
[135] Ibid, p.591.
[136] Joanne Paul, Valerie Schutte, 'The Tudor Monarchy of Counsel and the Growth of Reason of State 'in *Routledge History* p.657.
[137] Ibid.

fifteenth century and influencing political decisions. It takes Hans Baron's civic humanism as a model in suggesting, like Elizabeth Cox-Wright and Albert Hyma, that humanism in England was more "practical". Further, it fits with the arguments of Watts and Rollison in that commonwealth ideology was used politically, and furthers Pollard's argument that all kings in the fifteenth century justified their actions in terms of commonwealth. It brings these ideas together to argue that humanism can explain changes to commonwealth ideology. This may have been a result of successive power vacuums: the death of Henry V left a child as king, with power split between his uncles in England and France. The rising mercantile classes perhaps looked for a new political system - given the declining feudal system - and focused their attention on ideas of commonwealth. This then influenced foreign policy, expectations of kingship, the political agendas of individual politicians, and the divinity of the king. The new importance of commonwealth ideology and its link to humanist thinking also helps explain certain events (like the 1483 usurpation of Richard III, or Richard of York's bid for power in 1454). Even Richard III's usurpation, something that historians have found irreconcilable with his record of loyalty and good lordship, becomes clearer if we consider his actions as coming from a place of genuine concern for the commonwealth. It is certainly worthwhile, therefore, to consider the effects of humanism on fifteenth-century commonwealth ideology, and the subsequent effects on political history.

Changing Commonwealth Ideology

Commonwealth ideology was not new to fifteenth-century England. In the twelfth century, the philosopher and cleric John of Salisbury (d.1180), wrote about the commonwealth and its relation to the monarch. For Salisbury, the realm was a body: the king was the head, and God and the Church the soul.[138] Whilst the commonwealth was the king's to protect, it ultimately stood in subjugation to the crown. It 'enjoy[ed] the rights of a ward', with the king as its guardian.[139] The king was responsible 'for the commonwealth', but he was not responsible 'to it', nor was he 'the representative of the people but... "the image of God on Earth"'.[140] Commonwealth ideology was present but held no real political power, and this was the case until the fifteenth century. At this point, ideas about commonwealth and kingly duty began to shift. Commonwealth ideology became a fundamental part of politics, and the king's duty to the realm began to supersede his duty to God.[141] As chapter four will examine in more detail, the role of the commonwealth in politics increased whilst that of the Church declined. Whilst there were some who were critical of this - the 1459 poem 'The Bison Leads the Blind' lamented 'slow' 'worship' and warned against the 'weed' of the commonality 'grow[ing] over the wheat' - the commonwealth nevertheless overtook the Church when it came to matters of state.[142] The king was no longer the "image of God on Earth", and instead had a primary duty to serve and protect the realm.

No explanation has been put forward for why commonwealth ideology and terminology changed in fifteenth-century England. Only John Watts has noted that it changed at all, but he believed this occurred in the sixteenth century.[143] This chapter will therefore firstly show how understandings and interpretations of commonwealth in fifteenth-century England changed, before suggesting that civic humanism influenced this. It will then look at expectations of kingship and discourse surrounding foreign war (how it was justified and when the king should pursue it), to show how ideas of commonwealth impacted notions of kingly responsibility and duty. As a result, this chapter will demonstrate how commonwealth ideology, inspired by civic humanism, had a significant role

[138] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* ed. Cary Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.66.
[139] Ibid, p.76.
[140] John Dickinson, 'The Medieval Conception of Kingship and Some of its Limitations, as Developed in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury', *Speculum* 1(3) (1926), p.313-314.
[141] To be explored in chapter four.
[142]' Bisson leads the Blind 'printed in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* ed. Rossell Hope Robbins, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) p.128-130. 'worschyp fro us longe hath be slawe [slow]', and 'Holynes comyth out of helle, ffor absolucions waxyn ware'; 'euery man may care, Lest [th]e wade [weed] growe ouer [th]e whete'.
[143] Watts, 'Commonweal and Commonwealth 'in *Languages of Political Society* ed. Gamberini, Genet, Zorzi, p.149.

in fifteenth-century English governance and kingship.

That civic humanism influenced English politics in the fifteenth century is something that has not been considered before. This is largely because of the assumption that humanism was almost completely absent from England until the sixteenth century. This largely stems from issues with defining humanism, but by taking Baron's 'civic humanism' as a model, it is possible to see humanist influence in England. Baron's civic humanism focused on politics, commonwealth, and civic liberty; the right of the state to govern itself and the idea that every individual within had a role and responsibility. As Scott-Baker stated in 2013, the 'language of civic republicanism' emphasised 'liberty, service and the common good'.[144] Civic humanists fused ideas of liberty, civic virtue, and public service adapted from classical sources', particularly Cicero.[145] The humanist chancellor of Florence, for example, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) believed that the chief duty of any ruler was the commonwealth, and humanist study informed civic service. It was to be 'in harmony with…duties as a citizen'.[146] Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475), the Florentine humanist and historian, wrote in his *Vita Civile* (c.1431-1438) that those in public roles must 'at all times disregard their personal interest' since they 'are duty-bound…to preserve the entire city and bear in mind at all times that the masses they govern rely on their good faith'.[147] He also wrote how:

> the private citizen must abide by the same law as everyone else, neither placing himself beneath or behind the others…he should always desire peace, tranquility and decency in the state and prefer the…well-being of the public to his own personal advantage.[148]

The 'defining element of republican Florentine ideology' was 'selfless public service', with the purpose of governance being to ensure "universal health".[149] It is this which began to influence English notions of commonwealth in the fifteenth century.[150]

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[144] Nicholas Scott Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty: Political Culture in the Florentine Renaissance 1480 - 1550* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013) p.238.
[145] Ibid, p.17. Palmieri mentioned Cicero explicitly when describing various groups of people in society. Palmieri, *Civil Life*, in *Cambridge Translations* ed. Kraye, p.168.
[146] Baron, *Crisis*, p.165.
[147] Matteo Palmieri, *Civic Life*, printed in *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts, vol 2: Political Philosophy* ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.168.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid, p.39; The concept of universal health was included by Tito Livio Frulovisi in his *Vita Henrici Quinti*, when he spoke about the 'universal profit and wealth 'of the people. Tito Livio Frulovisi, *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth* ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911) p.18.
[150] Although Palmieri's work was not translated into English until much later, he was not unknown to English scholars. One, Andrew Holes, who Weiss called 'one of the early leaders of English humanism', kept an open house when he was in Florence in the mid 1400s, and Matteo Palmieri, along with other scholars, 'were glad of an occasion to dispute with him on matters theological'. Weiss, *Humanism in England*, p.77, p.79. These occasions where Holes would entertain these men were, in the opinion of the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano de Bisticci, 'supplemented...by the books which he ordered and shipped back to England'. George Bruner Parks, *The English Traveler to Italy: The Middle Ages to 1525, vol 1,* (Rome: Ediziono di Storia E Letteratura, 1954) p.31.

As an ideology, it underwent significant change. As this thesis will show, it went from being subordinate to the king to being pre-eminent. Civic humanist influence helps explain the shift, and this is demonstrated by the terminology in political documents. Whilst commonweal was not a new term, individuals in the fifteenth century began using it interchangeably with other terms like *res publica*. *Res publica* carries humanist connotations and came directly from the likes of Cicero (d.43 BC) and Plato (d.348/7 BC).[151] In the fifteenth century, authors like John Russell (d.1494) and William Worcester (1415-1482) used words like commonwealth, common weal, common good and *res publica* to mean the same thing.[152] Although David Rundle was correct in stating that commonweal was not a humanist term, in the fifteenth century it took on humanist meaning. Though there was a clear distinction between commonwealth and *res publica* in the sixteenth century, this was not the case in the fifteenth. For example, Thomas Elyot (1490-1546) distinguished between common weal and public weal in 1529.[153] For Elyot, *res publica* was the interests of the state, whereas *res plebia* represented the interests of the commonality or, the 'rabble'.[154] In the fifteenth century, though, the interests of the people and the state were synonymous, much more akin to the "universal body" described by Florentine humanists. As John Watts has showed, in fifteenth century England, 'common' and 'public' meant the same thing.[155] Humanist terminology was used synonymously and interchangeably with commonwealth ideology, suggesting that ideas of commonwealth had changed. In this way humanism itself influenced medieval English politics.

Parliament Rolls

How commonwealth ideology changed, and how its role in governance developed, can be seen clearly in the parliament rolls of medieval England. The rolls are a useful source since they are a written record of parliamentary proceedings (including the opening speech, sermon, private and commons petitions and various legal cases) drawn up by the clerk of parliament at each session from the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) to that of Henry VII (1485-1509).[156] For the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the rolls are mostly complete— of the period between 1362 and 1504, only the

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[151] Cicero, Jonathan Powell & Niall Rudd, *The Republic and The Laws,* trans. Niall Rudd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Powell & Rudd note that a *res publica* was the property of the public, p.193.
[152] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.115.
[153] John Watts, 'The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politic 'in *The Fifteenth Century IV: Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Linda Clark & Christine Carpenter, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004) p.159.
[154] Luc Borot, 'Subject and Citizen: The Ambiguities of the Political Self in Early Modern England', *French Journal of British Studies*, 21(1) (2016) p.6.
[155] Watts, 'Pressure' in *The Fifteenth Century, IV,* ed. Clark & Carpenter, p.159.
[156] 'General Introduction', *PROME* [Accessed 20 January 2021]

rolls of 1368 and 1470 are missing.[157] This gives us an almost complete account of the fifteenth-century English parliament, and makes it possible to trace the role of commonwealth ideology within it. The petitions and sermons recorded reveal that this ideology had a place of particular prominence from the 1430s onwards. From 1437 to 1485, commonwealth ideology was mentioned in all but one of the twenty-one parliaments held, a significant increase from the fourteenth century. It is repeatedly stated in these records that parliament and the king had a duty to the commonwealth, and this is a departure from earlier ideology put forth by Salisbury, thus proving that the commonwealth ideology of the fifteenth century was different to that of the fourteenth century and earlier.

In the fourteenth century, commonwealth ideology was used infrequently in parliament and did not often refer to the realm as a whole. There were long periods where parliamentary documents did not refer to commonwealth at all (there was nothing, for example, in the 23 parliaments of Edward III from April 1328 to April 1341).[158] Where references do exist, they prove that though there was an understanding of commonwealth, it was not a popular or powerful political ideology. In the roll containing the first half of Henry IV's first parliament, for example, only four of 161 items mentioned the 'common profit' or 'common advantage'.[159]

Very few of the fourteenth-century references were to the people of the realm as a whole. Item 70 in 1315 concerned the repair of a road in Westminster:

> To our lord the king and his council… the paving of the road between the Bar of the New Temple of London and the gate of our said lord the king's palace at Westminster is so broken and destroyed that rich and poor passing that way…suffer great harm… because of which it would be to the…advantage both of our lord the king and those of the court and of others, if the said paving were repaired… May it please our said lord the king and his council to ordain on this as seems best to them for the common benefit.[160]

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Edward III's parliament of 1346 used commonwealth terms only once, and Richard II's 1395 parliament did not mention it whatsoever. The context of Richard II's parliament in particular is significant because Richard at this time was at the height of his tyranny. We could reasonably expect the commonwealth to be mentioned during this parliament, but it was not. This suggests that it did not yet have the importance it would have a century later.
[159] 'Henry IV: October 1399, Part 1', *PROME* [accessed 20 January 2021]. Articles 66, 67, 79 and 149.
[160] Ibid.

The ‘common benefit’ of Westminster was not the same thing as the ‘universal health’ of the realm. Thus commonwealth ideology before 1437 had a limited scope: it was used for localities or certain groups, and not often the realm as a whole. This was still the case in May 1421, when a petition was brought concerning Oxford students hunting without permission in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire. The petition wanted this dealing with ‘for the common profit of the aforesaid counties’.[161]

By the fifteenth century, ideas of commonwealth had expanded to encompass the realm as a whole, which fits with civic humanist ideas about the state as unified body. All of the twenty-one parliaments from 1437 to 1485, bar that of November 1450, contained references to the commonwealth. At the first parliament of Edward IV in 1461, ‘common weal’ was mentioned eight times in 43 items.[162] At his second in 1463, commonwealth in various terms (common profit, common weal) was cited six times in 60 items.[163] In 1437, of 38 articles, five mentioned the commonwealth.[164] All referred to the realm as a whole: the ‘common profit of the people’, the ‘common well-being’ of the realm, and the ‘common good’ of the realm were mentioned.[165] Similarly, ‘common harm’ and ‘common profit’ were mentioned three times in 1439 and like terms used four times in 1442.[166] Again, these all focused on the realm as a whole: item 23 mentioned exports of corn and how it related to the ‘common profit of all the realm’. Item 27 focussed on merchants, but still mentioned how foreign ‘aliens’ acting as brokers damaged the ‘common people of this land’.[167] How commonwealth ideology was used and what it was taken to mean had changed significantly by this point, with understandings of commonwealth more closely resembling the humanist idea of ‘universal health’.

Similarly, the rolls from 1437 onwards show how the government had a duty to protect the commonwealth. Richard of York (1411-1460) outlined this in both 1453 and 1455. In March 1453 the lords spiritual and temporal were given ‘instruction by the duke of York, the king's lieutenant of

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[161]‘ Henry V: December 1421 ’*PROME* [Accessed 20th February 2020]
[162] 'Edward IV: November 1461', *PROME* [accessed 20 January 2021].
[163] 'Edward IV: April 1463’, *PROME,* [accessed 20 January 2021]. Item 57: Two references about how pattenmakers should make pattens only out of Aspen wood that is not suitable for arrow making: ‘common people of the realm ’were ‘greatly inconvenienced ’by patten makers using wood suitable for arrows. Item 53: concerns inflation and damage to the ‘common people of the realm’; Item 48: the ‘commonality of the entire kingdom of England ’asks for coastal towns to be fortified for the ‘common relief’; Item 44: regards the payment of a staple to Calais for the ‘common profit of his realm, his wele ’and Calais; Item 39: for the ‘common weal, defence and welfare of this realm ’the king is granted certain castles, lordships, manors etc.; Item 22: Restrictions on imports to ‘improve the common weal of this land’.
[164] 'Henry VI: January 1437', *PROME* [accessed 20 January 2021].
[165] Ibid. Justice and peace mentioned in item 5; guilds and ordinances in item 35; the sale of wool in Calais in item 37.
[166] 'Henry VI: January 1442', *PROME* [accessed 20 January 2021].
[167] Ibid.

his parliament':

> According to their authority and such discretion as God has endowed them with, [they shall] daily devote themselves and attend to the accomplishment of [the king's] parliament, and to such things as they consider are for the well-being of his highness and of his lands and subjects and that his laws may be observed and kept, and justice administered to every person…and they would be as glad…as they could be if their diligence might advance and further the king's welfare and his royal estate, and the common weal.[168]

It was made clear by this that the lords in parliament were there to serve not only the king, but the commonwealth also. This was reinforced in July 1455, when York was appointed Protector and 'defender' of the realm. Following Henry VI's breakdown, he:

> said that he was willing to assume as far as it pertained to him, the charge and exercise of the name and responsibility of the same, according to the form of the aforesaid act, power and grant to the honour, praise and glory of Almighty God, and the profit and utility of the aforesaid king and kingdom, and the pleasure of the aforesaid lords, and the increase of the aforesaid community and common weal of the said kingdom.[169]

York - as will be argued in chapter two - connected both his role as Protector of the Realm and the role of parliament to the benefit of the commonwealth. In this, there are echoes of humanist thought about duty and service. For example, Aeneus Sylvius Piccolomini (1405-1464), taking his argument almost word for word from Cicero, believed a ruler's purpose was to 'watch over public affairs and administer justice'.[170] This was very different to Salisbury's definition of the commonwealth in the twelfth century. Even though Salisbury also took inspiration from Cicero, he believed the commonwealth was only the 'ward' of the king. The parliament rolls suggest that it now had a much more significant position, and show that understandings of commonwealth were much more in line with humanist definitions, where a ruler had a duty to his people.

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[168] 'Henry VI: March 1453', *PROME* [Accessed 20th January 2021]
[169] 'Henry VI: July 1455', *PROME* [Accessed 20th January 2021]
[170] C. J. Nederman, 'National Sovereignty and Ciceronian Political Thought: Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini and the Ideal of Universal Empire in Fifteenth-century Europe '*History of European Ideas*, 16(4) (1993) p.539**;** 'Civic Humanism ' *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humanism-civic/ (2019) [Accessed 24th January 2021]

Thirty years later, John Russell, bishop of Lincoln (d.1494) echoed York's sentiments. When composing draft speeches for the parliaments of 1483-4, he reminded those gathered that:

> all the terms and limits of our thoughts and affections we ought to refer to one singular point, that is to say, the advancing of the common weal. We be in the place where this should be treated. This time is prefixed for the same intent.[171]

That Russell and York believed parliament's duty was to the commonwealth is made all the more notable by the absence of such ideology from the fourteenth-century parliaments. This clearly shows that attitudes towards commonwealth had changed and definitions had expanded.

These new definitions aligned with humanist values, as one petition from February 1447 demonstrates. This petition linked the 'public good' of the realm to education:

> consider the large number of grammar schools that were in various parts of this realm in the past…and how few there are now, and the great harm that is caused because of this, not only to the spiritual side in the Church… but also to the temporal side… There should be an adequate number of schools in London and good teachers of grammar, and not simply for the particular benefit of two or three persons…for where there is a large number of pupils and few teachers…the masters grow rich in wealth, and the pupils poor in knowledge…contrary to all…order of the public good.[172]

The connection between education and the commonwealth was noted by humanists. Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II and known as the 'humanist pope' - wrote in his treatise *De Librorum Educatione* (1450), that education was particularly important.[173] In the treatise, also known as *The Education of Boys*, he stated that no one ought to have better or greater knowledge than a prince, whose prudence should profit all his subjects .[174] The 1447 petition contains a similar idea, that proper education benefits the commonwealth. The petition is also not concerned only with the 'spiritual side', but the temporal too. This will be more fully considered in later chapters, but it is important to

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[171] *Grants, Etc. from the Crown During the Reign of Edward V, from the Original Docket Book* ed. John Gough Nichols, (London: J. R. Nichols and Sons, 1854) p. lvi. 'alle the termes and lymitees of owre thoughtes and affeccions we oughte to referre to oo singular poynt, that ys to sey, the avauncynge of the comen wele. We be yn the place where thys schuld be tretyd. Thys tyme is prefixed for the same entente'.
[172] 'Henry VI: February 1447', *PROME* [Accessed 20th January 2021]
[173] Written for Ladislas V, king of Bohemia and Hungary (1440-1457).
[174] Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, 'The Education of Boys 'printed in *Humanist Educational Treatises,* trans. Craig. W. Kallendorf, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008) p.82.

note that the secular ‘public good’ was just as important as ‘spiritual’ good.

Thus the commonwealth had a position of importance in parliament from 1437 onwards. That it was referred to frequently suggests it was a prominent ideology, one which had evolved since the fourteenth century. Commonwealth now denoted a unified political entity, and focused on duty, responsibility, and ‘universal health’.

Parliamentary Sermons

It was not just parliamentary petitions and records that show the evolution and expansion of commonwealth ideology. The opening sermons do too, with those of John Russell and John Stafford, archbishop of Canterbury (d.1452) particularly containing ideas about civic duty and responsibility. The king’s duty to serve the people is emphasised in these sermons, and this is made all the more notable by the fact that it comes from churchmen like Russell and Stafford. As chapter four will examine in more detail, the king’s duty to the people eventually superseded his duty to the Church, and the sermons given by Russell and Stafford seem to recognise this. The role of the Church in relation to the state began to decline in the mid and late fifteenth century - evidenced by the lack of involvement in the civil war - whereas that of commonwealth ideology was growing.

The opening sermon was an opportunity to comment on politics and reflect on why the parliament had been called.[175] Because members often took notes to relay to those at home what had transpired, the sermons were not just aimed at those gathered in parliament.[176] News filtered down, so the only group truly excluded was the peasantry.[177] Because of this, the inclusion of commonwealth ideology in the opening sermons is further evidence of how it changed and grew in importance after 1437.

Stafford’s speech in 1437 was primarily an attempt to inspire loyalty to Henry VI. To do so, he drew on a text from Isaiah 62:3, ‘the royal crown is in the hand of God’.[178] This was common enough and a fairly typical model for parliamentary sermons.[179] However, Stafford’s speech

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[175] John Watts, ‘The Policie in Christen Remes: Bishop Russell's Parliamentary Sermons of 1483-84 ’in *Authority and Consent in Tudor England*, ed. G. Bernard & S. Gunn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002) p.33.
[176] Jean-Philippe Genet, ‘Political Language in the Late Medieval English Parliament ’in *Parliamentarische Kulturen* ed. J. Feuchter & J. Helmrath, (Dusseldorf, 2013), http://archive-2013-2016.lamop.fr/IMG/pdf/Genet160412.pdf, p.2. [Accessed 15th October 2020]
[177] Ibid, p.3.
[178] 'Henry VI: January 1437', *PROME,* [accessed 20th February 2020].
[179] Watts, ‘Policie in Christen Remes’, in *Authority and Consent* ed. Bernard & Gunn p.35.

focused on civic duty and added references not found in the original Bible verse:

> The governance of the community is represented in gold… And by this reason, just as gold is the most precious metal because it lasts longer and more firmly, so those commons who are firm and stable in themselves will remain constantly in faithfulness towards their king and prince: the second reason, just as gold is a flexible and malleable metal to form the making of a crown… so the commons ought to be flexible and compliant for the honour of the king and the prosperity, preservation and benefit of the realm.[180]

The bible verse makes no mention of subjects at all. Stafford inserted references to the 'commons' and 'community' where none exist in the original. By urging the people of the realm to be 'flexible' and support their king, Stafford tied the 'benefit' of England to the commons remaining 'compliant'. This implied that people enabled and secured Henry's kingship, giving the public a degree of power (of which more in chapter three). As well as this, it echoed humanist ideas about the duty of the citizens to support their government. Every individual, Salutati believed, had a duty to 'participate in the republic as a good moral citizen, a good officeholder and an active supporter of one's government'.[181] The government thereby relies on the people, and Stafford's sermon contained the same focus on civic duty and governance.

This was likely not accidental. Stafford did have some connections to civic humanism: he had been approached by the humanist scholar Tito Livio Frulovisi (fl.1430s-1440s) looking for employment, and he also received the attentions' of another humanist scholar, Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459).[182] Not only does the presence of these men in England undermine arguments that humanism was absent from the country until the sixteenth century, it also suggests that the ideas about duty and responsibility within Stafford's speech - similar to those found in civic humanism - were deliberate. These ideas were being used politically, to influence contemporary events, since Stafford was attempting to discourage dissension. In 1436 Paris had fallen to the French, and in 1437, Henry VI turned sixteen. Though his minority was never officially ended, he began to take a more active role in governance. Stafford's sermon urged continued loyalty at a time when the English were suffering losses in France, and there was change occurring within government. By asking the people to support the king, Stafford used commonwealth ideology and humanist ideas to shape

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[180] 'Henry VI: January 1437', *PROME,* [accessed 20th February 2020]. Particularly article 2.
[181] Guido Ruggiero, *The Renaissance in Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) p.238.
[182] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1996) p.210. Stafford had refused Frulovisi's offer but it is unlikely that Frulovisi would have approached Stafford if he was completely uninterested in humanist scholarship and the new learning; Dianna Dunn, *Courts, Counties and the Capital in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996) p.191.

contemporary politics.

Russell's three drafts for the 1483-4 parliamentary sermon continued this theme of responsibility and duty. Of the three proposed parliaments, only one - Richard III's January 1484 parliament - was actually held, but the drafts vary only 'slightly in subject matter'.[183] The three will be examined together here, because they tell us several things about civic humanist influence and commonwealth ideology within government. First, they acknowledge the political power of the commonwealth; secondly, Russell's choice of classical metaphors reveals republican influence; and finally, his choice of words when talking about kingship reveals a shift in the perceived duties of the king. This would seem to be deliberate. Russell had a reputation for learning— Mancini described him in 1483 as a 'man of excellence in both learning and piety'.[184] He owned works by classical authors such as Vergil, Cicero, and Pliny, as well as more recent humanist works by the likes of Boccaccio and Leonardo Bruni.[185] Therefore, we can see in the drafts for the 1483-4 parliament, humanist study and commonwealth ideology being directly applied to governance and politics.

For the proposed parliament of Edward V, one of the first things Russell mentioned (after stating parliament was assembled for the 'weal of this most noble and famous' realm) was the nature of the ocean and of islands.[186] He used this to comment on the power of the commonwealth and the need for those in power to be aware of the needs of the people. He likened the people to the sea: the 'unstable and wavering running water'.[187] On the other hand, the nobility were 'resembled' in the 'firm ground that men see in islands'.[188] The metaphor served as a warning for the nobility. They were vulnerable to the 'ebb and flow' of the water:

> So it is that whoso searcheth the history of other nations, namely the book of Boccaccio *De Casibus,* who so goeth no further than to our own home, remembering what fluctuation and changing amongst the nobles hath fallen in this realm, he may lightly see that all our ground is set within the sea, all subject to the ebb and flow, to winds, blasts, and storms…[189]

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[183] Watts, 'Policie in Christen Remes 'in *Authority and Consent* ed. Bernard & Gunn, p.40. The few differences will become significant later on when Richard III is looked at in closer detail.
[184] Domenico Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie* ed. Annette Carson (Horstead: Imprimis Imprimatur, 2021) p.59.
[185] John A. F. Thompson, 'Russell, John' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24318
[186] Russell's speech printed in *Grants, Etc.* ed. Nichols p. xxxix. 'Wele of thys most nobylle and famous'
[187] Russell, *Grants, Etc.* ed. Nichols p. xl. 'Vnstabille and waverynge rennynge water'.
[188] Ibid. 'Ferme grounde that men see in Isle londes'.
[189] Ibid, p. xli. 'Soothe hit is that who so searcheth the history of other nacions, namely the booke of Boccase *De casibus*, ye, who so goeth no ferther then to owre owen home, remembryng what fluctuacion and changynge amonges

Just how Stafford had implied that the people enabled kingship and governance in 1437, Russell believed the commonality had enough power to overwhelm the nobility. This is not something unique to Stafford or Russell: *Benet's Chronicle* had noted that some of the lords were 'terrified of the common people'.[190] That Russell mentioned the humanist Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) by name serves to further highlight how humanist ideas were present in England and altering ideas about commonwealth and governance.

Consequently, Russell argued, the only way to rule well was to keep in mind the needs of the commonwealth:

> Who so hearkenth not upon the common voice grounded in a reasonable precedent but bideth his affairs and doings in imagination of his own pleasance, leaving the provision of things that ought to be dread and doubted, ensureth not the intent of David the prophet... Lords and noble men, ye that have great substance…in whose sure and concord… rests the weal of all the common, open your ears, send unto your faithful spies, and hear true and unfeigned reports.[191]

In prophetic literature, David is described as an ideal king.[192] By using his example in this sermon, Russell suggested that those who ignore the 'common voice' cannot ensure good governance. The commonwealth was an integral part of rule in Russell's drafts, very much in line with humanist ideas about governance being for the good of all. Further, these drafts show how ideas about kingly duty (of which more at the end of this section) were changing in response to ideas about commonwealth. Salisbury had believed the commonwealth was subject to the king, but Russell's drafts acknowledged the power of the people, the insecurity of the nobility, and parliament's duty to the commonwealth.

This connection between duty and commonwealth was deepened by Russell's choice of words. The first draft, written for the child-king Edward V, further reveals that the commonwealth was a much

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the nobles hath fallen in thys Reme, he may lyghtly see that alle owre grownd ys sett with yn the see, alle subjecte to Ebbe and flowe, to wyndes, blastes, and stormes'

[190] *Benet's Chronicle* ed. Hanham, p.xxi. The chronicler referred to the terror of Lord Dudley and the Abbot of Gloucester. This chronicler mentioned how the duke of York had landed in Wales, and that Gloucester and Dudley, who were 'terrified', met York at Ludlow. The chronicler connected the fear of Dudley and Gloucester to their association with Lord Somerset, who was hated by the people for his failings in Calais.

[191] Russell, *Grants, Etc*. ed Nichols, p. xlii. 'Who so herkenethe not vppon the commyn voyce grownded in a reasonable president, but bydythe hys affayres and doynges in ymagination of hys owne plesaunce, leving the provision of thynges that ought to be dradd and doubted, ensuethe not th'entente of David the prophyte… Lordes and nobille men, ye that have grete substaunce…in whoos sure and concord…restithe the wele of alle the common, open your eeres, send unto your feythfulle espies, and here turue and unfayned reportes'

[192] John L. McKenzie, *The Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Touchstone, 1995) p.180

more powerful political entity than it had been in the time of Salisbury. Each time Russell mentioned Edward becoming king, it was followed immediately by a reference to the people. First, he was ‘called by God’ to ‘reign upon his people’.[193] Shortly after, Russell said Edward had been ‘called’ to be ‘your king’.[194] Each iteration of the king’s calling was in some way connected to the people, reinforcing the idea that the king’s duty was to serve the people first. Combined with ideas about the power of the commonwealth and the ‘common voice’, Russell’s drafts thus reveal that the king was expected to acknowledge his reliance upon the public and their role within politics. John Watts noticed this to a degree. He acknowledged that the king was a ‘much less dominant figure’ in Russell’s speeches ‘than in any other parliamentary sermon’.[195] This was not just because Edward was ruling in name only due to his age; the two drafts for Richard III also put the king in an inferior position. As will be shown in later chapters, Russell’s draft for Richard III described the king as the ‘stomach’ of the body politic instead of the head. These drafts thereby show that the commonwealth occupied a significant role within politics, one no longer as subject to the king as earlier.

Russell made other linguistic choices elsewhere in the drafts that emphasise this. In the first draft for Richard III, he described the three estates of the realm as ‘principal’.[196] Generally, the ‘principal’ estate in this period was the king’s. As Watts pointed out, Bishop Robert Stillington (1420-1491), in 1467, believed the king held the ‘principal’ office, whereas the three estates were only ‘notable’.[197] With the use of ‘principal’, Russell implied there was no other higher office. Watts argued that Russell viewed the estates as being ‘part of an agency of rule’.[198] He did not connect this to commonwealth ideology, but Russell certainly saw the value of the estates and conciliar rule. The

[193] *Grants, Etc*, p. xlvi. 'Reigne uppon hys peuple’.
[194] Ibid, p. xxxix. ‘Yowre king’.
[195] Watts, ‘Policie’, p.49.
[196] Russell in *Grants, Etc* p.li.
[197] Watts, ‘Policie in Christen Remes ’in *Authority and Consent* ed. Bernard & Gunn, p.41; Stillington’s speech is one of the ones recorded in the parliament rolls. Not all are, Russell’s and Alcock’s for example are not. 'Edward IV: June 1467', *PROME,* [accessed 13 January 2021]. Article 25. This was in Stillington’s speech about going to war in France and will be looked at in more detail in the following section. Incidentally, the Three Estates in France were referred to as ‘assemblies of notable persons ’in this period, but they were at the ‘disposal ’of the king. J. Russell Major, *The Deputies to the Estates General in Renaissance France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960) p.3.
[198] Watts, ‘Policie in Christen Remes ’in *Authority and Consent* ed. Bernard & Gunn, p.41.

king was not governing independently, but by the advice of his 'court and his council'.[199] This was very much in accordance with humanist ideas about conciliar and republican rule, and further highlights how ideas about governance for the sake of the commonwealth were prominent at this time.

Russell went so far as to compare parliament to a Roman senate:

> I see the policy of this realm in the time of holding of parliaments greatly correspondent to the same manner of the Romans. This is the house of the senate. The commons have theirs apart. And like as in this house one *tanquam consul* makes the questions, so in the lower house likewise all is directed by the speaker… all is one thing, that that the Romans did in their time and that we do now in this the king's most high and sovereign court.[200]

The importance of this is in the elective, conciliar nature of a senate. The medieval English parliament was certainly not a senate, but there were some similarities. Although the lords were not elected, the commons - knights and burgesses - were.[201] Whilst the king was generally viewed as the head of the parliament, he was unable to do anything - like raises taxes or pass laws - without parliamentary consent. In this way, parliament was conciliar and this was recognised by Russell. Watts showed that Russell's sustained use of 'classical metaphors' (like his use of the senate, and choice of words like *respublica*) suggest he deliberately regarded 'some elements of Roman history and wisdom as directly applicable to contemporary circumstances'.[202] He did not consider Russell's use of commonwealth ideology, but these drafts suggest that Russell believed the commonwealth was of great importance.

Like Stafford, it is likely Russell was inspired by civic humanism. He owned one of the earliest printed copies of Cicero's *De Officiis* and served on several embassies to the Continent, specifically

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[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid, p.xlv. 'I see the policie of thys Reme in the time of holdynge of parliamentes grettly correspondente to the same maner of the Romanes. Thys ys the howse of the senate. The commons have ther apart. And lyke as yn thys house one *tanquam consul* makithe the questions, soo yn the lower howse in lyke wyse alle ys directed by the speker… alle is oo thynge, that that the Romaynes did in ther tyme, and that we do nowe in thys the kynges most hyghe and soverayne courte.'

[201] J. R. Maddicot, *The Origins of the English Parliament 924-1327* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.378-9. The word 'parliament 'was first used for an assembly in England in 1236. There was a 'move away from the idea that the magnates represent the entire *regnum*' and a shift towards representation by local men in the thirteenth century. These local representatives were knights and land holders. p.411.

[202] *Grants, Etc*, p. xlvi. Calls England a 'publick body', and later likens the story of a woman who has lost ten coins to 'nostra respublica', our republic, p. liii; Watts, 'Policie in Christen Remes 'in *Authority and Consent* ed. Bernard & Gunn, p.51.

to Burgundy. He amassed a collection of humanist texts, owning not just Cicero but also works by Virgil, Plutarch and Boccaccio, who served as inspiration for his sermon.[203] Evidently he read and appreciated these works, since both Boccaccio and Pliny were referenced in his 1483 drafts.[204] Furthermore, his views would seem to be representative of wider humanist thought, since Thomas More later described Russell as one of the best learned men in England.[205] Russell would thus seem to have deliberately used humanist and commonwealth ideology to influence contemporary governance.

That humanism influenced parliament through new understandings of commonwealth has yet to be considered. Although Dan Seward noted that civic humanism influenced parliamentary proceedings, he believed this only happened after 1485.[206] He claimed that John Alcock (of whom more in the following section) 'can be credited with introducing humanistic learning to parliamentary proceedings'.[207] There is 'little evidence', according to Seward, that classical sources and humanist ideas were used before Alcock's speech in 1485.[208] This is not the case, as Stafford and Russell's speeches show. Furthermore, Seward claimed that a sermon given by Stafford in 1447 was the sole example of classical literature being used in parliamentary speeches before 1485.[209] He based this on Stafford's mention of Seneca in 1447, but Russell in 1484 mentioned Pliny, and Seward did not note this. He also missed the clear references to classical literature and humanist ideas in other speeches. Stafford's 1437 sermon spoke about common responsibility and the power of the public. Russell's three drafts for the parliaments of 1483-4 similarly considered the role of the people in politics, the importance of listening to the common 'voice', and compared parliament to a Roman senate. These sermons show a connection between commonwealth ideology in parliament and an awareness of humanist thought, despite what Seward suggested.

Therefore it is clear that commonwealth as an ideology had evolved since the twelfth century, when Salisbury described it as the king's ward.[210] By the late fifteenth century, the commonwealth was the "wavering" sea that could flood the land. This idea was much more humanist in nature, and

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[203] John A. F. Thompson, 'Russell, John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://www-oxforddnb-com.mmu.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24318?rskey=pA7CSR&result=1 (2008) [Accessed 20th March 2021]
[204] *Grants Etc*, p. xl.
[205] *Grants, Etc,* p. xxxvi.
[206] Seward, 'Bishop John Alcock and the Roman Invasion of Parliament 'in *The Fifteenth Century XV,* ed. Clark.
[207] Ibid, p.146.
[208] Ibid, p.147.
[209] Ibid, p.157.
[210] Salisbury, *Policraticus* ed. Nederman, p.76.

ideas about duty and public power had significant ramifications for all areas of late medieval governance and rule.

Expectations of Kingship: Commonwealth and War

If the duty of parliament and the king was the protection of the commonwealth, then this extended to ideas surrounding war. When the king should fight and how it should be justified evolved in accordance with commonwealth ideology, particularly in the 1460s and 1470s. In these years, Edward IV was under increasing pressure to renew the Hundred Years War. In the many speeches and poems urging him to continue the conflict, the interests of the commonwealth came before the interests of the crown. The conflict was justified through the use of classical metaphors, humanist terminology, and ideas of commonwealth and liberty, and in this way became a part of the wider rhetoric surrounding kingship, governance, and war.

However, many of these arguments were performative only. Edward IV's actions in 1475 demonstrate this well: despite justifying an invasion of France by emphasising the needs of the people, the Picquigny campaign produced very few tangible benefits for the people of England. Commonwealth ideology, influenced by humanism, was used as a rhetorical device to strengthen arguments for war and shape expectations of kingship, especially surrounding justifiable conflict. As will be shown in this chapter, these sources focused much on the responsibilities of the king and how he ought to be primarily concerned with the peace, defence, and preservation of justice within his realm. This is very much in line with civic humanist ideals, and so the debate over war with France in fifteenth century England was one that was influenced by civic humanism and commonwealth ideology.

The English had suffered a decisive loss at the battle of Castillon in 1453, and for some historians this signalled the end of the conflict.[211] In 1993 Anne Curry argued that in the mid- and late-fifteenth century, 'foreign policy was… subordinated to domestic concerns'.[212] She argued that 'for the next century or so' after the 1450s and 1460s, 'the desire was not to recover lost lands but rather to exploit divisions between France and other European powers'.[213] Edward IV, however, was urged to resume the conflict as soon as his throne was secure, and foreign policy was not subordinated to domestic concerns, but linked to them. J. R. Lander noted that justifications for the

[211] John A. Wagner, *Encyclopaedia of the Hundred Years War,* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006) p.79; Anne Curry, *The Hundred Years War* (New York: Macmillan, 1993) p.116. Anne Curry believed Castillion was the 'major turning point 'in the war, since afterwards 'the English abandoned the reconquest of Gascony and never again held land there or in Normandy, nor did they launch another major assault on France until 1475'.
[212] Curry, *Hundred Years* War, p.116.
[213] Ibid, p.117.

conflict in Edward's reign barely mentioned the king's inheritance or glory.[214] This is because commonwealth ideology became a tool for strengthening political arguments surrounding kingly responsibility and duty. As shown in the parliament rolls, changes to commonwealth ideology meant that ideas about kingly duty were changing too, and a king's role was far more dependent on the commonwealth than it had been previously.[215] The calls for war in the 1460s and 1470s represented this. Edward IV's calls for war were a 'far and distant cry from Henry V's', and Lander claimed that there was an 'indifference' and even hostility towards war with France among the people.[216]

Yet contrary to what both Lander and Curry suggested, there does not seem to have been an 'indifference' to the conflict before or after Castillon. Not only were noblemen like Humphrey of Gloucester and Richard of York in favour, there is evidence that some of the commonality were too. Throughout the 1430s and 1440s, Henry VI appeared to be in favour of peace, and so whilst the war was not yet over, there were poems and speeches written in favour of the conflict. One such was the *Libel of English Policy* (c.1436-1441), examined at the end of this section, which represented mercantile interest in the conflict. It is possible to see in both public encouragement of the conflict (as in the *Libel*) and in the demands by the nobility, the influence of civic humanism on ideas of commonwealth and war. Within civic humanism, there was a notion of *libertas*. This was the liberty of the state and the people within it; the refusal to be ruled by any other governing body.[217] Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) believed that a focus on *libertas*, *aequalitas* (equality) and *ius* (law) made the Florentine republic so ideal. A city (or in this case, a country) should defend both its borders and its laws with the same fervour.[218] Humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) similarly stressed that humanism, liberty, and the state of the commonwealth were linked. He argued that 'liberty alone' allowed civic values to flourish in Florence.[219] This was further suggested by Bruni who claimed that when the 'liberty of the Roman people was lost' so too was the 'healthy condition of the studies and letters'.[220] Therefore, civic humanism contained a focus on commonwealth, defence, and justice. Something similar can be seen in the English refusal to accept

[214] J. R. Lander, 'The Hundred Years War and Edward IV's 1475 Campaign in France 'in *Tudor Men and Institutions*, ed. A. J. Slavin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972) pp.70-100.
[215] This will be explored in more detail in chapters three and four.
[216] Ibid, p.86, p.94.
[217] Hanan Yoran, 'Florentine Civic Humanism and the Emergence of Modern Ideology '*History and Theory* 46(3) (2007) p.329. The notion of *libertas* was so strong in Florence that this was part of the reason why Hans Baron ascribed civic humanism to Florence alone. The refusal of Florence to be governed by Milan or any other state made the notion of *libertas* unique to Florence, according to Baron. *Crisis*, p.11.
[218] Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments* ed. Geoffrey Stephen Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954) p.52. 'The people must fight for the law as they do for the city wall'.
[219] Poggio quoted in Baron, *Crisis,* p.408.
[220] Ibid, p.417

the loss of control over French territory. This coincided with ideas about the king's duty to the people, and the need for government to serve the commonwealth.

In the 1460s and 1470s, there were calls for renewed war with France. Speeches were given by the likes of Robert Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells (d.1491) and John Alcock, bishop of Worcester (1430-1500). William Worcester also presented Edward IV with the *Boke of Noblesse*, supporting the conflict. All of these sources emphasised commonwealth and defence in the same way that Bruni and Bracciolini did: liberty was essential for the commonwealth to thrive. Despite the fact that there was no attack from France, defensive language was employed in speeches, sermons, and sources such as Worcester's *Boke.* This seems to have been deliberate, to rally support for war even when there was no defensive need. This reinforced the idea that the war was for the benefit of the people and not the king. As later chapters will show, military expectations of kingship shifted, so that war for riches was frowned upon, and only war for the defence of the commonwealth and its interests could be justified. Arguments for war in the 1460s and 1470s drew on the idea that war for defence was more acceptable, aligning with new expectations of kingship, kingly duty, and the concept of *libertas*.

This was vastly different to how the Hundred Years War was justified at its beginning, and the contrast reveals how commonwealth rhetoric was changing both medieval governance and expectations of kingship. Fourteenth century sources - government records and chronicles, for example - did not have the same commitment to the commonwealth, making almost no mention of anything but the king's inheritance. After the death of Charles IV of France (1294-1328) in 1328, Edward III believed the French crown was rightfully his. Through his mother, he had been Charles' nearest male relative. The French nobility argued the claim could not pass through a female line, and crowned Philip, count of Valois (1293-1350) instead. Edward III initially accepted this, and paid homage to the new Philip VI for Gascony in 1329. By 1336, the French were supporting the Scots in their war for independence. In the same year, Edward was encouraged to wage war by Robert of Artois (1287-1342), a former advisor to Philip who sought refuge in England. A later French satirical poem titled The Vows of the Heron (c.1436) believed it was Artois who 'began the war and the terrible strife .[221] Artois had been feeding information to the English, and when Edward III refused to evict him from England, the French retaliated by taking Gascony in 1337. This was the final straw for Edward, who, in response, invaded France from the north.

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[221] *The Vows of the Heron (Les Voeux du Heron): A Middle French Vowing Poem*, ed. John L. Grigsby & Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992) p.33.

There were thus a variety of different reasons for the outbreak of the war, and it is far beyond the scope of this thesis to pin down one alone. However, many contemporaries noted Edward's defence of his rights. His close roll in 1337 put the loss of French lands as the primary cause of the conflict.[222] The roll mentioned the 'hardness' and 'malice' of the French king, stating that he was 'striving by all the means that he could to undo [Edward] and his people'.[223] This is the only mention of the English people in regards to the conflict, and it is singular, placed second to last.[224] Further, the Lanercost chronicle (1272-1346) presented the war as a result of Edward III offering peace to France, and the offer being declined. The 'proud and avaricious' king of France rejected all attempts at peace, and as a result 'the king of England prepared to fight him'.[225] The French chronicler Jean Froissart (c.1337-c.1405) noted in his chronicle (c.1361/1362) that the war was pursued by Edward primarily out of defiance. Froissart, like the author of The Vows of the Heron, focused on the role of Artois, who 'always…counselled [Edward III] to defy the French king'.[226] He mentioned Edward's defiance of France twice more in the same section. He also mentioned how Edward's 'heritages' were kept from him 'wrongfully'.[227] This was echoed in the Vows of the Heron, when Edward exclaimed: 'does he believe he can take my land from me?'.[228] Thus the war was either a violation of the kings rights or brought about through the meddling of Artois. Crucially, few English or French explanations of the war paid any attention to the commonality or commonwealth.

In the 1460s and 1470s, however, arguments for a resumption of the war focused on the commonwealth and its defence. As the previous section has shown, commonwealth as an ideology had a much more prominent role in the politics of the fifteenth century. As a result, ideas about kingly duty shifted and this influenced the calls for war in Edward's second reign. The conflict was presented as being in the interests of the commonwealth, with the king ostensibly going to war to defend his subjects' interests.

In 1468, a speech was given in parliament by Robert Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells, linking the king's duties to the commonwealth. This speech was designed to justify war with France, and

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[222]' Edward III's manifesto explaining the causes of the French war, 1337 '*English Historical Documents, vol. IV* ed. A. R. Myers https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=919 [accessed 10th Dec 2020]
[223] Ibid.
[224] The last in the list was a broken truce with Scotland.
[225] *The Chronicle of Lanercost* ed. Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913) p.309
[226] Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. and trans. John Bourchier, Lord Berners, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963) p.13.
[227] Ibid.
[228] *Vows*, ed. Grigsby & Lacy, p.39.

though given ‘by the mouth of the Bishop of Bath and Wells’ it was the ‘king’s commandment’.[229] Although it stated that Edward IV planned to ‘recover and enjoy the title and possession’ of France, the focus was on ideas of commonwealth and justice:

> It was explained at the king’s command and in his name, by…the Bishop of Bath and Wells…that justice was the foundation and root of all the prosperity, peace and politic rule of every realm… Justice is for every person to perform his office in which he is placed according to estate or degree; and as for this land, it is understood that it stands by three estates, and above that one principal; that is to say, lords spiritual, lords temporal, and commons, and over them, the royal estate, that is our sovereign lord the king, … [whose] ultimate intention was to administer law and justice, and to plant, fix, and set peace throughout this his realm…and he also intended to provide an outward peace for the defence and security of this realm… Whereby his said highness might…soon recover his right and title to the crown and land of France… his said highness was fully set and determined, with the might and help of Almighty God, and with the advice and assistance of his lords spiritual and temporal, and also of the commons of this land, to…perform his said principal aim, for the defence of this land… to cross the sea to France, and to subdue his great rebel and adversary Louis…to recover and enjoy the title and possession of the said realm of France…[230]

The ‘defence and security’ of the realm was (apparently) Edward’s ‘principal’ reason for going to France, and this aligns with humanist notions of *libertas.* Further, his ‘ultimate intention’ was to ‘administer justice’, which depended on the ‘surety’ of the realm. Again, there was no real threat to England since there was no French attack, but the security and defence of the people was put first. The king’s duty was to ensure justice and defence, and so this is how the war was presented, with commonwealth rhetoric employed to strengthen arguments in favour of conflict. This was a world away from the loss of ‘heritages’ described in 1337, and was much more focused on the interests of the realm.

This is not to suggest that Edward’s motives were altruistic. Before going to France, Edward needed to first raise taxes, and parliament had the power to refuse him. There was precedent for refusal: in 1324, Edward II requested a tax in order to ransom John of Brittany, earl of Richmond (captured by

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[229] Edward IV: June 1467', in *PROME*, [accessed 13 January 2021].
[230] Ibid.

Scots in 1322) and 'meet further dangers', like 'the growing possibility of war with France'.[231] He was denied on both counts, and tried again in 1325 to no avail.[232] Edward IV thus needed to appeal to what parliament valued, and he did so by referencing the commonwealth and the need for defence. When he did eventually go to France, (of which more momentarily), he immediately agreed to a peace treaty, one which brought great financial gain for himself and several leading members of his court. His desire for material gain was stronger than any dedication he felt for the commonwealth, and the entire thing may have been little more than a bid for money on Edward's part. Even before he left for France, some contemporaries doubted it was a serious invasion.[233] Nevertheless, in order to justify the conflict, Edward and those urging him to invade France drew on commonwealth ideology and ideas about defence to argue its necessity. That France was not actually attacking shows how ingrained such ideology had become in medieval politics, and how the ways in which conflict was justified evolved in response to humanist thought and commonwealth rhetoric.

The calls for war were interrupted in 1470 by the rebellion of the king's brother and cousin, the duke of Clarence and the earl of Warwick. Edward IV was briefly deposed and Henry VI reinstated, in a period known as the Readeption. By 1471, Edward had taken back his throne and dealt with the Lancastrian threat to his crown. Both Henry VI and his son, Edward of Lancaster, were dead, along with the earl of Warwick. With his throne secure, Edward was again encouraged to turn his sights on France. During the first parliament of his second reign in November 1471, the Croyland chronicler observed that 'many speeches of remarkable eloquence' were made to advocate the resumption of the Hundred Years War.[234] That of John Alcock, bishop of Worcester stressed the importance of the commonwealth, referencing it much more than the king's inheritance. This put the commonwealth on more equal footing with the king's possessions.[235] In the eleven-page speech,

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[231] Maddicott, *Origins of the English Parliament*, pp.357-8.

[232] He extended parliament in a bid to wear them down, and the session lasted twenty four days. Still parliament did not agree to his demands. In November 1325 the king asked again, this time asking for a tax to cover the cost of an expedition to Gascony in order to deal with 'danger from France'. Parliament was subjected to a 'threatening speech ' by the king's favourite Hugh Despenser, but still, 'nothing resulted'. Ibid, p.358.

[233] 'Milan: 1474' in *CSPM.* A letter from Christofforo Bollato, Milanese Ambassador at the French Court to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan on 18th August 1474 discussed a proposed marriage between Edward's daughter and the French dauphin. Since Edward was at the same time preparing for war, 'accordingly many are led to make various conjectures… either… King Edward suggests this marriage alliance as a sham…so that he may afterwards be able to claim that he tried the way of peace …before war… or else that King Edward is proceeding sincerely in this alliance… as King Edward is by his nature more inclined to quiet and peace than to war, many adhere to the latter opinion'.

[234] *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland, with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers* trans. Henry T. Riley (London: Henry G. Behn, 1854) p.471.

[235] *The Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury,* Vol.III ed. J. Bristocke Sheppard (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1889) p.275; Sermon not included on parliament roll but commons would later 'speak warmly of the way in which he had relayed the king's concern to uphold the law (roll 1 item10). That it is not included in the

the king's inheritance was mentioned only twice.[236] By contrast, the good of the realm, justice, unity, and the need for the king to defend his subjects was mentioned frequently. The opening lines set out the king's duty. The king:

> knows himself to be most bound of all the creatures of the world to bethink, study, and find the most convenable means and ways that might set his people in ease, wealth, and prosperity, understand for certain, that tranquility and assured peace within…is the only means by which any realm or commonality of the world hath grown to abundance and riches; and of the other side, by dissension and discord the greatest and mightiest realms and lordships have fallen into poverty and desolation.[237]

In this Alcock set the tone for the rest of the speech: war was for the 'ease, wealth, and prosperity' of the kingdom. Encouraging external conflict for internal unity was not unusual - similar arguments were used during the Crusades - but Alcock presented the commonwealth as the king's primary duty. He was expected to go to war to defend its interests. Combined with the lack of emphasis on the king's own rights and inheritances, Alcock's speech is evidence of changing military expectations when it came to the king, and evidence of the role of the commonality within politics.

For Alcock, this was what the king had been 'established' for: to be 'bound' to the 'tranquility and assured peace' of the commonwealth.[238] That the king 'knows' this 'himself' shows that the commonwealth's precedence over the king was recognised. Whereas before the king's inheritance disputes were enough to take England to war, in the 1470s this was not the case. Edward III's lost inheritance was dwarfed by the importance of the commonwealth. Whilst historians like Lander have noted this, the significance is yet to be fully appreciated. The king's estate and inheritances were being repeatedly placed second to the commonwealth. Alcock's belief that the king was 'bound' to the commonwealth was vastly different to Salisbury's assertion that the commonwealth

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parliament rolls does not seem to be exceptionally unusual. Some are included - like Stillington's - whereas Russell and Alcock's aren't. As Watts noted in 'Policie of Christen Remes', most of the sermons from the 1450s and 1460s do not survive (pp.41-2). The full texts of speeches are, as Lander also states in 'The Hundred Years War and Edward IV's 1475 Campaign', rarely recorded in the rolls.

[236] *Letter Books*, ed. Bristocke. Mentioned on p.278 and p.279.

[237] Ibid, p.274-5. 'knoweth hym silf to be moost bounde of all the creatures of the world to be-thynk, studie, and fynde the most convenable moyens and weyes that myght sette his people in ease, welthe, and prosperite, undirstandeth for certain, that tranquilite and assured peax within forth is the oonly moyen by which any reame or comynalte of the world hath growen to abundance and richesse; and of the other side, bi discencion and discorde the grettest and mightiest reames and lordships have fallen into poverte and desolacion'.

[238] Ibid, p.274. 'Stablysshed'.

was the king's ward. This affected discourse surrounding the resumption of the war because the conflict was now presented as being for the benefit of the commonwealth alone.

The way Alcock referenced the matter of inheritance again gave the commonwealth more importance. Though he mentioned Edward III's lost titles, the focus was on what this did to the people of England instead of the king:

> It is not to forget the subtle and crafty enterprises of Louis, the king's adversary in France; how often by his means hath he entered communication and embassies between our sovereign lord and him, to abuse the people of this land and to put them in hope of peace and recompense for the king's inheritance of that side, and how at all times, the king hath been by him eluded, never a thing reasonable by him to the weal of this realm agreed, not effectually offered.[239]

The duplicity and 'crafty enterprises' of the French is a theme that was carried over from the fourteenth century. It has been shown already that earlier sources stressed the 'malice' of the French towards Edward III. In the fifteenth century, though, the duplicity was not towards the king but to the people and the commonwealth. The king became more or less absent. The physical absence of Henry VI and lack of real kingly presence perhaps encouraged this and allowed ideas of commonwealth to grow, but Edward IV in the 1460s and 1470s was not an absent monarch. The lack of kingly presence in these arguments seems to be about ideas of commonwealth, duty and defence rather than anything else.

Like Stillington in 1468, Alcock tied the possession of the French crown to the king's ability to do justice:

> Our sovereign lord thinketh that [he], consider[ing] his just and rightwise title…to the crown and realm of France… seeing also that he hath largely done his part in requisition of justice or of some reasonable recompense in that part… could do things better for the comfort,

[239] Ibid, p.277. 'It is not to forgett the subtyll and crafty enterpruises of Lowes the Kyngs adversarie in Fraunce; howe ofte by his moyens hath he entred communicacion and ambassades betwix our Soverayn Lord and hym, to abuse the people of this lande and to put theym in hope of peas and recompense for the Kyngs inheritaunce of that side, and howe atte alle tymes the kynge hath be by hym illuded, never thyng resounable by hym to the wele of this reame aggreed, not effectually offered'.

surety, and wealth of his subjects…[240]

Thus the issue of withheld inheritance, once so crucial in the fourteenth century, was no longer powerful enough to stand on its own. It was connected instead to other areas of governance, especially the king's ability to ensure justice, peace and the wealth and prosperity of his subjects. This is similar to the values held by civic humanists in Italy, where 'liberty, civic virtue and public service' were important.[241]

In turn this affected ideas about kingly duty and military expectations of kingship. The focus on the king going to war was purely centred on the 'comfort' and defence of the people, not the king's personal glory. Alcock made a great deal of Edward IV personally fighting:

> For so it is that though to every person voluntary rest is more pleasant and agreeable than labour by constraint, namely in the dangerous feats of war, yet our sovereign lord, of his knightly courage and tender affection that he beareth to the honour of this land [and] the…weal of his subjects, will not spare to employ his own person…for the pacifying of the land inwards, the defence of the same from the outward enemies, and the increasing of the wealth and riches to be had among his subjects, to which his highness has at all times… been as courageously set and disposed… as any king of England has or might be.[242]

Again it is noted that the fight is not for personal glory, but the 'weal of his subjects'. That this was a product of Italian influence is certainly plausible when the civic humanist dedication to liberty and defence is noted. Alcock's emphasis on defence and on the king's duty to defend the realm with his own person is therefore similar to ideas about war and defence within civic humanism. However, in Italy the focus was on the defence of liberty and trade, the qualities which enabled the Roman Republic to prosper. In England, it was on the wealth of the people and keeping control of France, territory which made the commonwealth, John Russell claimed, 'perfect'.[243] It was the commercial interests of merchants, which it was claimed benefitted the realm as a whole, and the idea of

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[240] Ibid, p.279. 'Our soverayn lord thynketh that [he], considered his just and rightwys title which he hath to the corone and reame of France…seeyng also that he hath largely doo his part in requisicion of justice or of some resounable recompence in that partie…could doo thynges better for the recomforte sewertie and welthe of his subgetts…'.

[241] Scott Baker, *Fruit of Liberty* p.17.

[242] Ibid, p.278. 'For so it is that though to every persone voluntarie rest is more plesaunt and aggreable than labour by constrainct, namely in the dangerous fetes of werre,yet our Soveraigne Lord, of his knightly courage and tendre affection that he bereth to the honour of this lande, [and] the…wele of his subgietts, woll not spare to employe his owne persone…for the pacifieng of of the londe inwards, the defence of the same fro the outward enemyes, and the encresyng of welthe and richesse to be had amonge his…subgietts, to whiche his Highnesse hath at alle tymes… bee as courageously sett and disposed… as…any Kyng of Englond hath or myght bee'.

[243] *Grants, Etc* ed. Nichols, p.liii. Russell mentions the 'perfection 'of the commonwealth.

English lands in France that were being protected. In 1469 a rebellion led by Robin of Redesdale in Yorkshire called for the protection of these: the rebels mentioned how tonnage and poundage should be ‘employed to the keeping of the sea...for the safeguard of…merchants to the great enriching of this land and also for the great defence of the enemies’.[244] This, with Alcock's speech, further shows how English commonwealth ideology had expanded. Previously, as the first section has shown, ideas of commonwealth did not always describe the realm as one unified body. Here, however, the ‘riches’ of the people were linked. The 1469 rebels believed the wealth of merchants benefitted the realm as a whole, and this was echoed in Alcock's speech. The ‘weal’ of the king's subjects was linked to their ‘defence’ and ‘riches’. It was the interests of the people - merchants, but also the wider population too - that was being defended in the 1460s and 1470s, and this is an important departure from the calls for war in the fourteenth century.

After years of discussion, in 1475 Edward, allied with Burgundy, invaded France.[245] The king’s ‘great enterprise’, however, was over almost immediately.[246] The Treaty of Picquigny was agreed between Edward IV and Louis XI on 29 August, ending the English invasion. Edward was given 75,000 crowns, and a seven-year truce was agreed.[247] As well as this, tolls on merchants were to be abolished, and Edward’s daughter Elizabeth was to marry the Dauphin Charles. Edward was also granted a generous French pension, all without fighting a single battle. The reaction to the treaty was not a positive one, and it is in this that we can see how expectations of military kingship changed. The invasion had been justified through commonwealth ideology and ideas of liberty and defence. When the king chose material gain instead, there was significant backlash.

The treaty was an ‘inglorious outcome’, so much so that Edward IV did not make all of the terms public.[248] As well as the 75,000 crowns to return to England, Edward was granted an annual pension of 50,000 gold crowns, and this was met with derision by some of the English. Most notably, Richard, duke of Gloucester (1452-1485), the king’s brother, disapproved. Whilst many of the king’s men were similarly rewarded (several other noblemen received pensions of over 1000

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[244] *Vales Book*, p.215. ‘Also that the revenues of tonnage and poundage may be emploied to the keeping of the see as it was graunted...for the saveguarde of entercors of marchauntes to the grete enriching of this lande and also for the grete defence of thennemyes’.
[245] Charles Ross, *Edward IV,* (London: Yale University Press, 1997) pp.209-210. The alliance between England and Burgundy was agreed with the Treaty of London on 25th July 1474. Edward was to invade France before 1st July 1475, and Charles, duke of Burgundy recognised Edward as king of France. In return, Charles was to have sovereignty over the French territory he asked for.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid, p.233.
[248] Ibid, p.234; p.236. In particular, he 'failed to make public’ news of the marriage between his daughter and the French prince, and the pension he was to receive. English chroniclers got hold of the news anyway.

crowns), the soldiers and commons of England were outraged.[249] Although tolls were removed from merchants, there was 'hostility' towards the treaty among the people, who had wanted more from the expedition. Even with commercial impositions lifted, it was the king - not the people - who benefited the most. Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse* had argued that the war should have been for the 'relief of...needy people… those that have lost their lands, livelihood and goods in the wars'.[250] He had urged the king to 'let your rich treasures be spread'.[251] The treasures were restricted to the king and his noblemen, not 'put abroad...among your true subjects' as Worcester had advised, and so anger towards the king was inevitable. Philippe de Commynes (1447-1511) recounted in his memoirs the story of a Gascon solider, Louis de Breteilles, serving Anthony Woodville, earl Rivers (c.1440-1483), who was 'very much displeased'.[252]

> I asked him how many battles the King of England had won. He told me nine, and that he had been in every one of them in person. I demanded next how many had he lost? He replied, never but one, and that was the one in which we had outwitted him now; for he was of opinion that the ignominy of his returning so soon, after such vast preparations, would be a greater disgrace and stain to his arms than all the honour he had gained in nine former victories.[253]

This anger was not restricted to the king's soldiers with him in France. The Croyland Chronicler described how in England:

> the number of people complaining of the unfair management of the resources of the kingdom…would have increased to such a degree that no one could have said whose head, among the king's advisers, was in safety; and the more especially those, who, induced by friendship for the French king or by his presents had persuaded the king to make the peace…[254]

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[249] Ibid, p.234. John, Lord Howard and Thomas Montgomery received pensions of 1,200 crowns, and the chancellor Bishop Rotherham received 1,000. William, Lord Hastings received an annual 2,000 crowns.
[250] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.39v. 'Let youre riche tresours be spredde… among your true subgettis…to the relief of your…nudie peple. And inespecialle to tho that have lost theire londis, livelode, and goode in the werres'.
[251] Ibid.
[252] *The Memoirs of Philip de Commines: Volume 1,* (London: G. Bell, 1877) p.279.
[253] Ibid.
[254] *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland, with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers* trans. Henry T. Riley (London: Henry G. Behn, 1854), p.473-4.

This was supported by the assessment of the Milanese ambassador to Burgundy, Giovanni Pietro Panicharolla, who wrote to the duke of Milan that September:

> The Duke [of Burgundy] says he is advised from England that the people there are extremely irritated at this accord, cowardly as it is, because they paid large sum of money without any results. Accordingly King Edward did not want his brothers to proceed to England before him, as he feared some disturbance…[255]

The benefits to the king greatly outweighed the initial benefits to the people, and this was what made it so unpalatable. Yet disappointing as it was, it did bring some 'results'. Not only were restrictions on trade lifted, but the king's new income meant the commons had a reprieve from taxation. For the next few years, Edward IV did not need to call a parliament in a bid for funds. Nevertheless, people were angry over the lack of tangible benefits Picquigny provided. It had greatly enriched the king, but not those who had funded the expedition in the first place. The 'lands, livelihoods and goods' Worcester had mentioned remained lost.[256] The peace was profitable for the king, but not honourable, and the reaction from the people of England suggests attitudes towards war had changed. In response there was a 'rash of disorder' in Hampshire, Yorkshire, Wales, and the marches.[257] Despite the financial success of the 1475 expedition, many (both commonality and nobility) believed it to have been worthless. As Commynes recalled, it was the 'ignominy' of it all that was so frustrating, not just financial mismanagement. Soldiers and nobility alike seem to have taken on the idea that war was about more than the king and his rights, and to come away with little more than a French pension was an embarrassment. In this way ideas about war seem to have shared the civic humanist focus on defending liberty, laws, and the commonwealth. Indeed, John Russell believed that holding French territory made the 'commonweal' 'perfect' and Picquigny did nothing to recover the lost lands.[258] Thus commonwealth ideology in the fifteenth century changed the way people thought about conflict and war, and in turn, the way people thought about kingly duty.

Expectations of Kingship: Military Kingship in Literature

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[255] 'Milan: 1475', in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), pp. 189-220. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp189-220 [accessed 10 March 2022].
[256] BL Royal Ms 18 B xxii f.39v.
[257] A. J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England, 1399-1509* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000) p.305.
[258] *Grants, Etc* ed. Nichols, p.liii. Russell mentions the 'perfection 'of the commonwealth.

The changing ideas about war, commonwealth and the king's duty can be seen in fifteenth-century literature. William Worcester's (1415-1482) *Boke of Noblesse* illustrates this, and highlights how these ideas were being used to directly influence the arguments of the 1460s and 1470s. Worcester had been educated at Oxford, and served as secretary to Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459), a man famed for his exploits in the Hundred Years War (so much so he was the inspiration for Shakespeare's Falstaff in *Henry V*). In the 1450s, Worcester penned the *Boke*, and in 1475 it was revised and addressed to Edward IV. The text encouraged the king to fight for the needs of the commonwealth, drawing heavily on Cicero and other ancient works. Worcester quoted, for example, the ancient military treatise *De Re Militari* (c.450). *De Re Militari* was a popular military manual, with instructions on things like how to make encampments and how to run an army.[259] Worcester specifically picked out from Vegetius how a leader (or 'chieftain') of an army is responsible for its care, and he likened this to the king. The prince's 'principal' responsibility was the 'governance of common public'.[260] Again, ideas about going to war were aligning with ideas about kingly duty and responsibility to the commonwealth. This was also shown by the Latin quote Worcester placed at the very beginning:

> Hoc igniter summum est nobilitatis genus, posse majorum quorum egregia faca dicere, posse eorum beneficiis petere honores publics, posse gloriam rei publicae hereditario quodam jure vendicare, posse insuper sese eorum partes vocare, et clarissimas in suis vultibus imagines ostendere.[261]

Rei publicae here has been translated by Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs as 'common good':

> This is the highest kind of nobility: to be able to relate the great deeds of one's ancestors; to be able to strive for public office because they did well; to be able to protect the common

[259] Vegetius, *The Military Institutions of the Romans* ed. John Clarke (Tales End Press, 2012). The text contains sections on how to use various types of weapon (bows, javelins, slings etc), how to organise legions, how to manage troops, and other various pieces of advice. It is essentially a military handbook.

[260] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.28. '...the dedis and enterprises of a prince is office is principally committed hym for the gournaunce of comon publique'.

[261] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.1. Translated in Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard III's Books: XII. William Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse* and his Collection of Documents on the War in Normandy', *The Ricardian,* 9(115) (1991) p.157.

good by hereditary right and above all to be able to call oneself part of them and show that one is made in their image.[262]

The protection of 'the common good' was a fundamental part of nobility and rule, and Worcester emphasised this heavily through the text. All of the great figures he mentioned throughout were said to have particular care for the commonwealth: for example, Marcus Actilius was a 'true lover' of the commonwealth, and Camillius 'loved so well the common profit of…Rome that he was called the second Romulus'.[263] Another 'noble senator' set 'no worship' by 'vainglory but only laboured for the common profit of Rome'.[264] Nobility was tied to the 'common profit', thus putting the commonwealth in place of importance.

This is something that stemmed from humanism, and Worcester was clear about the influences on his work: his dedication to the commonwealth came directly from Cicero. He used Ciceronian ideals to shape his own understanding of commonwealth, and in turn used this to comment on the French war. He wrote that:

> Every man after his power and degree should principally put him in devour [duty] and labour for the advancement of the common profit of a region, country, city, town, or household; for, as all the famous clerks written, and especially that wise senator of Rome Tullius in his book *De Officiis… Res publica* well attended and observed, it is the ground of welfare and prosperity of all manner people.[265]

Cicero was an especial influence on humanist scholars, and Worcester was using ancient philosophy to reach humanist conclusions about war and responsibility.[266] Like Alcock in 1470, Worcester commented on the king's 'duty' to the commonwealth, suggesting that the *Boke* may

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[262]' Hoc igniter summum est nobilitatis genus, posse majorum quorum egregia faca dicere, posse eorum beneficiis petere honores publics, posse gloriam rei publicae hereditario quodam jure vendicare, posse insuper sese eorum partes vocare, et clarissimas in suis vultibus imagines ostendere.' BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.1. Translated in Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard III's Books: XII. William Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse* and his Collection of Documents on the War in Normandy', *The Ricardian,* 9(115) (1991) p.157.

[263] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.32v, f.27. Marcus Actilius, a 'chief duke of the Roman hosts' who fought against Carthage; Camilius was 'the duke of Rome' who would 'use justice in his conquest', and conquered Florence to 'bring them under the governance of Roman laws'.

[264] Ibid, f.30.

[265] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.29.'Every man after his power and degre shuld principallie put hym in devour [duty] and laboure for the avaunsment of the common profit of a region, contre, cite, tone, or household; for, as alle the famous clerkis written, and inespecialle that wise cenatoure of Rome Tullius in his book De Officiis… Res publica welle attendid and observed, it is the grounde of welfare and prosperite of alle manner peple'.

[266] Harvey C. Mansfield, 'Bruni and Machiavelli on Civic Humanism' in *Renaissance Civic Humanism* ed. Hankins, p.249. Cicero, Mansfield claimed, was the 'most influential republican thinker of the ancient world'.

have been representative of wider ideas about war, commonwealth, and what was expected of the king.

When he revised the *Boke* ahead of the 1475 campaign, addressing and presenting it to Edward IV, Worcester made the connection with humanist ideals even clearer. As John Gough Nichols showed, Worcester inserted into this version a section on voluntary contributions to the war effort. This was drawn from ancient philosophy, relied on humanist notions of responsibility, and highlighted that defence of the commonwealth was paramount:

> The famous clerk of eloquence Tullius said in his book of rhetoric that, like as man receive his living in a region or in a country, so he is of natural reason bound to defend it… Also Cato affirms with the said Tullius.[267]

Elsewhere in the text he used Livy to suggest the same thing: 'Also I read of a noble example in Titus Livius…that when the noble Romans, in the time of wars long continued…given largely of their goods moveable…'.[268] At the side of this it has been noted how 'amply' the people 'departed their goods' to 'make an army'.[269] Worcester echoed Alcock's idea of being "bound" to the protection of the commonwealth, but it was not only the king who was bound. Instead, it was the entire realm. Such ideas were prominent in civic humanism and ancient philosophy: Heraclitus, for example, had argued that people should defend their city as they would their laws.[270] The freedom of the city was vital, as conveyed in the concept of *libertas*. Humanist thought therefore influenced Worcester and his work, and by extension contemporary politics.

This was a section added specifically to comment on the politics of 1475. When Worcester was revising the text, parliament had just granted the king the right to raise 'benevolences'. These were loans granted for the 'weal and surety of this realm'.[271] Though they were called loans, there was no intention of repayment. Naturally they proved unpopular, and though Edward raised 5,000 marks in

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[267] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii, f.12v. Cicero (Tullius) said in his *Orations* that: 'This is my proper place…as defender of the city. Let others occupy camps and kingdoms…we…will, in common with you, defend the city and the affairs of the city…' *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero, Volume 4,* trans. C. D. Yonge (London: George Bell and Sons), p.196. 'The famous clerke of eloquence Tullius seith in his book of retherique that, like as a man recevethe his levying in a region or in a countree, so is he of natural reason bounde to defend it…Also Caton afirmith with the said Tullie'.

[268] Ibid, f.40v-41. 'Also I rede of a noble example in Titus Livius…that when the noble Romains, in the tyme of werris long continued….yoven largelie of their goodis meveable…'

[269] Ibid, f.41. The people 'amplye…departed ther godes 'to 'make an armee'.

[270] Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments* ed. Geoffrey Stephen Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954) p.52.

[271] 'Edward IV: October 1472, First Roll', in *PROME*, [accessed 19 August 2020].

London, further attempts yielded 'disappointing results'.[272] This addition shows Worcester used ancient precedent and humanist ideals to encourage all of England to pay for its defence. How successful he was is debatable. The *Boke* survives in only one copy, and so who Worcester's audience actually was is unclear.[273] However, the presence of these ideas in the *Boke of Noblesse* show that humanist ideas about commonwealth, defence, and duty were used by individuals outside of the king's council. This tells us that there was a link between commonwealth ideology, war, kingly duty, and common responsibility, observed by those inside and outside government.

It has not generally been believed that the *Boke* represented wider ideas. Although David Starkey noted that Worcester was influenced by humanism, he did not believe the *Boke* reflected general attitudes towards war and commonwealth.[274] Similarly, J. R. Lander claimed that Worcester's enthusiasm for war was 'no more than an echo of a vanished past', and not representative of wider thoughts about the conflict.[275] Only Anthony Gross noted that the 'patriotic stance' of the *Boke* was similar to Alcock's speech but he did not explore this at length.[276] However, both the *Boke* and Alcock's speech focussed on the duties of the king. Whilst the *Boke* may have had limited readership, the ideas within were not unique.

Further, another text survives which is similar to the *Boke of Noblesse*, although from much earlier. The anonymously written *Libel of English Policy* (c.1436-1441) was written earlier than the *Boke*, but it survives in at least seventeen manuscripts and contains similar ideas. Like the *Boke*, the *Libel* suggested that 'peace, unity and prosperity…come as the fruits of militarism'.[277] It did so by mentioning kings who kept control of the seas: Edgar, Edward III and Henry V.[278] Only by doing so could England's interests be protected: 'Keep then the sea, that is the wall of England'.[279] The author was 'deeply troubled' by foreign merchants and stated that it was in the crown's interests to keep control of the Channel.[280] By referencing earlier kings, the *Libel* placed both the keeping of the seas and the protection of the commonwealth amongst the king's duties. Alcock's speech

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[272] Charles Ross, *Edward IV*, (London: Yale University Press, 1998) p.281, p.223
[273] BL Royal MS 18 B XXLL.
[274] David Starkey, 'England 'in *The Renaissance in National Context* ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.150.
[275] Lander, 'Hundred Years War', *Tudor Men*, ed. Slavin, p.78
[276] Anthony Gross, *The Dissolution of Lancastrian Kingship: Sir John Fortescue and the Crisis of Monarchy in Fifteenth-Century England* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1996) p.33.
[277] Alfred Hiatt, 'Historical and Political Verse 'in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry* ed. Julia Boffey & A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016) p.166.
[278] Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, p.92-3.
[279] Ibid. 'Kepe than the see, that is the wall of Englond'.
[280] Hiatt, 'Historical and Political Verse', *Companion*, ed. Boffey, Edwards, p.165.

touched on this also, stating that fees merchants had to pay were 'enriching 'the 'adversary'.[281] Merchants were to be protected, because if they were 'cherished… we were not likely to fail… If they be rich, then in prosperity shall be our land, lords and commonality'.[282] Thus the *Libel*, like Alcock and Worcester and the Robin of Redesdale rebels, linked military exploits to the protection of the commonwealth and linked the fortunes of the entire realm together. This was not entirely selfless. Wealthy merchants wanted better access to trade in France, and a chance at increasing their profits. By claiming that their interests were tied to that of the realm at large, however, the conflict became less about material gain, and more about the interests of the realm as a whole. Again, the commonwealth was a united body with a shared fortune more closely resembling the idea of universal health promoted by civic humanists.

The *Libel* also shows that the use of commonwealth ideology and rhetoric when arguing for war was not just used by the king's council; it was used by merchants and others of a lower social class too.Whilst this text was not about the resumption of the Hundred Years War in particular, it suggests ideas in the *Boke* and political speeches represented ideas about war in fifteenth-century England in general. This is especially significant given the dates: the *Libel* was composed sometime between 1436 and 1441, Stillington's speech was given in 1468, Alcock's in 1471, and the *Boke of Noblesse* was written in the 1450s and revised in 1475. All share similar ideas about kingly duty, commonwealth, and how war was justified. There was a sustained link between commonwealth ideology and ideas about war.

As Genet noted, commonwealth ideology was more 'intense' by the end of the fifteenth century.[283] The *Boke*, the *Libel*, and the speeches by Alcock and Stillington support this. Genet implied that the new "intensity" was introduced only after 1485, but these sources prove the "intensity" was present throughout the century. Commonwealth ideology, inspired by humanist ideals, was shaping ideas about war and kingship from the middle of the century onwards.

Expectations of Kingship: Commonwealth and Education

Commonwealth ideology did not just influence expectations of kingship regarding war. The commonwealth was viewed as the king's primary duty in general, and in accordance, the way

[281] *Letter Books* ed. Bristocke, pp.281-2.
[282] Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, pp.329-330. 'cherysshede… we were not lykely to fayle… Yiff they bee riche, thane in prosperite schalbe oure lande, lordes and comonte'.
[283] Genet, *Political Language*, p.7.

princes were prepared for rule changed. Nicholas Orme believed that the education of the king's eldest son remained largely unchanged from the Norman Conquest to the early fifteenth century.[284] He argued that the death of Henry V was a catalyst, as he appointed men like Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter to oversee his son's education. Before this point, the sons of the king - and of the nobility - were taught not by professionals, but by knights and other noblemen.[285] In the fifteenth century the education of princes became more 'elaborate and formal'.[286] Orme cited primarily the employment of professional schoolmasters 'rather than simple knights'.[287] What Orme did not note was that the education of the king's son contained a much greater emphasis on a king's duty to the commonwealth. The education of three princes, Henry VI (1421-71), Edward of Lancaster (1453-71), and Edward of York, future Edward V (1470-1483), all demonstrate the importance of the king's duty to the commonwealth, and all had humanist influence.

Humanist influence on commonwealth ideology, and how this related to royal education and expectations of kingship has not been explored. However, because the commonwealth became so important in fifteenth-century England, ideas about kingship began to change in response. Aysha Polnitz looked at the employment of professional grammar masters in the fifteenth century, but since most were only employed part-time and not paid extravagantly, she doubted they were truly appreciated. She took their wages as a direct reflection of their worth, an unnecessary criticism since wages have never - in the past or present - been a true reflection of worth. Polnitz as a result believed that the formalisation of English education was only to 'lend a veneer of civility and eloquence to fifteenth-century soldiering'.[288] In her view, humanism and education were of little importance in England at this time. Neither Orme nor Polnitz connected the increased formalisation of education to the growing prominence of the commonwealth. Only Lauro Martines claimed that the purpose of fifteenth-century humanism was to teach noblemen about their political responsibilities, but his focus was not England. Martines made the connection between humanist values, commonwealth, and fifteenth-century education, but only in Italy.[289] The same argument can be applied to fifteenth-century England.

As argued above, military expectations and ideas about war changed as a result of humanist

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[284] Nicholas Orme, 'The Education of Edward V', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* 57(136) (1984) p.120.
[285] Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy* (London: Methuen, 1984) pp.21-22.
[286] Ibid, p.21.
[287] Ibid, pp.21-22.
[288] Aysha Polnitz in *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) p.7
[289] Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) pp.191-219.

influence on commonwealth ideology. War was justified more through its benefit to the commonwealth than through the king's needs, meaning the king took a backseat. There were changes to a prince's education too, to better reflect the expectations surrounding the king and war. Previously, the military education of kings and princes had been paramount. Edward III's 'royal cabinet of curiosities' contained a helmet taken from Saladin by Richard I, and a knife which assassins had used to attempt to murder Edward I in 1272.[290] Princes were surrounded from a young age with the trappings of martial kingship and stories of great warrior kings. This did not vanish, but shifted into something else.

One text that illustrates the beginnings of the shift in military expectation is the *Vita Henrici Quinti* (c.1438).[291] This was a biography of Henry V commissioned by his brother, Humphrey of Gloucester (1390-1447) for Henry's son, Henry VI. Gloucester employed the humanist Tito Livio Frulovisi (fl.1429-1456) to compose the work.[292] This was a significant choice given Frulovisi's involvement with humanism and that this was a text intended to guide the young Henry VI.[293] Naturally the *Vita* praised Henry V and his victories over the French, of which Agincourt (1415) was the pinnacle. The late king's skill in war was lauded, but Frulovisi presented going to war as a necessity. In a text extolling the virtues of Henry V, his love of the commonwealth was emphasised:

> How great was the constant love of the public weal in this prince that desired rather to die than to be unprofitable to the realm. Certainly this a special note to be bred of all princes, and especially of them that court more their singular pleasure, honour and profit than the universal advantage and wealth of his people and countries, whose blind affection the example of this noble Prince utterly condemneth.[294]

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[290] W. M. Ormrod, *Edward III* (London: Yale University Press, 2012) p.15.

[291] Henry VI's copy: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 285 (i). https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/pw573ct5642 [Accessed 10th January 2021]. It bears no annotations, but does have the royal coat of arms on the first folio. Gloucester's copy is held in the London College of Arms, MS Arundel 12.

[292] The fact that Frulovisi was employed by Gloucester again undermines the idea that humanism was completely absent in England until the sixteenth century. Some have been critical of Frulovisi though, with David Rundle asking 'who now has cause to remember Tito Livio Frulovisi?'. David Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's Vita Henrici Quinti' , *The English Historical Review*, 123(504) (2008) p.1109. He was employed as Gloucester's 'poet and orator' between 1436 and 1438, and he was clearly regarded as a humanist by those in Gloucester's circle: in the poem *On Husbondrie* Tito is mentioned alongside the other humanists in Gloucester's employ, such as Piero del Monte and Antonio Beccaria. Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature,* p.51.

[293] Little known about Frulovisi's actual life, with no birth or death dates recorded, but he worked mainly in the period between 1429 and 1456.

[294] Tito Livio Frulovisi, *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth* ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911) p.18. 'howe great was the constant loue of the publique weale in this Prince that desired rather to dye then to be vnproffitable to the realme. Certainely this a speciall note to be bred of all Princes, and especiallie of them that court more theire singular pleasure, honnor, and proffit then the vniuersall aduantage and wealth of his people and countries, whose blinde affeccion th'example of this noble Prince vtterly condemneth.'

This emphasis on the commonwealth was a big part of Frulovisi's description of Henry V's coronation in 1413. It is useful to compare this to another biography of Henry V, written in the same period. The *Gesta Henrici Quinti* was written sometime before 1418, but this text did not mention the king's duty to the people when describing the coronation. The *Gesta* only mentioned how he 'was crowned at Westminster on Passion Sunday' and:

> when he began to reign…he applied his mind with all devotion to encompass what could promote the honour of God, the extension of the Church, the deliverance of his country, and the peace and tranquility of kingdoms.[295]

There was no mention of the commonwealth in this other text, and the focus on the 'universal advantage and wealth' of the people was absent. Instead the king's main duty was God and the Church. In the *Vita*, however, Henry V's 'constant love' for the 'public weal' echoed the Italian ideas about governance that we begin to see in England. Frulovisi's notion that the king would rather die than be unprofitable to his people also reflects ideas about duty and the role of the king as protector of the commonwealth's interests. By mentioning these in connection with the coronation, Frulovisi implied that this duty was as fundamental to kingship as the ceremony that confirmed the office.

This duty to protect the realm can be seen only a few pages later, when Frulovisi introduced the French conflict. When telling how the war began under Henry V, Frulovisi emphasised a careful, measured approach to conflict. His Henry V did not rush into the war, but rather considered the conflict and sought advice. Frulovisi was careful to point out that it was only after Henry had established peace in England, Ireland and Scotland that he turned to war with France. Henry:

> delivered upon the recovery of the realm of France, which by just title of inherence was descend unto him, and at that time was injuriously withheld from him by the French king. And because he would nothing proceed against the pleasure of God, he first demanded advice and counsel of all the discrete and learned men…through all the realm…[296]

[295] *Gesta Henrici Quinti: The Deeds of Henry the Fifth*, ed. and trans. Frank Taylor and John S. Roskell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) p.3.

[296] Frulovisi, *First Life*, ed. Kingsford, p.24. 'delibered vppon the recouerie of the Realme of Fraunce, w[i]ch by iust title of inheritance was discended vnto him, and at that time was iniuriouslie w[i]thhoulden from him by the French

Whilst there was a focus on Henry's inheritance, Frulovisi nevertheless stressed that Henry made sure his own kingdom was peaceful before turning his attention elsewhere. He also noted that this was in the second year of his reign, the first being the year in which he 'established many profitable things in his realm for the commonwealth and the prosperity of his subjects'.[297] Frulovisi could have jumped straight in and begun the biography with Henry's invasion of France. This is especially the case if, as Frank Millard argued, the *Vita* was intended for 'foreign consumption in the furtherance of the Lancastrian cause'.[298] But the *Vita* seems to be more than propaganda. It gained international recognition 'only belatedly and through the author's own efforts', suggesting propaganda was not Gloucester's chief purpose.[299] Contrary to what Millard believed, it seems that first and foremost it was a text to guide the young Henry VI and encourage him to secure his rule in France. It is unclear whether or not Henry VI ever read the text, but given that Humphrey of Gloucester was in charge of Henry's education, and set down a commission specifically stating he read mirrors for princes, it is not unlikely. Thus it shows how ideas of commonwealth and war were linked to kingly responsibility, and how these ideas were being used to educate princes and kings.

It is important to note that the *Vita* was written c.1436-1438. Humanism was still new in England; Humphrey of Gloucester had only recently begun to cultivate it in his own household. Yet despite the youth of humanism at this stage, texts like the *Vita* advocated a love of the commonwealth and a careful, considered approach to war. Whilst it is not quite the same as the speeches of the 1460s and 1470s, it is not far off. Furthermore, Frulovisi emphasised that the glory was not Henry V's alone:

> But that victorious and goodly King suffered not those honours to be referred unto him, but to laud and honour of God; neither, as is used amongst them that be elect in his pride, he showed not to the people his helmet, where upon his crown of gold was broken…in the field by the violence of the enemy… he eschewed all occasions of vainglory, and refused the vain praising of the people.[300]

Kinge. And because he would nothinge proceede against the pleasure of God, he first demaunded aduice and councell of all the discrete and learned men….through all the Realme…'

[297] Ibid, p.22. Henry 'established manie profitable things in his realme for the common wealth and prosperitie of his subjects'.

[298] Frank Millard, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: Politics and Reputation: Princely Influence and Memory in Fifteenth Century England* (Riga: VDM, 2009) pp.51-2.

[299] David Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's Vita Henrici Quinti' *The English Historical Review*, 123(504) (2008) p.1128.

[300] Frulovisi, *First English Life*, p.65. 'But that victorious and goodly King suffered not those honours to be referred vnto him, but to the laude and honour of God; neither, as is vsed amongest them that bene elect in his pride, he shewed not to the people his helmett, where vppon his Crowne of goulde was broken…in the fielde by the vyolence of the enemie… he eschewed all occasions of vaine glory, and refused the vaine praysings of the people.'

Frulovisi's picture was of a king wholeheartedly dedicated to the commonwealth, refusing to revel in the glory of his victory. When compared to the way in which the glory of the king was emphasised at the start of the Hundred Years War, the *Vita Henrici Quinti* shows how military expectations of kingship changed in fifteenth century England.[301] Frulovisi's involvement suggests this approach to ideas of commonwealth and kingship was a product of humanism, and as such the *Vita* is an example of humanist influence on commonwealth, expectations of kingship, and the education of princes.[302]

Ideas about commonwealth and defence replaced the focus on military glory, and this can also be seen in texts intended for Henry VI's son, Edward of Lancaster. Although Edward spent most of his childhood in exile, he was still raised as a medieval prince. By 1467, there were concerns that, unlike his father, he was too concerned with war and violence. That year, the Milanese ambassador commented that although the prince was 'only thirteen years of age', he 'talks of nothing but cutting off heads or making war'.[303] The prince apparently did not take after his father, and whilst a warlike king may once have been desirable, by the later fifteenth century it was not. Given the context, this is especially interesting. Not only was England at war with France, but at war with itself too. Edward was expected to help take back the English throne from the Yorkists, something which could not have been achieved without bloodshed. Lancastrian hopes of restoration rested much on Edward's dedication to 'making war', yet it was disapproved of. This is a clear indication that military expectations of kingship had changed, turning away from needless violence and kings who made war for the sake of it. That this was observed by Italian ambassadors is also notable. Since the ambassador, Giovanni Panicharolla, was from Milan, it is not surprising that he would have these ideas. Humanism was most popular and prominent in Italy, and such ideas would not be unusual. What is more surprising is that English contemporaries seem to have agreed. The prince was placed under the tutelage of John Fortescue (1394-1479), apparently to moderate the prince's character, since he 'had become too centred on fighting and revenge'.[304]

Sometime between 1468 and 1470, Fortescue, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, wrote *De*

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[301] Rundle, 'Unoriginality', *EHR,* p.1109.
[302] Frulovisi emphasises God and humility, but this does not undermine the argument that commonwealth overtakes God. Frulovisi was writing in the 1430s, at the start of the period when things began to change. Commonwealth ideology began to take precedence over God and Church only after this, but the *Vita* shows that it was an ideology already growing in the 1430s.
[303]' Milan: 1467', in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1912), pp. 117-122. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp117-122 [accessed 20th March 2020]
[304] Orme, *Childhood*, pp.184-185

Laudibus Legum Angliae, a treatise on the laws of England. Orme believed this was an attempt at guiding Edward of Lancaster more towards justice and law, but he did not connect this with a shift in ideas about a king's duty to the commonwealth. Charles Arrowood in 1935 however noted that Fortescue may have been influenced by the Renaissance ('his theory of government suggests at a number of points the renaissance doctrine of the prince') but still believed he was 'influenced mainly by contemporary practice and by mediaeval theory'.[305] Arrowood pointed out that, for Fortescue, the education of the prince was 'an instrument of national policy'.[306] This furthers the idea that the king or prince had a primary duty to the commonwealth above all else. Fortescue urged the prince to moderate his warlike desires:

> I do indeed rejoice, most fair prince, at your noble disposition perceiving as I do with how much eagerness you embrace military exercises, which are fitting for you to take such delight in, not merely because you are a knight but all the more because you are going to be a king. For the office of a king is to fight the battles of his people and judge them rightfully… For that reason, I wish that I had observed you to be devoted to the study of the laws with the same zeal as you are to that of arms, since, as battles are determined by arms, so judgements are by laws.[307]

The whole point of the work, argued Margaret Kekewich, was that the prince 'know and love the laws of England', but it was also about his duty to his people.[308] Fortescue taught the prince to 'respect the rights of the subject' by teaching him England's laws, but also emphasised that it was his purpose as king to 'fight the battles of his people'.[309] In this text, a king that catered to the commonwealth was at least as important - if not more - than a king who waged war. This duty to the people was absent from earlier commonwealth ideology, and shows how traditional expectations of kingship were giving way to newer ideas about commonwealth and duty.

Fortescue was not the only one employed to moderate the prince's character: he was also taught by George Ashby (c.1390-1475). Ashby was a clerk to Henry VI and between 1462 and 1463, composed *The Active Policy of a Prince.* Initially, this was a translation of the eleventh century text

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[305] Charles F. Arrowood, 'Sir John Fortescue on the Education of Rulers', *Speculum*, 10(4) (1935) p.404.
[306] Ibid, p.406.
[307] John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae* ed. and trans. S. B. Chrimes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949) p.3.
[308] Margaret Kekewich, *Sir John Fortescue and the Goverance of England*, (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2018) p.212
[309] Emma Roberts, *Memoirs of the Rival Houses of York and Lancaster, vol. 1* (London: Harding and Lepard, 1827) p.516

Liber de dicts philosophorum antiquorum, by Mubassir ibn Fatik, but the end result, Kekewich stated, was a 'fairly original poem'.[310] The translated sayings of the philosophers formed a second section that followed the *Active Policy*, titled the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*. In this, Ashby related sayings of famous philosophers and translated them into verse. This seems to have been designed to be read with the *Active Policy*, with the *Dicts* being included the end. Ashby was thus using ancient philosophy to directly inform and influence the education of the young prince, and used it to support more civic ideas about the role of the king in relation to the commonwealth.

Both texts together formed one advisory text for Edward of Lancaster, similar to Fortescue's. Like Fortescue, Ashby also presented war as a course that should be carefully considered before action is taken:

> I would fain you would keep in remembrance to be right well advised by good sadness, by discrete prudence & faithful constance ere ye begin war for any riches, or of fantasy or simpleness. For war may be lightly commenced, doubt is how it shall be recompensed.[311]

War for 'riches' was emphatically frowned upon in this text. This reflects older ideas about war influenced by religious morality, but it shows influence from newer, more humanist notions, too. Ashby noted in the *Dicts and Sayings* that there were three ways for kings to gain glory: by having good laws, by 'many lands conquering' and by making deserts 'habitable'.[312] Conquest was second in the list, with good laws taking precedence. The humanist focus on good laws and justice was combined with ideas about war to focus on serving the people before the king serving himself.The ideas in the *Active Policy* do not seem to have been restricted to Ashby. He urged the prince to remember the past, provide for the future and 'well govern' the present, something which Margaret Kekewich noted is 'virtually identical' to an 'anonymous seven-verse poem on the virtues required by a prince'.[313] Ashby thus is representative of wider ideas about kingship and princely qualities. His works, with Fortescue's, show that attitudes towards military kingship were changing, focussing more firmly on the needs of the commonwealth and the king's duty to his people.

That texts like *Active Policy* and *De Laudibus* were written with the purpose of drawing the prince

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[310] Margaret Kekewich, 'George Ashby's The Active Policy of a Prince: An Additional Source', *The Review of English Studies* 14(164) (1990) p.532.
[311] George Ashby, 'On The Active Policy of a Prince', *George Ashby*'*s Poems* ed. Mary Bateson (London: Early English Text Society, 1899) p.34. 'I wold fain ye wolde kepe in remembrance to be right wele aduised by goode sadnesse, by discrete prudence & feithful constance er ye begynne werre for any richesse, or of fantesie or of symplenesse. For werre may be lightly commensed, doubt is how it shal be recompensed.'
[312] Ashby, 'Dicta et Opinions Diversorum Philosophorum 'in *Poems*, ed. Bateson, p.50.
[313] Ibid, p.41; Kekewich, 'George Ashby's The Active Policy', *Review of English Studies*, p.534. These virtues were prudence; justice; temperance; discretion; reason; pleasance and goodwill; and courtesy and nurture.

away from violence is important. Being Mirrors for Princes, they were part of a long literary tradition going back to Giles of Rome in the eleventh century, and advice supposedly given to Alexander the Great by Aristotle. They were flexible: they could be 'tailored to meet the needs of a specific recipient' and 'responded to contemporary circumstance'.[314] In attempting to moderate Edward's character, these texts show that ruling well and ruling fairly was just as important as military might. This itself was prominent within humanism: Plato told the story of two Cypriot princes who ruined their father's kingdom because they had not been taught how to rule properly.[315] Plato recommended a balanced education that adequately prepared princes for rule. This was taken up by fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists like Piccolomini and Salutati.[316] Salutati in particular believed that politicians should 'serve' the commonwealth, and it is this kind of civic ideology that can be seen in Ashby and Fortescue. As discussed later on p.157, Fortescue ultimately believed that the king must 'refer' everything he did to the commonwealth.[317] This is vastly different to the ideas of Salisbury for example, who although using the same ancient sources and classical philosophy, reached the conclusion that the commonwealth was still very much subject to the king. The former was a much more humanist and civic conclusion that is seen in England in the fifteenth century. Although Fortescue primarily took inspiration from the twelfth-century lawyer and theologian Thomas Aquinas, he occasionally quoted humanists like Poggio and Bruni.[318] Thus the emphasis on commonwealth, justice, and ruling properly suggests that humanist values were present in the shifting expectations of kingship and were represented within Mirrors for Princes.

It is impossible to say whether or not Henry VI or Edward of Lancaster ever took anything from these texts. Abbot John Whethamstede (d.1465), closely associated with Humphrey of Gloucester, did say that Henry VI read Vegetius' (d.450 BC) *De Re Militari* in 1459, but this may have been a move calculated to show Henry had an awareness of military tactic.[319] Regardless of whether or not the princes they were intended for ever took anything from these texts, they reflected wider attitudes about kingship and duty. Where Aysha Polnitz argued humanism did not dramatically change expectations of kings in the fifteenth century, this suggests the opposite. Both Henry V and Edward of York, future Edward V, were, Polnitz claimed, 'brought up to regard the sword, rather

[314] Katherine Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Medieval England*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p.22.
[315] Plato, *The Laws* ed. Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) p.126.
[316] Piccolomini, 'The Education of Boys 'in *Humanist Education Treatises,* trans. Kallendorf; Baron, *Crisis*, p.165. Salutati believed that humanist education was necessary for politicians and that they should 'serve' the commonwealth.
[317] John Fortescue, *The Governance of England*, printed in *John Vale*'*s Book* ed. Kekewich, p.235. 'All that he dotthe oweth to be referred to his kingdome, for thoughe his estate be the highest estate temporal in erthe, yit it is an office whiche he mynistreth to his reaulmes defence and justice…'.
[318] Weiss, 'Bruni and Early English Humanism', *Modern Language Review*, 36(4) (1941) p.178). He quoted Bruni's Isagogicum, and Poggio's biography of Diodorus. These may seem inconsequential at first, but it indicates that Fortescue at least had some knowledge of humanist works.
[319] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.81.

than the pen, as the greatest weapon of kingship'.[320] To an extent this is true, but texts like the *Vita Henrici Quinti, De Laudibus*, and *Active Policy* - as well as the *Boke of Noblesse* and speeches from the 1460s and 1460s - suggest an evolution in how and when that sword was deployed, with greater focus on it being used to benefit the commonwealth over the king.

It was not only military might which the commonwealth now took precedence over. The focus on proper justice reinforced the idea that the laws (*ius*) and liberty (*libertas*) of the commonwealth must be defended above all. Ashby emphasised this in the *Active Policy*, going so far as to suggest that the king's duty to the commonwealth took precedence even over his duty to God. In a section discussing the king's duty to provide justice, Ashby instructed that subjects' petitions must be dealt with 'justly, truly, evening and morning', 'in haste' and 'with advice'.[321]

> If any people put to your highness bills of complaint or petition answer them in haste with advice… folks be not delayed frivolly…My lord all men should be under your dread, that be under your rule and obedience. So must you under God in word and deed, in eschewing his wrath and displeasure, he will be dealt with in sad constance, neither with japes, mocking nor scorning… No man ruleth God, but he ruleth all… Reigning kings...be to him subject.[322]

The placement of this is significant, because the king's duty to his subjects comes before the description of the king's duties to God. Whilst the text admittedly jumps from concern to concern with no real order to any other pieces of advice Ashby has, this is slightly different. He wrote about the king's duty to his subjects' petitions and the king's subjection to God together in one point. Because he wrote about them together, the placement should be noted. Whilst acknowledging that kings are God's subjects, ultimately 'to him subject', Ashby nevertheless advised the king to pay attention to his subjects' needs to avoid God's 'wrath and displeasure'. That dealing well with subjects' petitions avoids God's 'wrath' implies that even God recognised the importance of the king's duty to the commonwealth.[323] This mirrors speeches given by John Russell 1480s - to be looked at fully in later chapters - where God 'called' Edward V to rule for the people. Ashby

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[320] Polnitz, *Princely Education* p.28

[321] Ashby, *Active Policy,* ed Bateson, p.31. 'Iustly, truly, even and mornyng', 'In haste with advisinesse'.

[322] Ibid**.** **'**If any people put to your highnesse billes of compleint or peticion onswere theim in haste with advisinesse…folke be nat delaied friuolly… My lorde al men shuld be vnder your drede, that bene vnder your reule &obseisance. So must ye vnder god in worde and dede, in eschewing his wraithe & displeasance, he wol be deled with in sad constance, neither with iapes, mokke ne scornyng…No man reuleth god, be he reulith al…reignen kynges…be to hym soubget.'

[323] This links to the biblical origins of kingship. Saul, the first king of Israel, angered God by disobeying him, and so God chose David (a shepherd) to be king instead. The implication is that avoiding God's wrath will keep the king on the throne, and only by recognising his duty to the commonwealth can he do this.

similarly suggested that duty to the commonwealth comes first, and it is by doing their duty to the commonwealth that kings fulfil their duty to God. It is this which makes fifteenth century advice literature far more humanist and civic in outlook, and separates them from earlier works by the likes of Salisbury and Aquinas.

This focus on the commonwealth and the king's duty was also a large part of other advice literature, like that written by John Lydgate (1370-1451). Based on Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (c.1360) Lydgate wrote the *Fall of Princes* between 1431 and 1438, examining the role of fortune and explaining the failures of princes throughout history.[324] Just as Salutati believed humanist study must serve the commonwealth, Lydgate echoed that princes must 'avail' to the 'common profit'.[325] At the end of the *Fall*, lamenting the decline of Rome, Lydgate asked:

> Where is Tullius chief lantern of this town, in rhetoric all other surmounting? Moral Seneca or prudent sad Cato, the common profit always preferring, or rightful Trajan… Long process hath brought all to ruin.[326]

He implied that Rome had fallen because of the lack of care given to the common profit, justice, and morality. A note in the margins in the *Fall* also glorified a republican who fought for the 'common' of Rome and for '*pro re publica*'.[327] The *Fall* thus contained humanist ideals and stressed that the role of the prince was one of service to the 'common profit'. Lydgate thus used ancient philosophers like Seneca and Cato to emphasise the role of the commonwealth, and this is similar to how Italian humanists like Salutati and Palmieri engaged with classical sources. Humanist ideals were thus being used to advise princes and kings. Lydgate's actual involvement with humanism has been much debated, with many historians believing he used classical sources second-hand, relying on contemporary literature rather than ancient texts.[328] However, Andrew

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[324] *Fall of Princes* suggests that a 'prudent prince can effectively Fortune-proof himself'. Even Machiavelli 'stopped short of arguing Fortune could be trumped or wholly avoided 'argued Paul Strohm. Strohm claimed there is in the *Fall* the quality of *vertue*, something 'remarkably anticipatory of its Italian and Machiavellian counterpart, *vertú*. 'Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) p.2.

[325] John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes* ed. Henry Bergen (London: Early English Text Society, 1924) p.127.

[326] Ibid, p.325-6. 'Where is Tullius cheeff lanterne off thi toun, in rhethorik all other surmountyng? Moral Senek or prudent sad Catoun, thi comoun proffit alwei preferryng, or rihtful Traian… long processe hath brouht al to ruyne'.

[327] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.41.

[328] Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, (London: Routledge, 1970), p.35. Pearsall argued that classical literature 'meant little to Lydgate 'and his knowledge of the classics was 'far more limited than his own frequent allusions would suggest'. Maura Nolan, too, argued Lydgate relied more on Chaucer and Gower than classical authors and his actual reliance on

Galloway pointed out that, in one work in particular (his *Disguising at London*, written just after Henry V's death in 1422), the classical references were more than second-hand. Nolan believed Lydgate used Chaucer as a source, but Galloway disagreed. Although Chaucer may have been an inspiration, some passages in the text take 'steps into a classical outlook that is not... in parts, even consistent with Christian orthodoxy, much less dependent on a familiar vernacular literary tradition'.[329] Though Lydgate may not have been a humanist himself, this did not mean his work was not influenced by humanist ideas. The focus on the commonwealth in the *Fall of Princes* reinforces this, and suggests that these new notions of commonwealth were beginning to spread beyond scholarly humanist circles.

This focus on the king's duty to the commonwealth did not just affect ideas about military kingship. It also affected how kings were actually prepared for rule. Orme noted that royal education became more formal in this century, but not that this was connected to both the influence of civic humanism and the increased importance of the commonwealth. However, civic humanism held that those serving in public office needed to serve the commonwealth, and in order to do so, they needed a balanced and proper education. Piccolomini's *The Education of Boys,* for example, noted that it is 'fitting that a king should have a liberal education, that he may garner truth for himself in the books of the philosophers'.[330] Piccolomini quoted Vegetius, writing that: 'No one ought to have better or greater knowledge than a prince, whose prudence should profit all his subjects'.[331] A proper education was deemed necessary for the 'profit' of the commonwealth. Consequently, in fifteenth-century England, royal education became more formalised, with clear humanist influence, to ensure that princes ruled in the interests of the commonwealth.

Although the monk and historian William of Malmesbury (c.1095 - c.1143) believed in the twelfth century that 'an illiterate king is a crowned ass', royal education remained largely informal.[332] Before the fifteenth century, tutors were pulled from the ranks of the aristocracy, usually men close to the royal family. Richard II's tutor, for example, was Simon Burley (d.1388), a close friend of Richard's father, Edward the Black Prince (1330-1376).[333] It was not until the fifteenth century that

classical sources was minimal. Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p.51.

[329] Andrew Galloway, 'John Lydgate and the Origins of Vernacular Humanism', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 107(4) (2008), p.461.

[330] Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, 'The Education of Boys 'printed in *Humanist Education Treatises,* trans. Craig. W. Kallendorf, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008) p.82.

[331] Ibid.

[332] William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England* ed. J. A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848) p.425

[333] Burley was not born a nobleman, but was brought up alongside the Black Prince and subsequently became his close friend.

professional schoolmasters were employed; Orme called them men from 'the world outside'.[334] John Somerset (d.1454) was tutor and grammar master to the young Henry VI. Somerset had graduated from Oxford as a master of arts and bachelor of medicine, and was master of the grammar school at Bury St Edmunds by 1418.[335] Edward of Lancaster was also taught grammar, and was described by John Fortescue as sufficiently 'learned in grammar to be deservedly called a grammarian'.[336] Edward of York too had a grammar master from the 'outside'; John Giles was appointed when the prince was just four years old, and his brother Richard two.[337] The princes of the fifteenth-century had to be well prepared for their office in order to best serve the needs of their people, and this was very different to the way tutors were chosen in the fourteenth century.[338] As a result, changes to royal education in this period show how humanist ideas about kingly duty and commonwealth were influencing a prince's preparation for rule.

The commission outlining the education of Henry VI shows this new formality. When the king was six, he was placed under the tutelage of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick (1382-1439). This was likely down to the influence of Henry's humanist uncle Gloucester: as per Henry V's will, Gloucester was to have 'the principal safekeeping and defence of our beloved son .[339] Beauchamp had gifted Gloucester a French translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and the two were evidently connected.[340] Beauchamp was, like Gloucester, no stranger to humanist literature and has been described as the 'best nurtured man in England', with his own 'accomplishments' in education and patronage.[341]

Beauchamp received a clear commission in 1428, written in French, setting out what the young king should be taught. It was Beauchamp's 'loial devoir [e]t diligence' (loyal duty and diligence) to teach the prince "how to move and exhort us to love honour".[342] These lessons "concerning and touching

[334] Nicholas Orme, *Childhood to Chivalry,* p.22.
[335] Carol Rawcliffe, 'Somerset, John, d.1454 '*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008) [Accessed 15th November 2020]
[336] Orme, *Childhood to Chivalry,* p.154.
[337] Ibid. Giles also taught the prince's brother Richard too, possibly from as early as the age of two.
[338] Arnd Reitemeir, 'Born a Tyrant? '*Fourteenth Century England Vol. 2*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002) p.152 Henry Bolingbroke, before he had assumed the throne in 1399, had sent his son (the future Henry V) to Oxford University, but it is unclear what he studied, and Bolingbroke was not yet king.
[339]' Henry VI: November 1422', *PROME*. Most of Henry V's will is included in the parliament roll of Henry VI's first parliament. Another copy of the will survives in Eton College archives, in which it is revealed that only right before his death did Henry V make clear his wishes regarding his son's upbringing. It is made clear that Henry 'wished Gloucester to to have 'the principal safekeeping and defence of our beloved son '(tutela et defensionem nostri carissimi filii principales).'
[340] Guyda Armstrong, *The English Boccaccio: A History in Books* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) p.70.
[341] R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, (University of California Press, 1981) p.52.
[342] *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, *vol.3* ed. Harris Nicolas, (London: Commissioners on the Public Records, 1834–7), p.297. 'pour nous enseigner mouvoir [e]t exhorter a l'amour honour'

honour" were "passed by our council".[343] The young king was to be taught specifically 'bons meures lettrure langages norture [e]t courtoisie [e]t autres enseignementz tiler come a si grand prince'.[344] This translates to 'good manners, letters, languages, nurture and courtesy, and other things', lessons for a 'great prince'. Thus not only was there a focus on honour, there was also the inclusion of good letters. This is significant, since humanism placed importance on the study of *bone litterae* - good letters.[345] This was surely deliberate: Gloucester knew that 'good letters' was a part of humanism. In a letter to the humanist Pier Candido Decembrio (1399-1477), Gloucester explicitly mentioned his dedication to the 'cult of letters'.[346] Thus the commission of 1428 reveals that Henry VI's education had some humanist influence, and that this was intended to teach him the value of honour and learning. The study of good letters came second only to good manners in Henry's education. It was placed ahead of nurture and courtesy, the 'social arts of courtly life' such as speaking, hunting, dancing etc.[347] Little else is known about the particulars of Henry VI's education, but through this commission we can see a humanist influence. English expectations of kingship were beginning to align with more humanist ones, where kings needed a proper, formal, education in a range of subjects in order to better serve the commonwealth.

Henry's martial education was not neglected, though. Beauchamp had two 'little coat armours' made, and Henry was given seven 'swords and a long blade…for to learn the king to play'.[348] This was in tandem with the instructions of the 1428 commission. Henry VI was taught to wage war, but also the importance of honour, languages, letters, and manners. This is very similar to how his own son Edward of Lancaster was taught to consider war and appreciate the English legal system. Polnitz believed the English still viewed the sword as the weapon of kingship rather than the pen, but the preparations made for Henry VI and for Edward of Lancaster show that increasing value was being attached to education and commonwealth.

This shift was much more pronounced by the end of the century. By the 1480s, the education of Edward V was even more clearly structured and formulated. The ordinances of 1483 set out that the

[343] Ibid. 'choses faire concernantz [e]t touchant loneure…come en certaines articles [e]t appointementz passez par n[ot]re consail'.
[344] *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, *vol.3* ed. Harris Nicolas, (London: Commissioners on the Public Records, 1834–7), pp.297.
[345] Malcolm Hebron, *Key Concepts in Renaissance Literature*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p.59
[346] Vickers, *Humphrey*, pp.360-361. 'Do not think anything gives us more pleasure than that which relates to learning and the cult of letters'. The letter is dated March 23, 1439 (or 1440 in the new calendar). Durham MS., C. iv. 3.
[347] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.24; Wakelin, *Humanism*, fn.8, p.25
[348] *CPR: Henry VI, Vol. VI, 1452-61,* (London: Hereford Times Co., 1910) p.247. 'lyttil cote armurs', 'swerids and a long blade... for to lerne the kyng to play'.

prince was to study (be 'at his school') for three hours a day.[349] He was to study music, history, philosophy: the likes of which had been endorsed by Cicero, who claimed in *De Oratore* (55 BC) that the perfect ruler of the commonwealth was one educated in history, philosophy, and law.[350] Most importantly, though, the printer William Caxton (c.1422-c.1491) defined the prince's course of study as the study of 'humanity'.[351] The *Black Book of Edward IV* (a detailed account of the royal household from 1478) also recorded that the prince and his household were to study 'exercises of humanity'.[352] As humanism in the fifteenth century was often referred to as the study of humanities or humanity, this is a clear indication that Edward of York's education had some humanist dimension. This is important because humanism was seen almost as a professional qualification in Italy.[353] In England too, humanists were increasingly employed in government and held onto their posts despite regime changes. Humanist study was clearly valued, and it is possible that it came to be viewed almost as a qualification for kingship itself. Indeed in an epilogue of Caxton's *Boece,* an anonymous hand has noted the theory from Plato's *Republic* that all kings should be philosophers.[354] Furthermore, in 1457 the university of Oxford encouraged Henry VI to let his son study classical history in order to learn how to govern.[355] Connections were being drawn between humanist study and good governance, with princes being taught from an early age about the importance of the commonwealth and kingly responsibility.

That a proper education equated to good rule is evidenced by a 1464 letter from Edward of Lancaster. In this letter the exiled prince wrote to the earl of Ormond in secretary hand, purely to show off his writing. The twelve year old prince claimed it was 'written with my own hand that you may see how good a writer I am'.[356] The letter was concerned with the 'subduing of….rebels' against Henry VI.[357] It was probably drafted by Fortescue, but that the prince wrote it in his own hand - and emphasised this - suggests that showing off the education of the prince served another

[349] BL, Sloane MS. 3479 f.54. Edward was to be 'at his scole' for two hours, and then 'an hour at his scole before he goe to meate'. These three hours were purely for study, not physical education. Orme believed that physical education was separate. Orme, *Childhood to Chivalry*, p.154.
[350] Edward Clayton, 'Cicero '*Internet Encyclopeadia of Philosophy* https://www.iep.utm.edu/cicero/ [Accessed 25th March 2020]
[351] Wakelin, *Humanism* p.8.
[352] Myers, *Household*, 126-7, 137-8; Orme, 'Education of Edward V', p.186. 'exercices of humanyte'.
[353] Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1986) p.194; Burckhardt, *Civilization,* p.151.
[354] Wakelin, *Humanism,* p.21; Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Project Gutenberg* https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm (1998) [Accessed 10th March 2021] Book V, no pagination.
[355] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.25.
[356] Biblioteque Nationale de France MS Francaise 4054 f.172. 'written with myn awn hand that ye may se how good a wrytare I ame'.
[357] Ibid.

purpose.[358] Historians have argued that texts like the *Active Policy* served also as propaganda, to show how competent and educated the young prince was.[359] This letter does the same, since the education of the prince had political value. Whilst this has been noted by historians who have commented on the propaganda value of advice literature, they have not extended this to the prince's actual education. The 1464 letter demonstrates that Edward's ability to write well was being used to influence politics, showing that the education of the prince was much more formal and political than previously.

Conclusion

With a greater emphasis on how such an education adequately prepares a king for rule, fifteenth-century princes were raised much differently to their fourteenth-century predecessors. The focus on proper education, justice and the commonwealth seems to be a product of humanist influence, affecting expectations of kingship from the 1430s onwards. It is clear from the parliamentary records that this ideology infiltrated governance, and from discourse surrounding war that it influenced ideas about when the king should go to war and how it should be justified. Commonwealth ideology, influenced by civic humanism, was thus influencing politics at the highest levels, and this has ramifications for all areas of kingship and governance.

[358] Sebastien Sobecki, *Last Words: The Public Self and the Social Author in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) p.187 He draws comparison between Edward's 'inexperienced angular hand 'and Ashby's secretary hand. He also argued that the language in the letter echoes that of the *Active Policy*. Words like 'adversaries', 'guyding', and ideas about 'subduing 'rebels are present in both the letter and the *Active Policy*. Through this he concludes that Ashby must have been a significant influence on the prince, and perhaps was even the one who taught him how to write.

[359] Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p.153. It made 'the prince appear as the authentic and fully capable heir to the throne'.

Humphrey of Gloucester

The connection between commonwealth ideology and medieval politics was one first recognised and exploited by individuals within government. Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (1390-1447), Richard, duke of York (1411-1460) and Richard III (1452-1485) all appealed to populist politics and deliberately manipulated commonwealth ideology to support their own political aims. These aims ranged from bolstering arguments for war with France and discrediting political rivals to opposing government. All three also used commonwealth ideology to push a claim to the throne. In this way, commonwealth ideology became part of the rhetoric of politics and governance, used to add weight to political arguments. As chapter three will argue, the use of this ideology by prominent political figures eventually led to the people taking on this ideology themselves, so that by the 1460s, even a group of peasants believed they had a role in putting Edward IV on the throne. Before it was used by those lower down the social scale, though, commonwealth ideology was used by individuals in positions of power to inform and influence politics, governance and kingship.

Humphrey of Gloucester was was a great patron of literature, and the 'first English patron of Italian humanism'.[360] The youngest son of Henry IV (1367-1413) and his first wife Mary de Bohun (d.1394), Gloucester was one of Henry VI's two uncles, and as a result, had a significant role in governance during the king's minority. As per Henry V's will, Gloucester was given authority in England whilst his brother John, duke of Bedford, was given authority in France. He was frequently in opposition to other influential figures in his nephew's government, notably Cardinal Henry Beaufort (c.1375-1447), coming into conflict over issues such as the war with France and the prospect of peace. This eventually led to Gloucester's downfall, and 'the possibility that he might become the figurehead for…embittered war veterans' contributed to his arrest on 18th February 1447.[361] Gloucester died five days later, possibly following a stroke, but the circumstances surrounding his death led to later accusations of murder which were popular amongst the common people.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Thomas Warton dubbed Gloucester the 'singular promoter of literature' in England; Elizabeth Prescott Hammond called him the 'English Maecenas of the

[360] G. L. Harris, 'Humphrey [Humfrey or Humphrey of Lancaster], duke of Gloucester [*called* Good Duke Humphrey] 1390-1347' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14155 (2004)
[361] Ibid.

fifteenth-century' in 1904, and in 1907 Kenneth Vickers said Gloucester 'felt the full force' of humanism and that his life was 'moulded thereby'.[362] Yet B. L. Ullman felt that Gloucester's patronage of humanism was disingenuous. Gloucester gave large numbers of humanist texts away to the University of Oxford, and Ullman suggested he only donated works he had no personal interest in.[363] Others such as Susanne Saygin disagreed, and set out to 'tear down the artificial barrier between Gloucester's political action and his cultural patronage'.[364] Whilst Saygin successfully demonstrated how Gloucester's humanism influenced his politics, she did not consider his use of commonwealth ideology. Frank Millard, on the other hand, did explore Gloucester's interest in and popularity with the common people. He aimed to bridge the divide between Gloucester as the 'cultured noble patron' and Gloucester as the 'rash politician'.[365] Millard, like Saygin, believed that Gloucester's scholarship and politics both 'served the same end': the 'enduring fame, power and prosperity of the house of Lancaster'.[366] However whilst both rightly did away with the division between the duke's activities as patron and politician, neither properly considered his very deliberate use of commonwealth ideology. Commonwealth ideology became a tool Gloucester used to further his political aims: to push for war with France, to undermine his rivals, to add weight and legitimacy to his political arguments, and to explore ideas of kingship and rule.

His use of such ideology certainly seems to have been informed by his patronage of humanism. This is something historians like David Rundle have been skeptical of: for Rundle, Gloucester was a passive patron who collected humanist texts for aesthetic purposes only.[367] This does not seem to have been the case. Gloucester was perhaps the 'single greatest' patron of humanism in fifteenth-century England.[368] Not only did he amass a large collection of humanist books, he used these to inspire and influence his political ideas. This is made clear by a letter Gloucester wrote upon receiving a translation of Plato's *Respublica* by the humanist Pier Candido Decembrio (1399-1477). Gloucester wrote expressing his gratitude:

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[362] Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1774-81) p.344; Elizabeth Prescott-Hammond, Lydgate and the Duchess of Gloucester' *Anglia,* 27 (1904) p.382; Kenneth H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1907) p.341
[363] B. L. Ullman, 'Manuscripts of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester', *EHR,* 52(208) (1937) pp.670-672.
[364] Susanne Saygin, *Humphrey of Gloucester and the Italian Humanists* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) p.16.
[365] Frank Millard, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: Politics and Reputation: Princely Influence and Memory in Fifteenth-Century England* (Riga: VDM: 2009) p.246.
[366] Ullman, 'Manuscripts', *EHR,* p.671.
[367] David Rundle, 'Humanism Before the Tudors 'in *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* ed. J. Woolfson (London: Palsgrave Macmillan, 2002). p.23. Rundle believed that to credit with Gloucester with the real beginnings of English humanism was an example of 'magnate attraction', and that his role was actually minimal.
[368] Peter Murray Jones, 'Information and Science 'in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes* ed. Rosemary Horrox, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.98.

> We have received your longed-for letters with the books of Plato which have given us much pleasure… These books shall be always kept at hand, so that we may ever have something to give us pleasure, and that they may be almost as counsellors and companions…as was the wisdom of Nestor to Agamemnon…Do not think that anything can give us more pleasure than that which related to learning and the cult of letters….[369]

That he described his books as 'counsellors' is significant, and this has been much neglected by historians (Vickers' only comment on this letter was that it had a 'classical tinge').[370] It reveals, however, the connection between Gloucester, humanist study, and the rhetoric of commonwealth. Gloucester was not a passive patron of humanism. He was using these ideas deliberately and purposefully, placing such texts in the role of Nestor to his Agamemnon. He was reading them specifically with a view to being "counselled" by them, which reflects the humanist ideal that scholarship should inform governance. Plato's *Respublica* specifically related to statecraft and citizenship, and so it is clear that Gloucester was using humanist ideas to augment his understanding of both.[371] In the text, Plato constructed the idea of a *Kallipolis*, a utopia where there is co-operation and unity between all citizens.[372] It also insisted that all citizens should agree who should rule them, giving the people a degree of political power and making governance elective and conciliar.[373] The letter is evidence that Gloucester read and appreciated this text about governance and the role of the people within the state, and was being "counselled" by it.[374]

These ideas were then used by Gloucester as a tool to further his political ambitions. Commonwealth ideology became part of Gloucester's rhetoric, especially in regards to the war with France. It has been noted in the previous chapter that commonwealth ideology was used to justify the conflict, and Humphrey of Gloucester was chief among those in favour of war. For Gloucester, peace with France, and the dauphin claiming to be Charles VII, was unacceptable. Firstly, it was an 'unacceptable repudiation of Henry V's achievements', because for Gloucester, peace meant surrendering the French crown.[375] It was an unravelling of the Lancastrian legacy which he was not

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[369] Letter printed in Vickers, *Humphrey*, pp.360-361.
[370] Ibid, p.361.
[371] BL Harley MS 1705. At the back of this copy, Gloucester has written, in French, 'C'est livre est d'moy Humfrey duc de Gloucestur'.
[372] ' Plato's Ethics and Politics in *The Republic*', *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* (2017) https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/ [Accessed 14th January 2021]. "Socrates is quite explicit that the good at which the rulers aim is the unity of the city."
[373] Ibid.
[374] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Project Gutenberg* https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm (1998) [Accessed 10th March 2021] Book V, no pagination. In this, Plato suggested that the commonwealth would not thrive unless 'political greatness and wisdom meet in one'.
[375] P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1991) p.32.

prepared to accept. On top of this, arguments for peace were championed by Gloucester's long-standing rival, Cardinal Henry Beaufort (1375-1447). Both had been attempting to oust the other from government for years: in 1425 there was an armed confrontation between them on London bridge, and Gloucester attempted to remove Beaufort from the royal council in 1426, 1429 and 1431.[376] He succeeded in 1432.[377] By 1437 Gloucester was 'virtual ruler of the kingdom', but a year later, Beaufort was back and Gloucester had 'all but lost' any influence he had in government.[378] By 1440, he was desperate to both regain his influence and prevent any peace with France. He could not, however, justify war with France based only on the late Henry V's wishes or the vision of a Lancastrian dual monarchy. Neither could he attack Beaufort without real reason. Any attack ran the risk of being perceived as a personal retaliation on an old enemy. Gloucester found his solution in commonwealth ideology, in humanist ideas about governance, and also in the humanist art of rhetoric and persuasion. By using these ideas, he added weight to and justified his arguments, bringing commonwealth ideology firmly into English politics.

After Agincourt in 1415, Charles, duke of Orleans (1394-1465) was found on the battlefield and captured by the English. Henry V intended to keep him imprisoned until all of France was conquered, but by 1440, Beaufort had orchestrated his release.[379] Gloucester was furious, and published his grievances in parliament, in a document known as the *Declaracone* (1440). This served Gloucester's double purpose well. He used commonwealth ideology and language in the *Declaracone* to undermine both Beaufort and the peace with France, claiming both were harmful to the commonwealth. The release of Orleans, Gloucester claimed, would ensure 'so many inconveniences and harms that might fall only by his deliverance'.[380] He addressed his protest to the king, and linked almost every complaint to the weal of both king and kingdom, even when they were not necessarily connected:

> Item, now late was sent to another ambassiate to Calais, by the labour and counsel of the said cardinal and archbishop of York, the cause why…is to me, your sole uncle, and the

[376] He was unsuccessful in 1426, and in 1429 attempted to put charges of praemunire against Beaufort. In 1431 he revived those charges, but they ultimately did not stick.
[377] Gemma Hollman, *Royal Witches* (The History Press, 2019) p.113. Gloucester discovered Beaufort exporting gold to Calais without a licence.
[378] Ibid, p.118.; Saygin, *Humphrey*, p.78.
[379] Protest of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, against the liberation of the duke of Orleans 'in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France During the Reign of Henry the Sixth, King of England* ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, 1861) p.447: '…wher as my lord of blessed memorie, youre fader (whom God assoyle!) peysing gretly so many inconveniences and harmes that might falle oonly by his deliverance, concluded and ordeyned in his last wille and utterly delivered, that unto tyme that he had accompisshed fully his conquest in his royaume of France; and thanne it be doen by as grete deliberacion, solempnite and suretees as couth be devised…'
[380] Ibid, 'so many inconveniences and harmes that might falle oonly by his deliverance'.

> other lords of your kin and council, unknown, to your great charge and against the good public of your realms… The which good, if it had been employed for the defence of your said realms, the merchandise of your lands might have had other course, and your said lands not stand in so great mischief as they do.[381]

Gloucester's main concern in this point particularly was that he did not know why the ambassador had been sent to Calais. The problem was his exclusion from governance, not the wellbeing of the realm. Nevertheless, he presented his grievances as being borne solely of concern for the 'good public'. Arguments for war with France manipulated commonwealth ideology and language in the 1460s, and Gloucester did the same in 1440. When mentioning the release of Orleans and giving up the French crown, he told the king that it would be a 'great… hurt to you and your land'.[382] All of Beaufort's actions and the consequences of peace with France were constantly linked back to the impact on the realm, though Gloucester's real concern was his exclusion from government.

Beaufort and his ally, John Kemp (c.1380-1454), the archbishop of York, were both also accused of corruption and fraud. Lands had been lost in France, the *Declaracone* claimed, because anyone who wanted to secure an office in Normandy had to pay Beaufort an exorbitant fee. This meant that skill and merit were discarded, and positions went only to those who could afford to pay. In turn this created mismanagement in the region and allowed the French victory over the English:

> Item, my right doubted lord, it is well known that it had [not] been possible [for] the said cardinal to have come to so great riches but by such means; for of his church it might not rise, inheritance hath he none. Wherefore…since there is great good behoveful at this time for the weal and salvation of your realms, the poverty, necessity, bareness and indigence of your liege people…consider the great lucre of the said cardinal and the great deceits that you be deceived in by the labour of him and of the said archbishop of York, as well in this your realm and in your realm of France and duchy of Normandy, where neither livelihood nor captain might be had without great good given to [Beaufort], whereby great part of all the loss that is lost there have been the causes of; for who so would give the most, his was the prizes, not considering the merits, service or substance of the person. And furthermore, it is

[381] Ibid, p.445. 'Item, nowe late was sent an other ambassiate to Calais, by the labour and counsaille of the saide cardinal and archebishop of Yorke, the cause why…is to me, youre seule oncle, and to other lords of your kin and counsaille, unknowen, to youre grete charge and ayeinst the gode publique of your royaumes… The whiche gode, if it had be emploied for the defence of youre saide royaumes, the merchandize of youre landes might have had other course, and youre said landes not standen in so grete mischief as they do.'
[382] Ibid, p.449. 'grete… hurt to you and youre lande'.

> greatly to be considered how… the which good… had [it] been well governed, might many a year sustained your wars without any tallages of your poor people.[383]

This section shows an awareness on Gloucester's part of both popular concerns and humanist ideals. Firstly he contrasted Beaufort's extreme and inexplicable wealth with the poverty of the people. In 1450 these would be the kind of things chief amongst the Cade rebels' grievances.[384] Secondly, this section also mirrors the humanist ideal that offices go to those who deserve them, not who can 'give the most'. The use of language like 'weal' and 'salvation' of the realm further linked Gloucester's grievances directly to the commonwealth. He was therefore using commonwealth ideology deliberately to both undermine Beaufort and argue against peace with France.

The focus on popular concerns also extended to the welfare of merchants. Gloucester explained how Beaufort had become the chief merchant of wool because customs officials in Southampton were employed by him. This, Gloucester believed, damaged the king and merchants alike:

> Whereas the said cardinal lent you…great and notable sums, he hath had, and has, assignments of the port of Hampton, which is the best port of your realm, where the costumiers be his servants; wherein by likeliness is it to suppose that he standing as the chief merchant of wools in your land, that you be thereby greatly defrauded; and under that rule what wools and other merchandises have been shipped and may be from time to time… to great hurt and prejudice to you, my right doubted lord, and to all your people.[385]

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[383]' Protest of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, against the liberation of the duke of Orleans 'in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France During the Reign of Henry the Sixth, King of England, vol ii,* ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, 1864) p.450. 'Item, my right doubted lord, it is wele knowen that it nad ben possible unto the saide cardinal to have commen to so grete richesse but by such moyens; for of his chirche it might not ryse, enheritance hath he noone. Wherfore… sith ther is grete gode byhoveful at this tyme for the wele and sauvacion of youre royaumes, the poverte, necessitee, barenesse and indigence of youre liege people…considre the grete lucre of the saide cardinal and the grete deceytes that ye be deceyved in by the labour of him and of the saide archbissop of York, as well in this youre royaume as in youre rouyame of Fraunce and duchie of Normandie, where neither office livelode, ne capitaigne might be had withoute to grete goode yeven to [Beaufort], wherby grete part of all the losse that is lost there, have ben the causes of; for who so wolde gif the moost, his was the prises, not considering the merits, service, ne suffisance of the personnes. And firthermore, it is gretly to be considered how…the whiche gode….had [it] ben well gourverned, might many a yere susteyned youre werres withoute eny talages of youre poure people'.

[384] *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, pp.204-206. The commons of Kent took issue with the fact: that the king was living beyond his means and causing the 'povertie 'of the people; that lords of 'roiall blood 'were excluded from the king's council, that debts were owed to the people of the land for things 'takyn to the use of the kinges howsolde'; that the king's servants were taking lands unlawfully; that lands in France had been lost and the perpetrators unpunished; that sheriffs and undersheriffs were abusing their powers; that ministers in Dover arrest people wrongly in order to claim a fee; that the people of Kent do not have 'free eleccion in chewsing knightes of the shire'; that the people were 'sore vexed in costes and labor'. Jack Cade issued separate articles, in which he asked for the arrest of the duke of Suffolk for losing France; punishment for whoever caused the death of Humphrey of Gloucester; and mentioned the extortion of the common people.

[385] Ibid, p.443. 'Whereas the saide cardinal lent you… grete and notable somes, he hath had, and hath, assignements upon the port of Hampton, whiche is the best port of youre royaume, where the coustumiers ben his servants; wherinne

Gloucester discredited Beaufort by accusing him of deceiving and defrauding both the king and the commonality. It is unlikely that his real concern was the welfare of merchants, but he apparently recognised the political value of using commonwealth ideology as a rhetoric. In contrast to Beaufort, Gloucester was the 'self-appointed spokesman of the people'.[386] This won him a great deal of support amongst them, with contemporaries calling him the 'good duke':

> It was thought that during his life he would withstand the delivery of Anjou and Maine, before promised. This for his honourable and liberal demeanour was surnamed [the] good duke of Gloucester.[387]

Gloucester emphasised the contrast between his own selflessness and the Cardinal's greed elsewhere in the *Declaracone.* Claiming that he 'write much thing for the weal of you and of your realms', he specifically asked for Beaufort's removal from the royal council.[388] The presence of Beaufort and Kemp, Gloucester claimed, affected the ability of other counsellors to speak the 'truth':

> Please it to your highness… to estrange them of your council… that men may be at their freedom to say what they think of truth; for though I dare to speak of my truth, the poor dare not so.[389]

That Gloucester had tried repeatedly to remove Beaufort from the council over the years suggests that this was just another attempt at extending his influence rather than something he undertook for the 'poor' men on Henry's council. Had Henry VI removed Beaufort, he would have created a vacuum for Gloucester to step into, and everybody within government knew this: he knew that some would take it 'by way of accusement of your council'.[390] As a result, he was careful to emphasise that his only concern was the lack of ability for the 'poor' to speak the truth. Gloucester

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by liklinesse it is to suppose that he standing the chief merchant of wolles in youre lande, that ye be therby gretly defrauded; and under that riuele what wolles and other merchandizes that have ben shipped and may be from tyme to tyme… to grete an hurt and prejudice to you, my right doubted lord, and to alle youre people'.

[386] Saygin, *Humphrey*, p.96.

[387] Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France* ed. Henry Ellis, (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1811) p.619. 'It was thought that durynge his lyfe he wolde withstande the delyvery of Angeou and Mayne, before promysed. This for his honourable & lyberall demeanure was surnamed [th]e good duke of Glouceter'.

[388] Ibid. 'write muche thing for the wele of you and of youre royaumes'.

[389]' Protest 'in *Letters and Papers*, p.450. 'Please it to your highness…to estraunge hem of youre counsaille, to that entent that men may be at thair fredam to say what hem thenketh of trouth; for thogh I dare speke of my trouthe, the poure ne dar not so.'

[390] Ibid. '…as I write muche thing for the wele of you and of youre rouyaumes, peradventure some wolde understande that I wolde, or had written it by wey of accusement of your counsaille, whiche God knoweth I do not'.

thus used commonwealth ideology and rhetoric to justify his arguments and make them more likely to persuade parliament. By linking every concern back to the people, the 'good duke' appeared to be arguing on behalf of the commonwealth rather than for his own ends.

This is an area which has not received scholarly treatment. Although Roberto Weiss noted that humanism offered Gloucester 'novel' arguments for the continuation of the war, he did not note that commonwealth ideology was a part of this. Furthermore, whilst Anthony Gross believed Gloucester used a 'combination of humanism and populism', this was to 'ring-fence' Henry V's reputation.[391] Gross did not elaborate on exactly what 'populism' Gloucester used to bolster his brother's reputation, and he made no mention of commonwealth. Neither connected Gloucester's use of commonwealth ideology to Beaufort either. However, commonwealth ideology was a rhetorical tool used by Humphrey of Gloucester to make a convincing argument against peace with France. By painting himself as the people's champion he was able to argue that he was not out solely for his own gain, whilst still furthering his own political agenda. Historians have not considered his attack on Beaufort in this way before, but it is likely that he used and manipulated commonwealth ideology as a smokescreen for his political aims.

Gloucester may also have used commonwealth ideology to explore ideas about rule. Millard called Gloucester the 'people's prince', and this was absolutely an image he cultivated.[392] The *Declaracone* is a good example of how he set himself up as a defender of the commonwealth. He was also, however, incredibly ambitious. His desire for power and influence was, as Vickers put it, 'beyond dispute'.[393] Gloucester therefore used commonwealth ideology to mask his political ambitions, whilst also exploring ideas about rule and governance. He may even have used it to put forward his own claim to the throne. Whilst he never openly claimed the crown in the way that his cousin Richard of York would do a decade later, he did present himself as an alternative royal authority. This argument rests on two texts from the 1440s: the anonymously written *On Husbondrie*, and a poem written after his death, the *Epitaphium*. Both suggest Gloucester used commonwealth ideology to explore ideas of rule.

On Husbondrie was commissioned when Gloucester's influence in government was at its lowest. After the death of his older brother John, duke of Bedford in 1435, Gloucester was heir to the throne. He had been superseded in the king's council by Beaufort in 1438, and by 1440 held little

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[391] Gross, *The Dissolution of Lancastrian Kingship: Sir John Fortescue and the Crisis of Monarchy in Fifteenth-century England,* (Stamford: Paul Watkins Publishing, 1996) p.35.
[392] Millard, *Humphrey*, p.157.
[393] Vickers, *Humphrey*, p.209.

influence in government. In 1441 his wife Eleanor Cobham (c.1400-1452) was arrested and accused of witchcraft. The couple were forcibly divorced, Eleanor sentenced to life imprisonment, and her husband tainted by association. It is at this point that Gloucester commissioned a translation of the ancient farming manual by Palladius (d.457-61). Although ostensibly about farming and land management, it may be read as an allegory for rule. This was nothing new; land management was often used in both England and on the continent as a metaphor for governance.[394] *On Husbondrie* was meant to be read this way; containing several references to governance, it was not a literal guide to agriculture. This was surely deliberate, since other translations of this text existed in England without these references. One was by Nicholas Bollarde (fl.1427), a Dominican friar, whose translation was much more like an actual farming manual than anything related to rule.[395] *On Husbondrie*, then, was a (perhaps somewhat desperate) attempt by Gloucester to explore ideas about rule and commonwealth at a time when he was almost politically irrelevant.

There are civic humanist ideas about the people and their needs within *On Husbondrie*. Although Daniel Wakelin noted that 'perhaps' *On Husbondrie* was a way of Gloucester showing he was fit for rule, he claimed there were no 'explicit hints' in the poem itself of this.[396] However, a passage about how farmers must cater to each plant and vine individually invites comparison between the king and how he must care for the commonwealth.[397] It urges the "farmer" to 'see the profession of every vine' and manage it accordingly.[398] In terms of rule, this advises the king to pay attention to the needs of the commonwealth, further suggesting that the duties of the king had shifted. The commonwealth was to be his priority. It also links to Plato's argument in the *Republic*, that each individual has specific needs and is suited to a specific purpose.[399] In other words, the king needs to be aware of the issues of his people, and tend to the needs of the commonwealth to ensure prosperity. This was something emphasised by Italian humanists like Salutati: the needs of the people is the primary duty of a leader. Gloucester was certainly aware of the concerns of the commons, as the *Declaracone* illustrated. It is possible that *On Husbondrie* was designed to take this further and suggest that Gloucester, being aware of the needs of the commons, would make a

[394] William Worcester's 1475 *Boke of Noblesse* does the same, and as Daniel Wakelin pointed out, 'political theorists from Aristotle onwards described expertise in agriculture as the equivalent of expertise in statecraft'. Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.44.
[395] Lalage Charlotte Yseult Everest-Philips, *The Patronage of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester*, (University of York, October 1983); Sidney Lee 'Bollard, Nicholas (fl.1427)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2798?rskey=FJt30A&result=1 [Accessed 15th May 2020]
[396] Ibid, p.45.
[397] *On Husbondrie from the Unique MS of about 1420ad in Colchester Castle* ed. Rev. Barton Lodge (London: Early English Text Society, 1873) p.2
[398] Ibid, stanza 10. 'se the profession of every vyne'.
[399] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Project Gutenberg* https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm (1998) [Accessed 10th March 2021]

better king than Henry VI, who, as the *Declaracone* showed, allowed the ‘public good’ to fall into ‘mischief’.

On Husbondrie was certainly more than a farming manual, and this is clear from the language used. ‘Governance’ was repeatedly used in reference to the land, which seems deliberately ambiguous.[400] Just as easily could ‘management’ have been used, but ‘governance’ was chosen instead, with specific connotations of rule and kingship. Indeed Daniel Wakelin pointed out that ‘governance’ was a ‘notable mistranslation’ from the original Latin ‘industria’.[401] It would seem, therefore, that Gloucester’s version was deliberately using language associated with rule. What is more, Gloucester was apparently directly involved with the making of the text. The anonymous author stated that Gloucester ‘taught me meter make’, suggesting he was directly involved with the composition.[402] Thus any messages *On Husbondrie* gave about kingship were likely a deliberate attempt by Gloucester, at this point heir to the throne, to explore ideas about rule.

That Gloucester was said to have taught the author meter, may, like the metaphor between farming and governance, also have been intended to show Gloucester as a competent leader. To be a ‘good reader’ was to be a ‘good lord’.[403] The use of learning and scholarship to inform governance was a humanist ideal, and it was an idea we have already seen Gloucester subscribe to: books were his “counsellors”. The author of *On Husbondrie* also mentioned several humanists by name, such as Piero del Monte (1400-1457), Tito Frulovisi (fl.1430s-1440s), Antonio Beccaria (1400-1474) and John Whethamstede (d.1465).[404] This shows that *On Husbondrie* was written under Gloucester's guidance, with humanist ideas and commonwealth ideology embedded within it. It implied that Gloucester would be a capable leader because of both his humanist study and awareness of the needs of the commonwealth. In this way, Gloucester was using commonwealth ideology to highlight his suitability for the throne and explore the expectations and duties of kingship.

Wakelin rightly pointed out that this was not exactly a public text.[405] It survives in only three copies, but perhaps its importance lies more in what it tells us about Gloucester’s ambitions rather than who actually saw it. It implies that even in the last years of his life, with almost all of his influence stripped away, he still wanted to underline his suitability for the crown and explore ideas

[400] *On Husbondrie from the Unique MS of about 1420ad in Colchester Castle* ed. Rev. Barton Lodge (London: Early English Text Society, 1873) p.2. Stanza 3, line 16.
[401] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.45
[402] Quoted in Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.51. ‘taught me metur make’.
[403] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.53.
[404] All were men who wrote for, lived with, or were associated with Gloucester.
[405] Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.53.

about rule. A. S. G. Edwards believed that *On Husbondrie* symbolised Gloucester's retreat from public life. He wondered whether it was an 'acknowledgement of Humfrey's own apolitical commitment at this stage in his life'.[406] Yet Edwards failed to notice the metaphors for rule in *On Husbondrie*. He called it a 'rural retreat', that lacked 'any overt or covert reference to contemporary affairs'.[407] However, *On Husbondrie* appears to be entirely relevant to contemporary affairs, being a metaphor for kingship. It was almost defiant of Gloucester, underlining his capability for rule at a point where his political influence was all but lost.

It is not unlikely that the point of *On Husbondrie* was to secure Gloucester greater power; he certainly had a track record of trying to further his influence. This was evident from the very beginning of Henry VI's reign. As per Henry V's will, Gloucester was granted the 'tutelam' of Henry VI.[408] Gloucester argued that this gave him all the powers of a regent; the king's council disagreed, insisting it conferred only the powers of a tutor.[409] He was eventually granted the entirely new title of Protector and Defender of the Realm, but it was restrictive, giving him no independent power. He was to relinquish the position whenever his elder brother John, duke of Bedford, (1389-1435), regent of France, was in England. In 1427 Gloucester requested clarification of his powers as Protector, which was a thinly veiled 'demand for more extended rights'.[410] In response, the Lords in parliament categorically replied that 'if the intention of the estates' in 1422 had been that he should have 'more power or authority, then more would have been expressed therein'.[411] They reminded Gloucester that he had accepted the Protectorate and 'pray[ed]' for him to be 'content with the power abovesaid'.[412] Their response in 1427 tells us much about Gloucester's political ambitions and it is important to remember whilst considering the ways Gloucester used commonwealth ideology to explore ideas about rule.

[406] A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Middle English Translation of Claudian's De Constulatu Stilichonis 'in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions* ed. A. J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 2001) p.277.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Codicil of the 1422 will printed in Patrick Strong, Felicity Strong,'The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V', *EHR,* 96(378) (1981) p.99. The will stated that: 'carrisimus frater roster Humfridus dux Gloucest'r habeat tutelam et defensionem nostri carissimi filli principales'
[409] The opposition to Gloucester being granted the power of a regent had Beaufort's fingerprints all over it. Harriss concluded that it was 'orchestrated if not led by 'Beaufort. G. L. Harriss, 'Beaufort, Henry [called the Cardinal of England] '*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [Accessed 10th February 2021]
[410] Vickers, *Humphrey*, p.207.
[411] ' Answer of the Lords to Gloucester's demand for a definition of his powers, 1427 '*English Historical Documents, vol. IV* ed. A. R. Myers, https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=1183 [Accessed 15th January 2021]
[412] Ibid.

It was not just Gloucester exploring these ideas. The *Epitaphium,* written anonymously after Gloucester's death, explored the same ideas about rule, commonwealth, and meritocracy.[413] Where *On Husbondrie* stated that kings ought to take note of the needs of the commonwealth, the *Epitaphium* was more explicit. It 'pleads the case of Duke Humphrey as if in the court of Heaven', suggesting that he should have had more power in life because of his work for the commonwealth.[414] Although Vickers was critical of the poem, calling it a 'piece of doggerel', it is an important source, showing how ideas of kingship were being linked to ideas about commonwealth and duty.[415]

Millard noted that Gloucester's position as Protector was later perceived as a 'calling rather than an appointment' for the duke.[416] The *Epitaphium* took this title literally:

> He was the very father and protector of the land,
> England, I mean, that is thine own dowry,
> Never man had more zeal as I understand,
> Nor readier to redress all transgressions by and by,
> I dare well say it sat his heart so nigh.[417]

That it was he and not Henry VI who was the 'father' of the realm shows that Gloucester's 'zeal' to fix all 'transgressions' was considered more important than anything the king had done. This was taken further, as the poem asked that Gloucester be crowned in Heaven to make up for the lack of crown he had in life: 'crown him in heaven, that in his days had no pare'.[418] Whilst Millard noted that the author of the poem was suggesting 'Humphrey was best equipped to rule England', he did not dwell on either the humanist origins of this, or the implications of it.[419] The *Epitaphium* suggested that Gloucester deserved to have a crown in life because of his work for good of the realm. It even specifically mentioned his 'study, labour and merit for common weal'.[420] Service to the commonwealth was being linked to kingship, not just in the *Epitaphium* but in the advice

[413] Rossell Hope Robbins, 'An Epitaph for Duke Humphrey (1447) '*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 56(4) (1955). Initially the poem was attributed to John Lydgate, but this has since been discredited.
[414] Millard, 'An Analysis of the Epitaphium Eiusdem Ducis Gloucestrie 'in *Authority and Subversion* ed. Linda Clark, (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003) p.124.
[415] K. H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester*, (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1907) p. 390.
[416] Millard, *Humphrey*, p.157.
[417] BL Add. MS. 34360, f.67. 'He was verray fader and protectour of the land, Ingland, I meane, that is thyn own dowarye; Neuer man had more zele as I vndrestond, Ne redyer to redresse all transgresses by and by; I dare wele say it sat his hert so ny'.
[418] Ibid, f.66b. 'crowne hym in hevene, that in his dayes had no pare'.
[419] Millard, 'Analysis 'in *Authority* ed. Clark, p.130.
[420] Add. MS. 34360, f.67b. 'study, labour and merit for comvne wele; ffor reward, smal thank, or worship in recompense'

literature examined in the previous chapter. Not only does this suggest service to the commonwealth was qualification for rule, it also shows that it was an ideology being manipulated for the political purposes of men such as Gloucester.

What is interesting about the *Epitaphium* is that it did not focus on Gloucester's royal heritage. Although he was called the 'father and protector' of the land, there is no mention of his royal blood. This is especially odd considering that throughout his life Gloucester was usually referred to as the 'son, brother and uncle of kings'.[421] Instead the focus was on how he protected the realm and laboured for the common profit. Kingship in the *Epitaphium* is thereby presented as meritocratic, something Gloucester had earned through his service to the commonwealth. This will be explored more in chapter three, but it seems that commonwealth ideology, combined with humanist ideas about meritocracy and elective governance, was changing ideas about kingship in fifteenth century England. The *Epitaphium* shows that these ideas - also found in the *Declaracone*, *On Husbondrie,* and in Frulovisi's *Vita*, where 'blind affection' for the king was 'condemn[ed]' - were being taken on by others.[422] Millard believed that, as the poem was written in English, it was intended for a wide audience, and may have been displayed by the duke's tomb in St Alban's Abbey, or on church doors in London.[423] This would enable such ideas to filter through society until, as chapter three argues, the commonality themselves recognised the political importance of the commonwealth.

Thus Gloucester used commonwealth ideology to explore ideas about rule with a view to increasing his own power and influence. It seems plausible that his interest in civic humanism made him aware of the political potential of the commonwealth, and his interest in humanist study enabled him to use these ideas as political rhetoric. It is no coincidence that everything he claimed was for the common benefit of England entirely matched his own aims: he wanted England to remain at war with France, he wanted Beaufort's influence on the council to be limited, and he wanted a more prominent position within government. He may even have come to desire the throne itself. The 'people's prince' used commonwealth ideology to bolster his own arguments. In so doing he won the support of the people. So mourned was he upon his death that even three years later, the Cade rebels included his mysterious demise amongst their grievances. Gloucester's use of commonwealth ideology therefore not only furthered his own political aims, but also won him public support. As the next section will demonstrate, this in and of itself was of great political value.

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[421] For example, in the *Declaracone*, and in other government sources. 'The protest of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester against the liberation of the duke of Orleans, 1440 '*English Historical Documents Vol IV* ed A. Myers, https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=1042# [Accessed 8th March 2020]
[422] Frulovisi, *The First English* ed. Kingsford, p.18. '…his people and countries, whose blind affection the example of this noble Prince utterly condemneth.'
[423] Millard, 'Analysis 'in *Authority* ed. Clark pp.117-119.

Richard, duke of York

Richard of York was a successor to Humphrey of Gloucester in more ways than one. After Gloucester's death in 1447, York stepped into the role of heir presumptive. However, as Anthony Gross noted, York also inherited the 'political mantle as the self-proclaimed protector of English national interests'.[424] Like Gloucester, York used commonwealth ideology as a political and rhetorical tool to discredit a rival, add weight to his own political arguments, and to extend power and influence. In this way, he used the same ideals and ideologies to claim the throne.

York's use of commonwealth rhetoric has not received sufficient attention from scholars. Although Gross noted that York 'built up a groundswell of popular support by establishing himself as the champion of a populist regime , he did not look at York's specific use of the commonwealth.[425] He believed that the 'reformist manifestoes' York put out in the 1450s were 'little more than a repetition of a pattern which had been established since the thirteenth century'.[426] This ignores the very different understanding of commonwealth ideology in the fifteenth century, and Gross did not explore how York's 'championing' of popular causes aided him politically. G. L. Harriss similarly did not think York was a 'populist'. Nevertheless, he admitted that Henry VI still feared and mistrusted the popular support that York excited as a reformer and even usurper .[427] Whether York was truly a 'populist' or not is difficult to ascertain, but he certainly used the rhetoric of populism deliberately to secure popular support. Although Michael Jones noted that York had great empathy for ordinary soldiers, his focus was Richard III, so he did not develop this point further.[428] A. S. G. Edwards was the first to connect York's politics with humanism, but he did not look at York's specific and deliberate use of commonwealth ideology. Using *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, a translation of an ancient text, he argued York used humanism to gauge reactions to the idea of him taking the throne.[429] Although Edwards went further than anyone else, he did not consider York's use of commonwealth ideology as a rhetorical device, leaving a gap in studies of

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[424] Anthony Gross, *Dissolution,* p.35

[425] Ibid, p.14.

[426] Ibid, p.5.

[427] G. L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-461* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 646.

[428] Michael K. Jones, 'Richard III as a Soldier' in *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* ed. John Gillingham (London: Collins & Brown, 1993) p. 94.

[429] A. S. G. Edwards 'The Middle English Translation of Claudian's *De Consulatu Stilichonis* 'in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions* ed. A. J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 2001) pp.274-275.

York’s use of populist politics and commonwealth ideology.

Richard of York may not have been after the throne until 1459/1460, but throughout the 1440s and 1450s, he certainly wanted more influence and power. He felt he had been neglected by the crown: after Gloucester’s death, he was heir presumptive to the throne and for a long time had been the richest man in England. Still, he did not have any especial influence with the king. Making matters worse, as lieutenant of France he was forced to start paying wages from his own pockets, significantly depleting his resources. By the 1440s, the crown was indebted to York to the tune of almost £40,000.[430] Like Gloucester before him, he apparently desired a position of greater influence in government, and in June 1451, one of York's councillors, Thomas Young (c.1405-1476) petitioned parliament for York to be acknowledged as heir presumptive.[431] York would not officially claim the crown for another nine years, but it is unlikely that Young would have presented the petition to parliament without York’s knowledge or approval. Further, in 1453 York’s chamberlain William Oldhall (d.1460) was arrested and accused of plotting in 1450 to kill the king and replace him with York. It would seem that York wanted a more active role in governance, but in another parallel to Humphrey of Gloucester, he was prevented from gaining influence with the king because of a rivalry with one of the king's favourites. In 1445, York had been replaced as lieutenant of France by Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset (1406-1455). At this point he began vocally opposing peace with France and the marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou (1430-1482). He was given the lieutenancy of Ireland in 1447*,* a position that served almost as a period of exile. York returned to England in early 1452, apparently with the purpose of removing Somerset and taking the position in government he felt he deserved. He had been almost crippled by the king s debts and was superseded in the king’s council by Somerset. Like Gloucester*,* he painted himself as the people’s champion and used commonwealth ideology and populist politics to win support and undermine his rival.

In 1450 he put three sets of articles before the king.[432] The first of the articles concerned his being turned away from Beaumaris on his way back from Ireland.[433] This focused on his own concerns, but the other two articles were not about York at all. These drew on popular concerns and attitudes in order to build an image of York as the people's champion. The second set of articles concerned

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[430] R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (Stroud: Sutton 1986) p. 75

[431] Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p.98. Young was sent to the Tower, parliament was dissolved, and the petition was unsuccessful.

[432] Bills printed in John Vale's Book, *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book* ed. Margaret Kekewich, (Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1995)

[433] *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.185. York was ‘stopped and for barred ’from landing at Beaumaris on his way back from Ireland. He was aware that ‘certeyn letres were made and delivered unto Chester, Shroisbury ’and other cities preventing him from entering there too.

the ‘extortions and oppressions used among the great estates’, and asked for justice for those wrongly accused of treason.[434] The third asked for the punishment of traitors.[435] Both were veiled attacks on Somerset: the second called for those ‘about the king’s person’ guilty of treason and crimes to be arrested.[436] Watts noted that the third set was ‘fully public...tailored to parliamentary and popular attitudes’.[437] It was, according to William Wayte, clerk to a royal justice in 1450, much after the common’s desire .[438] All three sets of articles were made freely available; Wayte told the country gentleman John Paston (1421-1466) that they were circulating about the city .[439] Again, this is evidence of how this kind of ideology filtered through society and how, by 1462, even peasants were making use of these ideas. For York in 1450, the focus was apparently on presenting himself as the people’s champion in order to win support.

In his second set of articles, York drew on ideas of commonwealth and kingly duty:

> Law causeth every state and degree to keep ordinate rule, and the king is sworn to his law and to defend his people and so… who that subverts… the law, it is the most treason on earth… for they impoverish their prince in unlawful asking of his inheritance and domains. Thus… they have caused the losses of his glorious realm of France… and that caused his liege men to their utterest destruction without reason or defence... Wherefore the gracious, true lords of the king's council… think on your oath that you owe to our sovereign lord and… give… true council without fear… then we all may defend surely the wealfull living…[440]

This bill was addressed both to the king and the council, and so York took the opportunity to remind both that the king was ‘sworn’ to both his laws and the protection of his people. In order to ensure the ‘wealfull’ living of the commonwealth, the king needed to adhere to the needs of the

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[434] Ibid, p.187. ‘extorcions and oppressions used amonge the grete astatis’.
[435] Ibid, p.189.
[436] Ibid, p.187. 'about the kinges personne’
[437] Ibid, p.189 n.29.
[438] Eliza Hartrich, *Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth Century England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) p.136. He was clerk to a justice named William Yelverton; ‘A.D. 1450, 6th October, William Wayte to John Paston’, *The Paston Letters, vol.1* ed. James Gairdner (London: Edward Arber, 1872) p. 150. ‘meche after the comouns desyre’.
[439] P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 85; William Wayte to John Paston, *Paston Letters* ed. Gairnder, p.153
[440] *Vale*’*s Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.188. 'Lawe causith every state and degree to kepe ordinate reule, and the king is sworne to his law and to defende his people, and so… who that subvertith… the lawe, it is the most threason on erthe…for they impovereth here prince in unlawfull askinges of his inheritaunce and demaynes. Thus…they have caused the losses of his glorious reaume of France…and that caused his liege men to here utterest destruccion withouten reason or defence… Wherefore the gracieux, trewe lordes of the kinges counsel…thinketh on your othe that ye owe to our souveraigne lord and…geveth… trewe counseile withoute fere… thanne we alle may defende surely the welefull leving…’.

realm and his councillors needed to give 'true counsel without fear'.[441] This is reminiscent of the claims made by Gloucester in the *Declaracone*. Councillors needed to give true and honest advice without repercussion. The articles are also further evidence that the king's duty to his people was a priority, and further shows how expectations of kingship were developing in response to the new popularity of commonwealth ideology.

York echoed the concerns of the Cade rebels in this bill. In July 1450, Cade demanded that those responsible for the loss of France were tried for treason.[442] Whilst Johnson noted that York based this bill on Cade's demands, he did not consider that York was specifically manipulating popular concerns and commonwealth ideology in order to undermine Somerset specifically. The bill did not mention Somerset by name, but it did not need to. Cade, and indeed the wider population of England, placed blame for losses in France at Somerset's door. Association with Somerset was enough to make Lord Dudley and the Abbot of Gloucester 'terrified' of the common people in 1452.[443] Furthermore, the passage quoted above has 'nota' written next to it in the left margin, and 'nota bene nota' in the right margin.[444] Ideas about the king's duty to defend his people and the harm done to France were popular in 1450, and York exploited these, as well as contempt for Somerset. He used commonwealth ideology as a rhetoric, engaging with 'the art of persuasion' to paint himself as the people's champion.[445] Much like Gloucester in 1440, he invited comparison between himself and Somerset with the articles, with York 'defend[ing] the wealfull living' and Somerset causing 'losses' and 'destruction'.

This was an idea York furthered in the third set of articles. Here he pushed for for the punishment of traitors and the execution of justice.[446] He was, apparently, concerned only with justice:

> I your humble subject and true liegeman, Richard duke of York… desiring surety and prosperity of your most royal person and welfare of this your noble realm, counsel and advertise your excellence for the conservation of good tranquility, able rule amongst all your

[441] Ibid.
[442] 'Complaints of the commons of Kent' in *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.204. Item 7 asked that the 'traitors 'who had 'destruyed 'the people and the king's lands in France be tried for treason.
[443] *Benet's Chronicle* ed. Hanham, p.xxi.
[444] *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.188, n.29.
[445] Kekewich, *Impact*, p.261.
[446] ' A.D. 1450, Richard Duke of York to King Henry VI '*Paston Letters* ed. Gairdner, pp. 153-4.

> true subjects, to ordain and provide that due justice be had against all that be so…openly noised.[447]

This also echoed concerns raised by the Cade rebels, and with York reminding the king of his duty to the 'welfare' of the realm, the articles present York as trying simply to ensure good governance and 'able rule'.[448] However, his concern for the 'conservation of good tranquility' is undermined by the fact that York wanted to be the one in charge of punishing 'such offenders'.[449] He offered to '[execute] your commandments in the premises aforesaid… and redress… the said misrules to my might and power'.[450] He was not being entirely selfless, just as Gloucester was hardly selfless either when he used similar tactics to undermine his Beaufort a decade earlier. The articles were a grab for power disguised as a bid for reform. York therefore used commonwealth ideology and rhetoric to build a convincing image of himself as a reformer, securing himself political support with a view to removing his rivals. In this way, commonwealth ideology was a significant tool for fifteenth-century politicians.

A letter York wrote to the city of Shrewsbury on 3rd February 1452 is further evidence of how he used commonwealth ideology to undermine Somerset. In the letter, York blamed Somerset for the loss of France, the 'undoing' of Calais, and the fact that necessary reforms had still not been made:

> It is not unknown to you, how that, after my coming out of Ireland, I, as the King's true liege man…perceiving the inconvenience before rehearsed, advised his Royal Majesty of certain Articles concerning the weal and safeguard, as well of his most royal person, as the tranquility and conservation of all this his realm: the which Advertisements, how be it that it was thought that they were full necessary, were laid apart, and to be of none effect, through the envy, malice, and untruth of the said Duke of Somerset; which, for my truth, faith and allegiance that I owe unto the King, and the good will and favour that I have to all the Realm, laboureth continually…for my undoing…[451]

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[447] Ibid, p.189. I your humble subgiet and trewe liegeman, Richard duc of Yorke….desiring surete and prosperite of your most roiall personne and welfare of this youre noble reaume, counseile and advertise your excellence for the conservacion of good tranquilite, able reule amonges all your trewe subgiettes for tordeigne and provide that due justice be had ageinste all that bene so…openly noised.'

[448] 'Complaints of the commons of Kent' in *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, pp.204-5. The complaints include things like justice for those wrongly accused of treason (item 5), complaints against sherifs and undersheriffs extorting the people (items 9 and 10), and corrupt officials using bribery, 'so the collectors office is bought and sold extortionately' (item 14).

[449] 'A.D. 1450, Richard Duke of York to King Henry VI '*Paston Letters* ed. Gairdner, pp. 189.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Letter printed in Henry Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History, vol. 1.* (London: Harding, Triphook and Lepard, 1825) p. 12.

The focus was on the commonwealth, and York deliberately presented himself as a reformer. He used the 'weal and safeguard' of the realm as an excuse for getting rid of Somerset. At the end of the letter York wrote that: 'I…am fully concluded to proceed in all haste against him'.[452] Clearly, York was exploiting commonwealth ideology and popular concerns to undermine his rival. Other letters went to other cities: it was not just Shrewsbury, which 'responded to York's call to arms', it is possible Nottingham did too.[453] An assembly was gathered in Ludlow on 10th February, as well as in Grantham and Stamford later in the month.[454] Henry VI's response to the letters was to ignore them and instruct others to do likewise, but York had clearly convinced some of them.[455] The humanist art of rhetoric was all about persuasion, and by deliberately using popular concerns and commonwealth ideology as a rhetoric, York had successfully won a great deal of political support.

York frequently showed an awareness of popular concerns. In a list of complaints from c.1449 against Adam Moleyns, the bishop of Chichester, (d.1450) York complained of the 'great hurt' to merchants and the 'great extortion' of the 'poor people' by the king's ministers, who took from them 'without payment, contrary to Gods' pleasure and the lands laws'.[456] In contrast, York acted for the 'maintaining of the… commonweal' and 'good politique laws'.[457] Mentioning the king's 'livelihoods' too, and how the royal estate was sustained, York pre-empted the grievances raised by the Cade rebels in 1450, again furthering the image of himself as a reformer.

This was an image he cemented during Henry VIs mental incapacity between 1453 and 1455, during his role as Protector. Although as Protector all he had to do was keep government ticking over until the king regained his sensibilities, he made an effort to right the wrongs he identified in 1449, as well as those the Cade rebels put forward in 1450. Cade had called for punishment of traitors, the reining in of royal spending, and an explanation for Gloucester's mysterious death. As a result, York had Somerset arrested and imprisoned, reduced the king's household back to the size it had been under Henry V, and saw a petition brought to parliament in 1455 that aimed to restore the late duke's name.[458] All of this furthered his reputation as a reformer, a move perhaps calculated to secure the support of the commonality.

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[452] Ibid, p.13.
[453] Eliza Hartrich, *Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413-1471* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) p. 139.
[454] Ibid p. 140.
[455] Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p. 109.
[456] Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p.220. The articles are undated but Wolffe puts them at no later than 6th July 1449, because after this, York was in Ireland; BL, Harley MS. 543, f. 164v. 'Grete extorcion', 'pore people'.
[457] Ibid, f.164. 'mayntayninge of the… comon weale'.
[458] The *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council* show that York reduced the household back to the size it had been under Henry V, limiting the king's household to 385 persons (398 during feast times), and Margaret of Anjou's to 120. The Prince of Wales was assigned just 38. *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England, vol. VI*

Yet York's real purpose in all of this, as with the articles in 1450 and the letters of February 1452, was the removal of the Duke of Somerset. This is made clear by the fact that when York was Protector, he had Somerset arrested and imprisoned, and appointed himself Somerset's replacement as captain of Calais. It seems to have been his purpose all along: in the early 1450s, York compiled an official list of complaints against Somerset.[459] These were put before the king's council for 'the great welfare and common avail and interest of your majesty royal and of this your noble realm'.[460] They drew attention to how Somerset, through his 'subtle ways and means', 'violent p[re]sumption', 'negligence… and wilful recklessness', caused the loss of Normandy.[461] York was playing on popular concerns and exploiting anger over the loss of English territory in France, but he couched these in terms of commonwealth. He stressed that he only desired the 'examination and knowledge of truth thereupon to be had for the great and singular weal of this your said realm'.[462] By drawing attention to Somerset's 'negligence', York painted himself as a reformer, especially as throughout the complaints, he referenced the due 'p[ro]cesse' and 'consideration of the law'.[463] He contrasted himself (ostensibly a reformer, committed to the law and the commonwealth) with Somerset (a traitor who deliberately and maliciously undermined English land in France).[464] He mentioned how Somerset had:

> put away and diminished diverse garrisons and other strong places…and that caused the soldiers in diverse strong places for poverty, not having horse nor harness, and also the number diminished… and that was a great cause of the loss of Normandy, the loss of which caused the perdition of Gascoigne and Guyenne.[465]

Here York exploited popular concerns over common soldiers and their losses, and he did so using blatant untruths. He accused Somerset of reducing the garrisons, but the garrison at Calais had been

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ed. Harris Nicolas, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1837) pp. 220-33; Bertram Percy Wolfe, *Henry VI* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001) p. 98. The number employed in Henry's household doubled in his first fifteen years of majority rule. In 1439 there had been 172 yeomen. This had risen to 228. His household employed over 500 individuals by 1451.This harks back to the 1449 complaints, where York called for the king's estate to be 'sustained' in the same manner as his 'noble progenitors', Harley MS 543, f.146v.; As for the rebels' calls for justice for Gloucester, in 1455 a parliament under York's 'auspices' brought a petition to restore the late duke's name. Johnson, *Duke Richard,* p. 85; Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p. 164.

459 BL, Cotton MS Vespasian C XIV f.40. There is some confusion over the date: John Stow in his chronicle attributed it to 1454, but Gairdner in the introduction to the *Paston Letters* claimed this was 'erroneous', and Stow meant 1453. He said, though, that 1453 'also is quite impossible' and he did not suggest an alternative date. (p.103).

460 Ibid. 'the grete welfare and co[m]on avail and interesse of your magiste roiall and of this your noble realme'.

461 Ibid. '…subtle weyes and means…violent p[re]sumption…negligence… and wilfull reckelessnes'.

462 Ibid. 'examination and knowleth of trouth theruppon to be had for the grete and singuler weel of this youre said roiame'.

463 Ibid.

464 Ibid. It also mentions how Somerset had 'consented 'knowingly to the 'brekyng of the trues'.

465 Ibid.

'very recently expanded', not reduced.[466] This is something York would surely have known. This list of complaints was handed to the king's council and so not a public document, but it was along the same lines as the letters he issued to cities like Shrewsbury in 1452. It is also strikingly similar to the *Declaracone* Gloucester wrote in 1440 condemning Edmund Beaufort, using commonwealth ideology and issues in France to also undermine a rival and secure greater political influence. Such ideology was frequently used by politicians like York and Gloucester, bringing commonwealth into governance and giving it political importance.

It is also a clear example of York using commonwealth ideology as a rhetoric to construct and support his arguments against Somerset. York did this frequently, appealing to popular opinion in order to win himself support and this caused anxiety for the king and Lancastrian government, well before York formally claimed the throne. Henry VI's response to the first of York's 1450 bills shows York was incredibly popular with the people, and that this was a threat to Henry's kingship. When York asked why he had been prevented from landing at Beaumaris, the king responded:

> Of long time among the people hath been upon you much strange language… and many of the untrue shipmen and other in their manner said words against our estate, making menace to our estate by yours, saying that you should be fetched home with many thousands, and you should take upon you that [which] you neither ought nor as we doubt not you will not attempt… Wherefore we sent to diverse of our ports and places for to hearken and take heed if any such manners of coming were, and if there had been, to resist it… How be it that peradventure your sudden coming without any certain warning caused our servants and subjects to do as they did considering the causes aforesaid.[467]

Actions in the name of the commonwealth were being linked to kingship. Just as the *Epitaphium* suggested Gloucester's labour for the commonwealth earned him the throne, York's efforts for the commonwealth worried Henry VI, believing York could 'take upon' himself the crown. The fact that it was 'shipmen' and others in their 'manner' that were saying these 'words against our estate' tells us that it was the commonality York was popular with. It was not just a small group of people

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[466] Jonhnson, *Duke Richard*, p. 113.

[467] Bills printed in John Vale's Book, printed in *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book* ed. Margaret Kekewich, (Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1995) pp.186-7. Of long tyme among the peopull hath bene upon you moche strange langage… and many of thontrewe shipmen and other in their manoire seide wordes ageinste our astate making manasse to our astate by youres seying that ye shulde be fetched home with many thowsandes, and ye shulde take upon you that ye nother oughte nor as we doughte notthte ye wil not attempte…Wherfore we sente to divers of our portes and places for to herkin and take heed yef any suche maneris of comyng were, and yf ther had bene tahave resiste it….How be it that peraventure your subden comyng withouten eny certayne warnyng causid our servantes and subgiettes to do as thei des considering the causes aforesaid'.

either. From Henry's response, 'such like language' had been found in 'diverse' towns across England.[468] It is clear that York's appeals to popular politics threatened Lancastrian government. Henry VI even admitted that those who had been encouraging the idea of York taking the throne had been rounded up and executed.[469] Other contemporaries commented on this too: Gregory's chronicle recorded that some had 'more favour unto the Duke of York than unto the king .[470] It is impossible to say whether or not York planned on claiming the throne at this point, but he certainly wished to undermine Somerset and take a more active role in governance. Like Gloucester before him, he used commonwealth ideology to do this. Henry VI's response, however, also proves the growing connection between suitability for rule and action taken on behalf of the realm.

Whilst the idea of York taking the throne had been circulating since the early 1450s, it was not until 1459/1460 that he acted on it. At this point it was clear that York wanted the throne, and in response, the Lancastrian government issued the polemic *Somnium Vigilantis*. This accused York of deliberately seeking the favour of the people to usurp the crown.[471] *Somnium Vigilantis* systematically went over all of York's criticisms of the government before refuting them. Significantly, it argued that only the king could serve the commonwealth and instigate reform:

> Among many things by which the commonwealth of a realm stands, the most principal is this, a due subjection…to the sovereign…and that none incompatible estate be usurped by any person…[472]

The fact that the *Somnium* needed to state that the commonwealth stood in 'subjection' to the king highlights the existence of ideas to the contrary, otherwise it would not need to have been said. York had been peddling these ideas, as had Gloucester. In invoking the commonwealth to win 'favour', York had put the commonwealth in a position of political importance. In so doing, he had continued what Gloucester started in the 1430s and 1440s.

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[468] Ibid, p.186. 'Also there was divers of such fals people that wenten and had soche like langage in divers of our townes of our lande'.
[469] *Vale*'*s Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.187.
[470] *Gregory*'*s Chronicle* in *Collections of a London Citizen,* ed. J. Gairdner (London: Camden Society, 1876) p.196. '…more favyr unto the Duke of Yorke thenne unto the kynge'.
[471] A. Broertjes, 'The Lancastrian Retreat from Populist Discourse', *Limina* 20(3) (2015); British Library, Royal MS D. 17. XV. f.307.
[472] Ibid, f.305. 'Among many thinges by the whiche the commone welthe of a royame stondyth, the most principall is this, a due subjeccion…to the soverain…and that none incompatible astat be usurped by ony personne…'

This does not seem to be a coincidence, as York deliberately linked himself to Gloucester. No satisfactory explanation has been put forth for why he would do so. Although Millard noted that comparison to Gloucester was a 'useful mantle' for York, he believed he only did so when his loyalty was suspected.[473] For Millard, it was a defence mechanism, not a way of claiming power. However, especially in the wake of the *Epitaphium*, York comparing himself to Gloucester may have been a way of York pushing his suitability for the throne.

An English Chronicle recorded the articles sent by York in 1460 to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the House of Commons. At this point, York wanted the crown. His articles mentioned Gloucester, saying that:

> since the piteous, shameful and sorrowful…murder to all of England of that noble…prince Humfrey…it hath been laboured…to have destroyed and murdered the said duke of York…for none other cause but for the true heart…we ever have borne…to the profit of the king's estate, to the commonweal of the same realm, and defence thereof.[474]

The articles suggested that York's life was endangered by his efforts to defend the 'commonweal'. The reference to Gloucester is curious since at this point, the duke had been dead for thirteen years. After Gloucester's death though, many of the king's subjects had reacted with outrage. Jack Cade in 1450 even mentioned the death of the 'high and mighty excellent prince, the duke of Gloucester' in the articles he compiled.[475] York therefore cultivated an image of himself as a defender of the commonwealth just like Gloucester, and used Gloucester's death as a way of attracting support for his cause. In emphasising his work for the 'commonwealth', the articles also suggested a similar thing to the *Epitaphium:* that labour for the commonwealth makes one worthy of a crown. It is possible that York deliberately drew on ideas about Gloucester earning a crown in order to emphasise his own suitability for the throne, at a time when he was actively pursuing a claim.

Similar ideas about commonwealth and rule can be seen in a humanist text associated with York, *De Consulatu Stilichonis.* Telling the story of the Roman general Stilicho (c.359-408), the fourth-

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[473] Millard, *Humphrey*, p.237.
[474] *An English Chronicle* ed. Davies p. 88 [Accessed 13th August 2020] https://archive.org/details/anenglishchronic00camduoft/page/88/mode/2up?q=humfrey 'syth the pytyous shamefulle, and sorowfulle…murther to alle Englond of that noble…prince Humfrey…hit hath be laboured…to have dystroyed and murthryd the seyde duke of York… for none other cause but for the trew hert…we ever have borne…to the profyte of the kynges estate, to the commons wele of the same reame & defens thereof.'
[475] *Vale's Book,* ed. Kekewich, p.206. 'highe and mightefull excellent prince, the duc of Glowcester'.

century text by Claudian (370-404) relates how Stilicho earned the love of the people through skill and military success. As a result the people begged him to take control of the empire. A translation of Claudian's text was written for York in c.1445 by the friar Osbern Bokenham (1393-1463), exploring ideas about rule as the *Epitaphium* and *On Husbondrie* did. It praised Stilicho's virtues and suggested that, because he worked for the commonwealth, he had earned the right to rule.

Bokenham claimed that Stilicho had been taught by the cardinal virtues. One, Clemency, taught him how it was important that 'no annoyance grew to [the] peace of [the] commonwealth'.[476] The 'peace' of the commonwealth ought to be preserved, and this ties into ideas about defence and the duty of the king to ensure the protection of the commonwealth. This was inserted into the text where no reference to the 'peace of the commonwealth' appears in the original.[477] This could hardly be accidental: Bokenham knew Latin, and had included the original Latin alongside his translation. York too could read Latin. Furthermore, Claudian was a popular author but *De Consulatu Stilichonis* was not a popular text. Thus, although Watts argued that that the use of the commonwealth was conventional' in the fifteenth century, this is not enough to explain its inclusion in Bokenham's translation.[478] Commonwealth ideology was deliberately inserted in order to make a comment about who deserves to rule and how they earn it.

This was connected explicitly to York by the comparison between York and Stilicho in the prologue:

> Mark Stilicho's life whom people praised…for now the parliament peers where they go or ride say the duke of York hath God upon his side… blessed Jesu make this rumour true and after… perils this prince with joy endow.[479]

This makes it clear from the start that the text was supposed to be read with York in mind. Further comparison is made to Richard by an annotation of 'deo gratias Ricarde' later in the text.[480] Watts noted that a scribe added this, but did not linger on why it was written. It was written opposite a passage that states: 'the greatest worship groweth that thou which council to all giveth'.[481] Watts

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[476] John Watts, '*De Consulatu Stiliconis:* Texts and politics in the Reign of Henry VI '*Journal of Medieval History,* 16, (1990) p.254. 'No noyance grewe to peas of commoun welthe'.
[477] Quoted in Wakelin, *Humanism*, p. 92.
[478] Watts, '*De Consulatu Stiliconis* 'p.254.
[479] BL, Add. MS. 11814, f.4. 'Marke Stilichoes life whom peoplies preysed…for now the parlement pierys wher thei goo or ryde seyen the duke of Yorke hath god vpon his side…blessid Ihesu make this rumour trewe and aftir…peryles this preince with ioie endwe.'
[480] Ibid, f.19.
[481] Ibid. 'thi greteest worship groweth that thou which counceil to al yivest'.

said no more about it, but it is worth noting that this is not a phrase usually associated with non-royals. It was kings, not noblemen, described as ‘deo gratias’.[482] The identity of whoever made this comment is unknown, but proves that there were individuals connecting York’s efforts for the commonwealth with a claim to the throne. In this way, *De Consulatu Stilichonis* was similar to *On Husbondrie* and the *Epitaphium*. The prologue also mentioned how Stilicho had more ‘worship…in his days’ than any ‘prince had of his degree’.[483] The implication was therefore that Stilicho, because of his good deeds, was more worthy of rule than any other prince. This connects ideas of commonwealth to ideas of rule and supported York’s bid for the throne.

Some have rejected the idea that *De Consulatu Stilichonis* was part of York’s bid for power because it was too early - a date in the back of the manuscript ascribes it to 1445. W. J. Fahrenbach argued that, because Gloucester was still alive in 1445, it could not have been made with York’s ambitions for the crown in mind. Since York was not heir at this point, Fahrenbach believed any designs York had on replacing Henry VI would be pointless as he was not yet next in line. However, this ignores the dispute over dating (Watts believed 1445 was a scribal error, and it actually dates from 1455).[484] Furthermore, whether York intended to claim the throne or not in 1445, the text proves that, regardless of the date, ideas about kingship were being connected to the commonwealth. York was, apparently, receptive to these ideas, as his articles in 1460 and his letter to Shrewsbury show. Edwards believed that the text was a ‘trial balloon’ for York: if the comparison between York and Stilicho did not ‘find approval’ it could be ‘disowned’.[485] However, what Edwards missed was the focus on the commonwealth. There is a focus on commonwealth ideology and how rulers need to protect the commonwealth in *De Consulatu Stilichonis* which is significant. Edwards also compared it to *On Husbondrie,* but believed these texts were polar opposites of each other.[486] They are more similar than has been noted, though. Both texts explore ideas about rule, and connect an awareness and concern for the commonwealth with good governance.

Therefore, *De Consulatu Stilichonis* painted York in a similar light as Gloucester: beloved by the people, working for the commonwealth, and therefore worthy of a crown. It cannot be claimed with any certainty that York commissioned *De Consulatu Stilichonis* in 1445 with a view of taking the throne. What can be said, however, is that York deliberately painted himself as a reformer with a

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[482] In England, ‘deo gratia ’had been adopted in reference to the king ‘sometime between May 1172 and February 1173’. Dauvit Broun, ’The absence of Regnal Years from Charters of Kings of Scots ’in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXV: Proceedings of the Battle Conference,* ed. John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), pp.51-2.
[483] Add. MS. 11814, f.4v.
[484] Watts pushed for 1455 date because the conditions were more relevant to the text. John Watts, ‘*De Consulatu Stiliconis:* Texts and politics in the Reign of Henry VI ’*Journal of Medieval History* 16 (1990).
[485] Edwards, ‘Middle English Translation’, p.275. *On Husbondrie* was Gloucester’s ‘rural retreat’.
[486] Ibid, p.277.

care for the commonwealth. The bills of 1450 and the letter to Shrewsbury, along with his 1460 articles, show that York used commonwealth language and ideology to pursue his own agenda. In 1460, he was formally recognised as heir to the throne with the Act of Accord. This will be looked at in detail in chapter four, but it should be noted here that the Act had a significant focus on ideas of commonwealth and kingly duty. York therefore, like Gloucester, grounded a claim to the throne in commonwealth language and ideology. Ideas about kingship were thus changing in response to the new prominence of the commonwealth.

Richard III

The actions of Richard's son, Richard III, demonstrate this even more clearly. In 1483, Richard duke of Gloucester (1452-1485), as he was then, seized the crown of England. Brother to the late Edward IV and seemingly loyal to a fault, Richard pulled off the coup with little opposition largely due to the stunned reaction of his peers. Richard had been one of the strongest pillars of the house of York, a capable military commander and a skilled administrator. He was so trusted that Edward IV had even created a hereditary palatinate lordship for him in Cumberland and Westmoreland.[487] Such faultless loyalty and dedication to the house of York made his actions in 1483 confusing and impossible to understand or justify. Many find his reputation for chivalry and loyalty irreconcilable with the 1483 usurpation.[488] However, Richard III relied heavily on the concept of the commonwealth to justify his seizure of the throne. He was not met with complete condemnation, which suggests that by 1483, the connection between commonwealth and kingship had been firmly established. As John Heneage Jesse noted in the nineteenth century:

> not only on the part of the lay and spiritual lords, but on the part of the commonality, we search in vain for evidence that the usurpation of Richard provoked the disapprobation, much less the indignation, of his countrymen.[489]

Richard emphasised the importance of the commonwealth, and this enabled him to take the throne. Indeed, in the documents surrounding the usurpation, the commonwealth was focused on as much as the supposed illegitimacy of his nephews. He also pushed the ideal that positions be granted

[487] Charles Ross, *Edward IV*, (London: Yale University Press, 1997) p.202.
[488] Hicks claimed that Richard 'aspired to be a good king who was devoted to the public good, but his accession brought not stability but division'; he was 'reviled for his usurpation'. Michael Hicks, *Richard III: The Self-Made King* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), p.3.
[489] John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of King Richard III and Some of His Contemporaries* (London: Richard Bentley, 1862) p.139.

based on merit and skill rather than blood. Thus he used humanist ideals and commonwealth ideology to underpin his seizure of the throne. *Why* he chose to usurp power is much more difficult to determine, but it is not impossible that when he claimed he was acting for the good of the commonwealth, he meant it. This section will therefore argue two things. Firstly, that commonwealth ideology was the tool Richard employed to successfully seize the throne. Secondly, it will be argued that his professed concern for the protection of the commonwealth was genuine.

This has not been used to examine Richard's actions in 1483 before. However, by understanding that Richard III could and did take the throne based almost entirely on commonwealth ideology, we can see that ideas about commonwealth were powerful enough to influence ideas about kingship. The emphasis on Richard's ability took precedence over his blood claim, and this highlights that the security of the commonwealth took precedence over the king's divinity. This has not received sufficient scholarly attention. Over the past few decades, studies have increasingly challenged the idea that Richard III was a cruel tyrant, and his capacity for good rule has been recognised. Indeed Anne F. Sutton suggested that, contradictory to the image of Richard as deceitful and selfish, for him, 'loyalty was the stabilising element in society'.[490] Yet though Sutton accepted Richard s loyalty and chivalry, the usurpation was not explained in terms of his dedication to ideas of commonwealth. Elsewhere, Rosemary Horrox stated that Richard s reason for seizing the crown was 'partly ideological', a result of his 'commitment to continuity'.[491] She believed he had a 'sincere' dedication to law and order.[492] Again, Horrox did not connect Richard s 'ideological' usurpation with the commonwealth or its use as a rhetorical tool in fifteenth century England.

Commonwealth and humanist ideologies go a long way in explaining both why Richard seized the throne, and how he went about it. Two arguments held up the usurpation. The first was that Edward IV s sons were bastards. In June 1483, according to Domenico Mancini, Richard 'suborned preachers… that in their sermons to the assembled public they did not blush to say… that Edward [IV]…had not been a legitimate king'.[493] These sermons, Mancini believed, claimed Edward IV

[490] Anne F. Sutton, 'A Curious Searcher for our Weal Public': Richard III, Piety, Chivalry and the Concept of the 'Good Prince ' in *Richard III: Loyalty, Lordship and Law*, ed. P. H. Hammond (London: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, c.1986) p.62.
[491] Rosemary Horrox, 'The Government of Richard III ' in *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship*, ed. John Gillingham (London: Collins & Brown, 1993) p.74.
[492] Ibid, p.69.
[493] Domenico Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie* ed. Annette Carson (Horstead: Imprimis Imprimatur, 2021) p.67.

had been a bastard; he was very unlike Richard of York, ‘whose son he was falsely said to be’.[494] Shortly afterwards, Richard - or those around him working to bring about the usurpation - changed tack, focusing instead on the illegitimacy of Edward’s sons. On the 22nd June, Ralph Shaw (or Shaa) (d.1484) preached a sermon claiming that Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth Woodville (1437-1492) was void, since he had been already been married to Eleanor Butler (or Talbot) (d.1468) when he married Elizabeth.

This was followed on the 24th June by a speech at the Guildhall given by Henry Stafford, duke of Buckingham (1455-1483), a close associate of Richard involved with the usurpation. Before the mayor and citizens of London, Buckingham extolled Richard’s virtues and denounced Edward’s immortality in a speech that was noted for its eloquence, and a ‘masterly example of the fictionalised speeches characteristic of classical and humanist historiography’.[495] Just as Richard of York and Humphrey of Gloucester used commonwealth as a rhetoric to persuade others of their arguments, Buckingham put forth Richard’s claim in a speech that unfortunately has not survived. Mancini’s commentary on it, however, has, and Richard’s skill and ability plays a significant role. Tudor writer Polydore Vergil believed the speech reflected ‘Richard’s mind’, and so it seems that like his father and Gloucester before him, Richard III was using ideas about merit and ability to persuade others of the necessity of his actions.[496]

In this speech, it was Edward IV’s sons who were illegitimate, not Edward IV himself. Edward V’s:

> illegitimacy arose by reason that his father King Edward [IV], when he took Elizabeth in marriage, was contracted in all legality to another wife to whom the duke [earl] of Warwick had bound him. Indeed, it was on Edward's authority that the [earl] had earlier covenanted the other lady by proxy, as they say, over the Channel. Besides, Elizabeth herself had been wed to another husband, and Edward had taken possession of her rather than married her. As a result all their progeny were unworthy of the realm… No one survived of the royal line save Richard, duke of Gloucester, who by law was entitled to the crown and, by virtue of his ability, could bear its burden of responsibilities. His past career and blameless morals were the surest pledge of his good governance…[497]

[494] Ibid.
[495] George M. Logan in Thomas More, *History of King Richard the Third* ed. George M. Logan, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) p.128.
[496] Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History, Comprising the Reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III,* ed. Henry Ellis, (London: Camden Society, 1844) pp.185-6.
[497] Mancini, *De Occupatione*, ed. Carson, p.67.

The 'other lady' was not Eleanor Butler like Ralph Shaw had claimed, but Bona of Savoy (1449-1603) instead, the daughter of the duke of Savoy. Warwick had, indeed, been sent across the Channel in the early 1460s to arrange a marriage between her and Edward IV, but this came to nothing. When Warwick returned, Edward had already married Elizabeth Woodville. However, the parliamentary act that later gave Richard the crown made no mention of Bona and focused instead on the marriage to Eleanor Butler. Thus the sources surrounding the usurpation contradict one another, offering different excuses and justifications for why and how Richard was going to claim the throne. Buckingham's speech reflects the uncertainty over how exactly the princes were illegitimate, and this uncertainty extends to the usurpation itself. Richard was trying to claim the throne 'by law', but how this was to be achieved was still unclear by as late as June 1483.[498]

This makes the second argument the usurpation rested on all the more significant, because this was not, unlike other arguments, dropped or changed. Buckingham's speech made use of ideas of commonwealth and meritocracy: Richard's 'blameless morals' and ability to 'bear the burden' of the crown were contrasted to the immortality of Edward IV, and Mancini noted that Richard claimed he should be king 'by virtue of his ability'. At a time when the king would otherwise have been a minor, this was a fair argument. England had suffered under minor rule before: both Richard II and, most recently, Henry VI had ascended to the throne as children. Whilst this was a good argument for Richard's protectorate, it would not make him king. After all, the king would not be a minor forever. Therefore, Richard needed to highlight his suitability for the throne another way, and he chose to rely on his ability to better serve the commonwealth in order to present the usurpation as necessary. The story of the princes' illegitimacy is so contentious - the Croyland chronicler called it 'colour for this act of usurpation' - that this second argument has been forgotten about.[499] Richard III, however, couched the usurpation in terms of commonwealth and meritocracy, linking both to ideas of kingship. Given that Buckingham was so close to Richard, it can be assumed that whatever he said at the Guildhall, he had Richard's approval. Combined with its focus on skill and virtue, the speech shows that Richard's strategy for winning the crown rested just as much on the rhetoric of 'ability' and meritocracy as it did on 'law'.

The day after the Guildhall speech, a petition known as *Titulus Regius* was drawn up, more firmly connecting the usurpation with the needs of the commonwealth and ideas of meritocracy. Richard was presented with the petition and formally offered the throne on 26th June by an assembly of lord

[498] Furthermore, there *were* others that 'survives of the royal line': George, duke of Clarence's son and daughter still lived, as well as the earl of Lincoln, John de la Pole (d.1487), the son of Elizabeth of York (1444-c.1403), sister to Edward IV and Richard III.
[499] *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland* trans. Henry T. Riley, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854) p.489.

at Baynard's Castle in London. Mancini believed that Richard 'would refuse such a burden, but he might change his mind if asked by the lords'.[500] The petition subsequently laid out why Richard should be king and urged him to take the throne, presenting the usurpation as by the will of the lords and not Richard himself. It was probably drawn up by Bishop Robert Stillington (1420-91), who had, supposedly, been the one to inform Richard of the pre-contract between Edward IV and Eleanor Talbot. Like Buckingham, he was hardly partisan and it is likely that, like Buckingham's speech, the petition had Richard s influence and approval.[501] Whilst Richard was not at the Guildhall for Buckingham's speech, nor at the meeting where the petition was drawn up, it is unlikely that his influence was not felt. Both Stillington and Buckingham were, after all, men associated with Richard. Thus it seems fair to conclude that Buckingham's speech and the *Titulus Regius* reflect Richard's thinking about how he was going to justify claiming the throne, presenting it as a necessary act for the good of the realm, endorsed by the lords who offered him the crown.

The petition, recorded in the parliament rolls, contained seven articles. All but two focussed on Richard's merits and the needs of the commonwealth.[502] The two remaining articles detailed the illegitimacy of Edward V and the ineligibility of other potential heirs, like George duke of Clarence's son, Edward earl of Warwick (1475-1499). Given Stillington's involvement in both the petition and the pre-contract story, it seems strange that the petition focused so little on Edward V's (alleged) inability to inherit the throne. Instead, it was entirely focussed on the 'common and public weal of this land'.[503] It opened with the statement that the 'three estates of this realm asked Richard to be king for the good of the commonwealth:

> May it please your noble grace to understand the considerations, election and petition written below…and willingly give your assent to it, for the common and public weal of this land and for the comfort and joy of all its people.[504]

They had 'diligently considered' Richard's merits, which included 'great prudence, justice, princely courage and excellent virtue'.[505] Richard was, as a result, 'wholeheartedly chosen…to be our king and sovereign lord'.[506] Richard's kingship was being defined by ideas of elective and meritocratic

[500] Mancini, *De Occupatione*, p.67.
[501] Michael Hicks, 'Stillington, Robert '*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004)
[502] Richard III: January 1484', *PROME,* [accessed 20th February 2020].
[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Ibid.

rule. He was 'chosen' to be king by the three estates, and this goes against the divine right of kings, by which only God could appoint a monarch.[507] The commonwealth was emphasised at the expense of kingly divinity, and Richard was chosen to be king because of his ability to serve the commonwealth.

This was combined with his status as the heir to both Edward IV and Richard of York, but though his inheritance was mentioned, it was not the main point of the petition. Instead, it was mentioned only at the end, when the lords in parliament claimed they were 'convinced that it is your inheritance to be thus chosen' as king. The use of 'chosen' again pushes the rhetoric that kingship was elective— at the end of the petition, it is said that Richard was king 'by right of consanguinity and inheritance as well as by lawful election, consecration and coronation'.[508]

Furthermore, the petition paid much attention to the fact that Richard was 'born within this land':

> You are the undoubted son and heir of Richard, late duke of York, the true inheritor of the said crown and royal dignity, and by right king of England by way of inheritance… you were born within this land, by reason of which we judge that you are more naturally inclined towards its prosperity and common weal, and all the three estates of the land have… more certain knowledge of your aforesaid birth and parentage. We also consider the great wit, prudence, justice, princely courage and the memorable…and laudable acts in various battles which…you have previously displayed for the salvation and defence of this same realm, and also the great nobility and excellence of your birth and blood…[509]

His physical place of birth apparently made Richard 'inclined' to the 'prosperity' of the commonwealth. This, as well as his 'memorable' skill in battle for the 'salvation' of the realm, was as important as his noble blood. Though the ramifications of this are huge for medieval kingship, the petition has surprisingly not been looked at in this way by historians. Nevertheless it indicates that the protection of the commonwealth had become a much more important determining factor in deciding who should rule.[510] Richard's strategy for taking the crown thus rested as much in the rhetoric of commonwealth and elective kingship as it did on Edward V's bastardy. Indeed the parliament roll of 1484 prefaced the text of the petition by claiming Richard 'kindly assented' to be

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[507] This will be looked at in more detail in chapter four, but after the Norman conquest - and certainly by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries - there was a strong idea that only God could create a king. Whilst the idea of the divine right of kings grew much stronger over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it had been present since at least the eleventh century, when focus was taken away from Anglo-Saxon elective kingship.
[508] 'Richard III: January 1484' *PROME,* [Accessed 20th February 2020]
[509] Ibid.
[510] This will be explored more in chapter three.

king ‘for the public weal and tranquillity of this land’.[511]

Richard III did not write the petition himself, but it is clear that its claims were important to him. The *Titulus Regius* pushed the rhetoric of choice and election and emphasised the role of the commonwealth, and this cast his seizure of the throne in a much more positive light. During his first parliament in 1484, he ordered the petition to be ‘ratified, enrolled, recorded, approved, and authorised’, with everything 'contained in it .[512] Because the assembly that drew up the petition was not technically a parliament, the validity of the petition was questionable. In order to record the ‘truth’, Richard had it ratified.[513] As well as this, it was to be ‘made clear and kept perpetually in mind’.[514] The petition, and the justifications it gave, were what Richard used to explain his seizure of the throne. Whilst historians have focused overwhelmingly on *Titulus Regius* being the declaration of Edward V’s illegitimacy, they have ignored Richard’s use of commonwealth ideology and language. He was presented in the petition as a capable ruler who was the best for the commonwealth. His insistence that it was ratified in 1484 suggests this was an image and a rhetoric he deliberately cultivated and encouraged.

Commonwealth ideology underpinned the usurpation, but it also underpinned Richard’s entire political career. An exploitation of the commonwealth may be *how* Richard took the throne, and it may also explain *why* he did so, too. Well before he could have set his sights on the throne, Richard had a reputation for fair leadership. Mancini wrote that after the death of his brother George, duke of Clarence in 1478, Richard:

> very rarely went to court, but remained in his own province. By his good offices and dispensing of justice he set himself to win the loyalty of his people, and outsiders he attracted in large measure by the high reputation of his private life and public activities. Such was his renown in warfare that whenever anything difficult and dangerous had to be done on behalf of the realm it would be entrusted to his judgement and his leadership. With these arts Richard obtained the goodwill of the people…[515]

Mancini was usually hostile towards Richard, and so this description of him as being liked by the

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[511]‘ Richard III: January 1484’, *PROME.*

[512] Ibid.

[513] Ibid.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Mancinci, *De Occupatione*, p.45.

people and dedicated to good leadership is notable.[516] Even Mancini could, apparently, see the connection between Richard's good leadership and the things that needed doing 'on behalf of the realm'. This comment by Mancini could sum up the entire usurpation: it was 'difficult and dangerous' but, in the eyes of Richard and his supporters at least, 'had to be done'. Richard prioritised the commonwealth and good leadership throughout the 1470s and 1480s, and by examining this, we can get a clearer idea of the role of commonwealth ideology and humanist ideals within English politics. Unlike York and Gloucester, Richard appears to have been more genuine in his commitment. He did not use commonwealth ideology and humanist ideals to rid himself of a rival like Beaufort or Somerset, but apparently out of desire for reform. From reforming bail laws and jury practices, to removing illegal fish-garths that negatively impacted fishermen, Richard showed he had an awareness of what mattered to the common people.[517]

In 1484, Richard's 'genuine interest 'in the 'promotion of learning 'resulted in a statute that protected books from trade restrictions.[518] It protected 'alien printers 'and specifically exempted books and literature from any kind of trade restriction.[519] The same statute also protected English merchants against 'unfair foreign competition'.[520] This harked back to the concerns of Alcock in the 1470s and shows that Richard protected mercantile interests. This may not have been entirely selfless, as merchants had provided a pillar of support for his brother Edward IV. However, the statutes show that Richard was aware of public concerns and also dedicated to the promotion of learning. This was very much in line with humanist ideals of the time and, as will be shown in a moment, Richard earned the approval of several humanists both in England and elsewhere. Actions such as these have not been linked to the usurpation before. After all, it was implemented after he became king. However, it demonstrates that Richard ruled in line with humanist ideology, and so the focus on the commonwealth in June 1483 was likely deliberate.

His reign was characterised by a protection of common or shared interest and promotion of learning. It is not a stretch to suggest that this is what he set out to achieve from the moment of his brother's death. He showed himself dedicated to the concerns of the commonality, with the biggest demonstration of this being the removal of the benevolences. This could have been a ready source

[516] Keith Dockray, *Richard III: A Sourcebook* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997) p.XV. Mancini was 'critical 'and 'hostile 'to Richard III.
[517] Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle* Ages, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.36.
[518] Sutton, 'A Curious Searcher 'in *Richard III* ed. P. W. Hammond, p.69.
[519] Anne F. Sutton & Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'VeRus Celluy je Suis (True I Am): A Study of John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln and Chancellor of England for Richard III, *The Ricardian* Vol XXVII (2017) p.62.
[520] H. G. Hanbury, 'The Legislation of Richard III', *American Journal of Legal History,* 6(2) (1962) p.109.

of cash for Richard III, but the same statutes that exempted books from trade restrictions put an end to the 'unlawful inventions' his brother had introduced.[521] Benevolences put the 'commons of this his realm 'in 'great thralldom', and they had paid 'to their almost utter destruction'.[522] Putting an end to the benevolences may not have been entirely selfless, since it would have earned him support among the people when his rule was still insecure. However, it furthered the image of him as a king determined to right any wrongs done to the commonwealth. This was something he also emphasised in Kent after Buckingham turned on Richard and rebelled (October 1483). A proclamation stated how the king was 'determined to see due administration of justice 'in his realm.[523] It urged anyone who 'finds himself grieved, oppressed or unlawfully wronged 'to make a bill and:

> put it to his highness, and he shall be heard and without delay have such convenient remedy as shall accord with his laws. For his grace is utterly determined that all his true subjects shall live in rest and quiet and peaceably enjoy their lands, livelihoods and goods according to the laws of this land.[524]

Therefore it is clear that Richard had a keen interest in justice and a desire for law and order. It is likely that this concern for justice and good leadership motivated him just as much in June 1483 as it did throughout his reign. Perhaps it was because of a desire to protect the commonwealth and ensure good leadership that he took the throne in 1483, not despite it.

The first major event of Richard's reign illustrated his attitude towards the commonwealth perfectly. The coronation on 6th July was traditional in almost every sense; Richard and his wife Anne Neville (1456-1485) were crowned king and queen in a ceremony mostly unchanged since the fourteenth century. One significant change came to the oath, however. In essence the oath was, as Sutton and Hammond were careful to stress, 'the usual one'.[525] He made the same promises as kings before him, but with one huge difference: Richard III took the coronation oath in English.[526] Initially, this might not seem such a huge change, and, aside from Sutton and Hammond, its translation has received startling little scholarly attention. Sutton and Hammond claimed the 'reason

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[521] *Statutes of the Realm Vol. 2* (London: Dawsons, 1856) p.478. 'unlawfull invencions'
[522] Ibid. They put the 'comens of this his roialme' in 'gret thraldome'.
[523] *Harleian Manuscript 433*, *vol. 2* ed. Rosemary Horrox & P. W. Hammond, (Gloucester: Sutton, 1980) p.49
[524] Ibid.
[525] *The Coronation of Richard III: The Extant Documents* ed. Anne F. Sutton & P. W. Hammond, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1993) p.4. Some historians 'have implied that he subscribed to a new version of the oath', so Sutton and Hammond made sure to point out this was not entirely true.
[526] Ibid, p.3.

for translating the oath...can only be guessed at'.[527] They posited that it was either an attempt at Richard currying favour with his new subjects, or a result of him not being as fluent in French as his predecessors (since the oath had, since 1308, been taken in French).[528] The translation to English, though, sums up the position of the commonwealth within English politics and within Richard's reign. Although the oath was, in essence, the same as it had always been, by giving it in English for the first time, it was for the first time more accessible. Like every other king since Henry I, Richard promised to maintain the Church, uphold justice, and defend his subjects, but by switching from French to English, the oath represented the importance of the people and the commonwealth in fifteenth-century England. The shift to English accepts that the commonality are an intrinsic part of politics. It also means that it could be understood by anyone in the realm, making it almost a direct promise.

Two copies of the oath survive: the first is a complete draft in the Register of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The second is a draft version in the regulations put together for the coronation. There are, on the whole, no real differences between the two, except some drastic differences in article four. Two words were changed. This article ran:

> Do you grant the rightful laws and customs to be held and promise you after your strength and poor laws as to the worship of God shall be made by your people in parliament, by you to be strengthened and defended. The king shall answer I grant and promise.[529]

The clerk then changed 'made' to 'chosen' and 'in parliament' was struck through.[530] The sentence in this copy thereby says that the laws 'shall be chosen by your people'. Since the oath in the Archbishop's Register does not have these changes, it is likely that they did not make the final draft. That such changes were proposed at all, though, should not be underestimated. The changes meant that king promised to uphold laws 'chosen' by the people, and not just the people in parliament. This suggests that the shift to English was about more than Richard not being fluent in French; it suggests that there was a deliberate attempt at making the coronation oath much more focused on the role of the people. Although this change was rejected, it should not be dismissed. The translation alone shows that under Richard III, the role of the commonwealth and people in politics

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[527] Ibid, p.5.
[528] Ibid.
[529] BL, Add. Ms. 18669, f.5b. 'Do ye graunte the rightfull lawes and costumes to be holden and promytt ye after your strengith and pouer lawes as to the worship of God shalbe made [struck through and 'chosyn' written above] by your people in parlement by you to be strengted and defended. The king shall answer I graunte and promytt'.
[530] *Coronation* ed. Sutton & Hammond, p.4.

had increased.

It is also vital that during Richard's first real display of kingship, something as inherent and pivotal as the oath was changed. Rosemary Horrox believed that as king Richard only ever wanted to emphasise continuity, yet his first act was to alter something fundamental. It is certainly possible that Richard took the throne with genuine reform in mind, and out of genuine concern for the commonwealth. In this way, Richard's reign displayed an awareness of the importance of the commonwealth and humanist ideals regarding good rule.

Humanist Influence

That this was a product of humanist influence is suggested by the number of humanists Richard surrounded himself with. He employed several: John Gunthorpe (d.1498), a 'noted Cambridge humanist' and 'considerable Greek scholar', was appointed keeper of the Privy Seal in May 1483. He also employed John Shirwood (d.1494), who had studied in Italy and knew both Greek and Latin, a 'still rare qualification' in England.[531] Richard's chaplain John Doget (d.1501), was also educated in Italy (Padua and Bologna) and acted as a diplomat for Richard.[532] Further examples come from John Argentine (1443-1508), a physician trained in Italy, and Thomas Langton, who had studied in Bologna and 'highly' valued the humanities.[533] Another indication Richard relied on humanists in his government was the appointment of Thomas Hutton as clerk of the 1483 parliament. Hutton was an 'unusual choice'.[534] He appeared 'to have lacked any background in royal administration, but he probably 'shared the humanist interests common to many of the men promoted by Richard'.[535] The 1484 parliament was pivotal for Richard III as he aimed to ratify the 1483 petition, and so it seems curious that he would appoint as clerk an individual with no experience. Richard evidently filled his government with humanist individuals, and whilst Anne Sutton noted that Richard surrounded himself with humanists, she did not associate this with the humanist ideologies found within the usurpation. Furthermore, Charles Ross claimed that there is no evidence that the 'fashionable scholarship' of these men 'rubbed off on their royal master'.[536]

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[531] Charles Ross, *Richard III*, (London: Yale University Press, 2011) p. 133.
[532] Sutton, 'A Curious Searcher in *Richard III* ed. P. W. Hammond, p. 69.
[533] Cathy Curtis, 'Richard Pace's *De Fructu* and Early Tudor Pedagogy 'in *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* ed. J. Woolfson (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) p. 47.
[534] Hannes Kleineke, 'Thomas Hutton, Clerk of the Parliaments to Richard III', *The Ricardian,* 26(2016), p.22; Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History* ed. Henry Ellis, (London: Camden Society, 1844) p. 191; Kleineke,'Thomas Hutton *The Ricardian,* p. 23.
[535] Kleineke,'Thomas Hutton', *The Ricardian,* p. 23.
[536] Ross, *Richard III*, p. 133.

However, it has been convincingly argued by Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs that the influence of one man in particular had a lasting influence on both Richard's reign and reputation. This was John Russell, bishop of Lincoln and Lord Privy Seal (d.1494). He was a man renowned for his learning: in the sixteenth century, Thomas More described him as 'one of the best learned men, undoubtedly' that England had.[537] This was a sentiment echoed by his contemporaries: Mancini also commented on his reputation for learning.[538] Sutton and Visser-Fuchs believed that statutes Richard implemented regarding bail, sheriffs, and fines were influenced by Russell (Richard extended bail laws and established that only men who owned property could serve on a jury to combat bribery and corrupt officials). Both Richard and Russell 'believed in justice, and in taking that justice to all the king's subjects'.[539] This contributed to Richard's reputation as a 'good lawmaker for the ease and solace of the common people'.[540]

Richard did much to ensure a reputation as a reforming king whose only concern was the commonwealth. John Rous (d.1492), famously hostile to Richard after Henry VII took the throne in 1485, initially stated that Richard 'ruled his subjects…full commendably', punishing 'especially… oppressors of his commons'.[541] As a result, he won the 'love of all his subjects rich and poor'.[542] Although Rous' sudden shift to hostility after 1485 may cast doubt on how reliable this image of Richard is, his portrait is backed up by other sources. Nicholas von Poppelau (1435-1490), a Silesean traveller, wrote in 1484 that Richard had a 'great heart'.[543] Anne F. Sutton emphasised that von Poppelau used the term to denote 'the princely virtue of magnanimity, the desire to do great things and in particular those which benefit the common weal'.[544] Furthermore, a letter of September 1483 from the humanist bishop of St Davids (later bishop of Winchester) Thomas

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537 *Grants, Etc. from the Crown During the Reign of Edward V, from the Original Docket Book* ed. John Gough Nichols, (London: J. R. Nichols and Sons, 1854) p.xxxvi.
538 John A. F. Thompson, 'Russel, John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004)
539 Sutton & Fuchs, 'VeRus Celluy je Suis (True I Am)', *The Ricardian,* p. 25.
540 Bacon in H. G. Hanbury, 'The Legislation of Richard III', *American Journal of Legal History* 6(1962) p. 95.
541 British Library, Add. MS. 48976, f.8ar. 'rewled hys subjettys…ful commendabylly', punishing 'specyally… oppressors of hys comyns'.
542 Ibid. 'love of all hys subjettys ryche and pore'.
543 Von Poppelau quoted in Anne F. Sutton, 'A Curious Searcher for our Weal Public 'in *Richard III: Loyalty, Lordship and Law* ed. P. W. Hammond, (London: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1986) p. 78.
544 Ibid.

Langton (d.1501) to the humanist prior William Sellyng (d.1494) suggested that Richard was committed to improving the lot of the commonality. Langton was admittedly biased towards Richard, and had an 'inbuilt interest in seeing Richard succeed'.[545] Yet this was a private letter; he had no idea that anyone else would ever read it. Nevertheless, he wrote that Richard:

> contents the people wherever he goes better than ever did any prince; for many a poor man that has suffered wrong many days has been relieved and helped by him and his commands in progress. And in many great cities and towns were great sums of money given to him which he has refused. On my faith I never liked the qualities of any prince… God has sent him to us for the welfare of us all.[546]

There was evidently a real commitment to justice and reform in the Ricardian regime that was approved of by contemporary humanists. Another humanist, Pietro Carmeliano, wrote a glowing commendation of the king in 1484, asking 'Who stands before our King Richard?'.[547] 'Obviously, no one.'[548] Even more suggestively, the Scottish ambassador Archbishop Archibald Whitelaw (d.1498) described Richard as having a 'most celebrated reputation' and being 'courteous to the common people'.[549] He even claimed that 'were Cicero still alive, his skills would scarcely suffice to describe your virtues'.[550] Whitelaw was 'one of fifteenth-century Scotland's most notable humanists', and so his endorsement of Richard shows that humanist ideals were being met by Richard's reign.[551]

Both before and during his reign, then, Richard III demonstrated an awareness of commonwealth ideology and a dedication to humanist values that placed emphasis on the people and their wellbeing. There was a focus on justice, on the protection of the commonwealth, and on the idea that positions be awarded based on merit alone. This may help explain why he decided to seize the throne. Historians have been unable to reconcile his previous record of piety and loyalty with the

[545] Charles Ross, *Richard III,* (London: Yale University Press, 2011) p. 152.
[546]' Doctor Thomas Langton, Bishop of St Davids to the Prior of Christ Church (1483) '*Christ Church Letters: A Volume of Medieval Letters Relating to the Affairs of the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, vol. 19* ed. Joseph Brigstocke Sheppard, (Camden Society, 1877) p. 46.
[547] Pietro Carmeliano, *Life of St Katherine of Egypt for Richard III* quoted in Keith Dockray, *Richard III: A Sourcebook* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997) p.8 and quoted in Anne F. Sutton & Livia Visser-Fuchs 'Richard III's Books XIV: Pietro Carmeliano's Early Publications '*The Ricardian* 10 (132) (1996) p. 363.
[548] Ibid.
[549]' Archibald Whitelaw's address to King Richard III, advocating the strengthening of peaceful ties between the English and the Scots, 12 September 1484 'translated and printed in *The North of England in the Age of Richard III,* ed. A. J. Pollard, (Stroud: Sutton, 1996) p.194.
[550] Ibid, p.195.
[551] Norman MacDougall, 'Whitelaw, Archibald '*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004)

fact that he pulled off such a coup in 1483. This coup disgraced his brother's memory, displaced his nephews and potentially ended in their deaths (although the jury is still out on the Princes in the Tower). If we accept that he was genuinely concerned for the commonwealth and security of the realm, his actions become more understandable. The protection of the commonwealth was certainly what Richard himself used to justify his actions.

Conclusion

As a result, commonwealth ideology was used in 1483 to make a king. The possibility that Richard may have taken the throne to serve the commonwealth shows what a strong political force this ideology had become. The usurpation also shows that the king's divinity had taken a backseat. Although Richard claimed the princes were illegitimate, how much this was believed by contemporaries is debatable. The Croyland Chronicler certainly had suspicions, deeming the claims of illegitimacy nothing but 'colour' for Richard's story.[552] Furthermore, Richard did not rely on the illegitimacy of the princes extensively: he never claimed he had been appointed by God to rule, only that he was the legal heir and the best to protect the commonwealth. Richard, though a very pious individual, ignored the divine right of kings. So too did Humphrey of Gloucester in *On Husbondrie* and the *Epitaphium*, and Richard of York in *De Consulatu Stilichonis* and the Act of Accord. This is quite a departure from the rhetoric of kingship seen in previous centuries, focusing much more on commonwealth ideals and meritocratic rule. By 1483, Richard's usurpation was only the latest in a series of events that diminished the king's divine right and destabilised the monarchy.

[552] *Ingulph*'*s Chronicle* trans. Riley, p.489.

By the mid-fifteenth century, commonwealth ideology and the role of the people was a prominent part of politics. Because the importance of the commonwealth was emphasised in parliament and used as a rhetoric by leading political figures, it should not be surprising that this filtered down the social scale. As this chapter will argue, because of the new importance given to commonwealth in the fifteenth century, the people began to recognise their significant role in supporting and endorsing kingship. This role was acknowledged by peasants and kings alike, and created an idea that the commonwealth was the foundation of power and authority. This coincided with growing desire for conciliar rule and created a political atmosphere more focused on popular assent. Simultaneously, there were growing ideas about treachery and treason, where crimes against the commonwealth were as serious as crimes against the king himself. In this way the commonwealth came to be of equal importance to the king. This chapter will therefore explore how the commonwealth was the foundation of kingly power, how this complemented and furthered desires for conciliar rule, and what this meant for the king and his status.

The People and Kingly Power

In September 1397, Edmund Stafford, bishop of Exeter (1344-1419) gave the opening speech in Richard II's twenty-fifth parliament. He claimed a realm needed three important things:

> First, that the king have the power to govern. Second, that the laws by which he ought to govern should be kept and justly executed. Third, that the subjects of the kingdom should be duly obedient to the king and his laws.[553]

Forty years later, Edmund's emphasis on subjects' obedience had given way to ideas of voluntary subjection. As John Stafford's 1437 speech (mentioned in chapter one) demonstrates, there was a shift from obedience to loyalty. In 1437 Henry VI was judged old enough to rule as an adult. This sermon was aimed at Henry's subjects, mentioning how the security of the realm rested in their continued loyalty. The 1397 speech serves as a stark contrast to the ideas of the fifteenth century. Where Edmund Stafford demanded obedience, John Stafford pleaded for loyalty. The contrast demonstrates a shift in how subjects were perceived, and tells us something about the power they held in the fifteenth century. In Edmund's speech, the subjects are lower than the king and owe him

[553] 'Richard II: September 1397, Part 1', in *PROME*, [accessed 24 May 2021].

obedience. In the fifteenth century, however, the subjects were viewed - and viewed themselves - as part of the political community.

John Russell's draft sermon for Edward V in 1483 put the people firmly in a role of importance. He first likened the nobility to islands, and the commonality to the sea:

> all the habitation and occupation of man is either in land or in water… the noble persons of the world… may more conveniently be resembled in the firm ground that men see in islands, then the lower people which… be… likened unto the unstable and wavering running water.[554]

Russell then used this comparison to highlight the vulnerability of the nobility to the commonality:

> who so [searcheth the history of] other nations…remembering what fluctuation and changing amongst the nobles hath fallen in this realm…may lightly see that all our ground is set within the sea, all subject to ebb and flow…[555]

As a result, Russell urged 'you lords and noble men…in whose sure and concord rests the weal of all the common, open your ears…'.[556] They needed to 'hearkenth' to the 'common voice'.[557] This idea that the nobility needed to listen to the commonality can also be found in a poem from 1450 titled 'Advice to the Court'. In this, the anonymous author wrote that 'for fear or for favour of any false man / Lose not the love of all [the] commonality!'.[558] Thus the commonality were viewed in the fifteenth century as providing essential stability and support. These ideas had been present from as early as 1401, when the anonymous author of the Digby poem 'What Profits a Kingdom' wrote that 'a kingdom in commons lies, all profits & all mischiefs'.[559] This kind of thinking was enhanced by humanist notions of the commonwealth as an important pillar of the political community.

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554 *Grants, etc*, p.xl. 'alle the habitacion and occupacion of man ys eyther in lond or in water… the noble persons of the worlde…may more conueniently be resembled unto the ferme grounde that men see is Isle londes then the lower peuple whyche…be…likened vnto the vnstabille and wavering rennynge water'.

555 Ibid, p.xlii. who so [searcheth the history of] nactions…remembryng what fluctuacion and changynge amonges the nobles hath fallen in thys reme…may lyghtly see that alle owre grownd ys sett with yn the see, alle subjecte to Ebbe and flowe…'

556 Ibid, p.xliii. 'ye lordes and nobille men…in whoos sure and concord…restithe the wele of alle the commen, open your eeres…'

557 Ibid.

558 Hope Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.203. 'ffor feer or for favour of any fals man, / Loose not the loue of alle [th]e commynalte!'

559 Ms Digby 102 in Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.42. 'a kyngdom in comouns lys, alle profytes & alle myscheues'

Shifting perceptions of both the commonwealth and the monarchy meant that the people became an important foundation of kingly power.

Clear indications of this can be found in popular verses, public gatherings and popular poems. Whilst John Watts noted the prevalence of sayings such as 'vox populi, vox dei', he believed that if the idea the people were 'free to act' 'had ever enjoyed hegemony…it had certainly lost ground by the fifteenth century'.[560] In the 1450s, 1460s, and 1480s, Watts claimed, the 'earlier emphasis on the king's obligation to defend the common interest was abandoned'.[561] This was not the case. As A. J. Pollard noted, the idea that 'politics are a matter of the public sphere can be traced…back to the Wars of the Roses'.[562] Further, semantic differences indicate a growth in notions of unity and common health. In the fourteenth century, as Charles T. Wood and William Hughes Dunham noted, the phrase "estates of the realm" was used to 'designate the grades…of society that were taken to be the components of the kingdom'.[563] In the fifteenth century, however, though the estates were still mentioned, other terminology such as common wealth and common profit was also used. Whilst the "estates" denotes a society that is separate and hierarchical, terms such as common good and common profit suggest an equal focus on "universal health", as mentioned by Florentine humanists. Thus the duty of the king to the commonwealth was a staple of late fifteenth-century politics, and notions about the power of the public had not 'lost ground'. Few have asked why this occurred in the fifteenth century. It could be argued that this was because of a void left by the limited authority of Henry VI, or the civil war, or even the rise in prominence of the mercantile classes (particularly in London). However, although the people became more involved in kingship because of the civil war (in particular the way Edward IV came to the throne), this was enabled by ideals and ideologies that had been circulating since the 1430s.

Stafford in 1437 made much of the loyalty of the people and the need for them to support their king. This idea that the people were pivotal to kingship was a large part of Edward IV's accession. In 1462, the year after he took the throne, the peasants of Wessex rose against the government. Proclaiming they had enabled Edward IV to take the throne, they warned the king that they also had the power to depose him. They were, as R. L. Storey described, 'self-styled kingmakers'.[564] They said that:

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[560] John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.20.
[561] Ibid, p.39.
[562] A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.133.
[563] William Hughes Dunham, Charles T. Wood, 'The Right to Rule in England: Depositions and the Kingdom's Authority '*The American Historical Review*, 18(4) (1976), p.739.
[564] R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999) p.197.

> We commons have brought king Edward to his prosperity in the realm of England, as able as we were to bring thereto, as able we be to depose him and put him down, and bring him there as we found him…[565]

From this statement it is evident that the Wessex peasants felt they had a hand in Edward's accession, as well as the right to depose him and appoint another. Coming from a group of peasants this is a remarkable statement. Charles Ross warned that sources like this should be treated with caution, claiming it 'may represent nothing more than…the boastful and wild remarks of inebriated men…outside the local ale-house'.[566] Though this account, Ross admitted, shows 'both the credulity and volatility of the common people', he did not believe it had any bearing on ideas of governance or the power of the commonwealth.[567] It seems too sensationalist to be representative of wider thinking, but other examples survive, showing the Wessex peasants were not unique. The commonality apparently believed they were the roots of sovereignty.

A letter from July 16 1461, addressed to country gentleman John Paston (d.1466), stressed the need for the king to 'please' the people in East Anglia.[568] John Berney (d.1473), the cousin of Paston's wife Margaret (c.1422-1484), wrote to tell Paston how:

> the king should please the commons in this country; for they grudge and say, how that the king receives such of this country…as have been his great enemies, and oppressors of the commons; and such as have assisted his highness be not rewarded; and it is to be considered, or else it will hurt…[569]

The 'hurt' Berney believed would come to the king if the people remained dissatisfied is strikingly like the peasants' threat of deposition. The sense of anger, too, is similar: they had 'assisted' the

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[565] Court of King's Bench Records, KB.9/299 f.25, digitised on *Anglo-American Legal Tradition*, University of Houston, http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no299/IMG_0035.htm [Accessed 15th May 2021] 'We comyns have brought kyng Edward to hys p[ro]sp[er]ite in the realme of Engeland, and as able as we were to bring hym therto, as able we be to depose hym and put hym down and bryng hym ther as we founde hym…'

[566] Charles Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda, and Popular Opinion During the Wars of the Roses 'in *Patronage, The Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Gloucester: Sutton, 1981) p.16.

[567] Ross, 'Rumour 'in *Patronage*, ed. Griffiths, p.16.

[568] Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Volume 2, Fastolf's Will,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) fn.182, p.104

[569] John Berney to John Paston, *The Paston Letters: Vol. III*, ed. James Gairdner, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904) p.292. 'The Kyng shold please the Comynnes in this cuntre; for they grudge and sey, how that the Kyng resayvith sych of this cuntre… as haff be his gret eanemyes, and opresseors of the Comynes; and sych as haff assystyd his Hynes, be not rewardyt; and it is to be consederyd, or ellys it wyll hurt…'

king and received nothing in return. What had so incensed them were pardons granted to men long despised in East Anglia. A letter from June 5 1461 recorded a royal pardon granted to a John Heydon (1461-79) and Sir Thomas Tuddenham (1401-62).[570] Heydon, along with his patron Tuddenham, had not only been supporters of Lancaster, but had also been accused of theft and false imprisonment. Anger against the pair and their associates went back as far as the early 1450s, and Edward's pardon seems to have been the last straw.[571] The people of East Anglia were angry enough to threaten their new king. This points to a belief that not only were they were owed something by Edward IV, but that they felt no fear in threatening their king with 'hurt'.

This tells us something about what people expected of their king: because they supported his bid for the throne, the commons of East Anglia expected Edward to rule with their interests in mind. They had 'assisted his highness', mirroring the Wessex statement that they 'brought' Edward IV to his 'prosperity'. The similarity shows that neither the Wessex peasants nor Berney's commons were unique in believing they were the root of Edward's kingship. It could be argued that this was because of the circumstances surrounding Edward's accession, but as this chapter will show, ideas about the role of the people continued after Edward's reign. These ideas were thus much more widespread than initially assumed. Whilst it must be noted that Berney had an ulterior motive - the purpose of the letter was to encourage 'the king [to] write to me, giving me thanks of the good will and service that I have done unto him' - the claims of the East Anglian commons are too similar to the Wessex peasants to be dismissed.[572] Furthermore, Berney made clear at the start of the letter that the trouble was 'as well in the North, as in this county of Norfolk'.[573] These were not isolated examples of discontent.

Further evidence comes from a rebellion in Somerset in May 1462. A crowd of 20,000 attacked Glastonbury because a mason, John Stowell, claimed that the abbot was sending large sums of money to the deposed Henry VI.[574] The people felt that attacking the abbot would keep Edward on the throne. It would therefore seem that when Storey suggested the claims of the Wessex peasants

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570 Richard Calle to John Paston, *Paston Letters, III* ed. Gairdner, p.278.

571 William Wayte to John Paston in *The Paston Letters, Vol. II* ed. James Gairdner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904) p.211. A letter from one William Wayte to John Paston (d.1466) dated the 9th January 1451, for example, records how Wayte 'wold ther worne a thowsand of good Maudby men to crye owte on Tudenham, Heydon, Prentys and Brygge for here falsse exstorciones'. As Gairdner noted, the people of Norfolk 'looked upon [Heydon] with anything but goodwill, regarding him as the ready tool of every powerful oppressor'. James Gairdner, *The Paston Letters, Vol.1* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901) p.42.

572 Berney to Paston, *The Paston Letters: Vol. III*, ed. Gairdner, p.292. 'the Kyng [to] wryte unto me, gevyng me thankyng of the good wyll and servyse that I haff doo unto hym'.

573 Ibid.

574 Storey, *End*, p.196.

may actually reflect ‘a widely held opinion’, he was correct.[575] In both the case of the Wessex peasants and Berney’s letter, the commons felt that the king owed his success to their support. Among some at least, there was feeling that common people enabled and endorsed kingship.

The earliest days of Edward IV’s reign reinforced this. On 1 March 1461, at St John’s Field in Clerkenwell, Edward was “elected” king by a gathering of soldiers and citizens. There had always been some kind of “election” in kingship, harkening back to the days of the Anglo-Saxon Witan, but this was generally only a formality. It was not the citizens who elected the king, but the lords gathered for the coronation. The ceremony traditionally began by asking those gathered to recognise their new monarch, but at the point of crowning this was more a formality than anything else. The Clerkenwell election was different. Edward had not yet been proclaimed king nor had he been crowned. Furthermore, it was not a collection of nobles and lords as would be gathered for a coronation ceremony, but a gathering of common people and soldiers. MS Gough 10 recorded that:

> the earl of March and the earl of Warwick came to London…and on Sunday after, all the host mustered in Saint John’s Field and there was read among them certain articles and points that king Henry VI had offended against the realm. And then it was demanded of the people whether the said Henry were worthy to reign still and the people cried nay, and then was asked if they would have the earl of March to their king and they cried yea, and then certain captains went to the earl of March’s place at Baynard's Castle and much people with them, and told him that the people had chosen him for king… And on Tuesday after, made cries that all manner people should meet him on the morn…and so they did. And thither came the earl of March with the lords…and…went on procession… After [the] procession [was] done, the bishop of Exeter, chancellor, made a sermon, and at the end of the sermon he declared the earl of March’s right and title to the crown and demanded the people if they would have him to [be] their king as his right asked and they cried yea...[576]

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[575] Ibid.

[576] Oxford: Bodleian Library, Ms Gough 10, f.46v. ‘Erle of Marche and the erle of Warwick com to London…and on Sonday after all the host mustred in Seynt Johns ffelde and there was redde amonge theym certeyne articles and poynts that kyng Harry the VIth had offended ayenst the realme. And then it was demanded of the peopull whether the said Harry were worthy to reign still and the peopull cried nay and than as axed iff they wolde haue the erle of marche to theire kyng and they cryed yee and then certeyne capetayns went to the erle of marches place at Baynardis Castell and much people w[ith] [t]hem and tolde hym that the people had chosen hym for kyng… And on teuesday after made cryes that all maner people shulde mete hym on the morn…and so they did. And thidder come the erle of marche w[ith] the lords…and…went on procession… after processsion [was] doon the bisshop of Excestre chanceler made a sermon, and at the end of the sermon he declared the erle of marches ryght and title to the crowne and demanded the people yff they wolde haue hym to [t]her kyng as hys ryght axed and they cryed yee…’

This reinforced the idea that Edward's kingship was founded on popular election from the beginning. It is not clear who the author was, but both William Philip and Miles Adys have been suggested, chamberlains of the city from 1474-79 and 1479-84 respectively.[577] Either way it was written by somebody who was involved with and knew much about municipal life and the city of London. That he recorded how the bishop of Exeter, George Neville (c.1432-1476) first rehearsed Edward's 'right and title' before the people assented suggests that the people corroborated Edward's claim to the throne. It could be claimed that this was again a result of the circumstances surrounding his accession, and nothing to do with ideas of commonwealth. However, Henry VI was accused of offending 'the realm', and this was directly tied to whether or not he 'were worthy to reign still'. In this we can see the kind of ideology present in the *Epitaphium* and in *De Consulatu Stilichonis*: protection of the realm and commonwealth made one worthy of kingship. Like in *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, the choice of who would rule was one taken by the people. This means that the Wessex peasants and Berney's commons were not alone in thinking the people had a role in securing kingship.

The element of public election was recorded in other chronicles. Robert Fabyan's (1470-1513) Great Chronicle of London was similar to MS Gough 10:

> In Saint John's Field… it was demanded of the said people whether the said Henry were worthy to reign as king any longer…whereunto the people cried…and said nay, nay, and after it was asked of them whether they would have the earl of March for their king, and they cried with one voice yea, yea…[578]

Thus the election of Edward IV was presented by contemporaries as by common assent. This would perhaps not be so unusual, except that Edward was fresh from victory at the battle of Mortimer's Cross (2nd February 1461). Instead of presenting his ascension to the throne as either by divine right or through right of conquest, the focus was on election and the role of the people. It is in things like this that Geoffrey Hindley saw the 'popular acclaim' Edward's kingship was 'rooted' in.[579] This acclaim was not just restricted to London. Berney's letter and the 1462 Wessex peasants

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[577] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, (London: Routledge, 2000) p.233. The chronicle has references to the goldsmith's company and the oaths taken by the chamberlains of the city. Therefore the author was probably both a goldsmith and chamberlain, and only two - Philip and Adys - fit this description in the reign of Edward IV.

[578] *Great Chronicle of London* ed. A. H. Thomas & I. D. Thornley (London: George W. Jones) (1938) p.195. 'In seynt Johnis ffyeld…it was demaundyd of the sayd people whethyr the sayd Henry were worthy to regn as kyng any lenger…whereunto the people cryed…and said nay, nay and aftir it was axid of theym whethyr they wold have therle of march ffor theyr king and they cryed with oon voys ye, ye…'.

[579] Geoffrey Hindley, *England in the Age of Caxton*, (London: Granada, 1979) p.79.

show there were groups in Wessex, East Anglia, and even in the north of England that felt they had a role in Edward's becoming king. This was even noted by Prospero di Camulio, Milanese Ambassador to France. In a letter of 9 March 1461 to Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan (1401-1466), Camulio wrote that 'we hear many strange things from England day by day and hour by hour…The rest of the princes and people, full of indignation, made my lord of March king'.

On the 27 March, Camulio wrote again:

> I…wrote how the people of London, the leaders of the people of the island, together with some other lords, full of indignation, had created a new king, Edward, son of the Duke of York, known as my lord of March. From what we have heard since, he was chosen, so they say, on all sides as the new king by the princes and people at London.[580]

Camulio pointed out that Edward was not elected solely by the lords, but 'on all sides'. Evidently this was something he found notable, since it warranted not one but two letters. Edward IV's reign was therefore founded on his election by both lords and commonality, and this was something recognised within England and on the Continent.

Edward was popular with the commonality, especially merchants.[581] However, the sense of election cannot be attributed to this alone. Nor can it be confined to Edward's reign; there are examples from the reign of Richard III too.[582] During Richard III's reign there was still an impression that kingship was elective. Whilst there was no proclamation like Clerkenwell, Richard was still proclaimed king by the mayor and aldermen of London at the Guildhall.

He was offered the throne at Baynard's Castle in a deliberate echo of Edward IV's accession. Mancini believed the location was chosen to avoid 'the Tower where the young king [Edward V] was held', but this was where Edward IV had accepted the crown in 1461.[583] Contrary to what Mancini suggested, this was not about avoiding Edward V, but about drawing similarities between Edward's accession and Richard's. There was deliberate similarity between 1461 and 1483:

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[580] Ibid.

[581] He became known as the "merchant king" because this particular group supported him strongly.

[582] Although the latter, a comment from the murderers of the duke of Suffolk, will be looked at in the section on treason.

[583] Mancini, *De Occupatione*, p.69.

> the title of [both Edward IV and Richard III] was put forward at Paul's Cross, and each secured the support of a section of the lords in a council at Baynard's Castle… Finally each took possession of the realm and began his reign by seating himself on the marble chair at Westminster, while reserving for the subsequent session of parliament the registration of his title in petitionary form.[584]

Richard was 'assiduous in following his late brother's precedent', both of them focusing on legitimacy and legality.[585] Edward's accession put emphasis on election and popular acclaim, and this is something Richard attempted to bring into his own accession.

A letter written to John Blount, Lord Mountjoy and governor of Calais (d.1485) on June 28th 1483 further emphasised that Richard had the acclaim of the people:

> Good law, reason and the concord assent of the Lord and Commons of the Realm have ordained [Richard to] reign upon the people… the King's said highness, notably assisted by well near all the lords spiritual and temporal of this realm, went the same day unto his palace of Westminster, and… within the great hall there took possession and declared… he would begin to reign upon his people, and from thence rose solemnly to the cathedral church of London, and was received there with procession, with great congratulations and acclamation of the people in every place…[586]

This acclaim extended to Richard's coronation. Even Mancini took a break from hostility towards Richard, noting that many 'lined the streets to admire the scene' as the new king 'receive[d] their salutations'.[587] At the coronation ceremony, the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Bourchier (1404-1486) described Richard as being 'elected chosen and required' to rule.[588] This was a significant choice of words. As Wood and Dunham have pointed out, 'elect' meant exactly that: 'to

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[584] C. A. J. Armstrong, 'The Inauguration Ceremonies of the Yorkist Kings and their Title to the Throne', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30(1948) p.51.
[585] Carson in Mancini, *De Occupatione*, p.113, n.162.
[586] *Original Letters Illustrative of English History,* vol 1, ed. Henry Ellis, (London: Harding and Lepard, 1827) p.148. 'Good lawe, reason, and the concorde assent of the Lords and Commons of the Royaume have ordeigned [Richard to] reigne upon the people… the Kings said Highnes, notably assisted by well nere all the Lords spirituell and temperell of this Royaume, went the same day unto his Palais of Westminster, and… within the gret Hall ther toke possession, and declared…he wold begyn to reigne upon his people, and from thens rode solempely to the Cathedrall Cherche of London, and was resseyved ther with procession, with great congratulacions, and acclamacion of all the people in every place…'.
[587] Domenico Maninci, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie* ed. Annette Carson (Horstead: Imprimis Imprimatur, 2021) p.71.
[588] *The Coronation of Richard III: The Extant Documents* ed. Anne F. Sutton, P. W. Hammond (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984) p.218.

choose, not to ballot'.[589] Richard's coronation thus contained an emphasis on election and soon after, he went to York 'with all speed'. Once there, he 'repeated his coronation'. Afterwards, 'he gave most gorgeous and sumptuous feasts and banquets, for the purposes of gaining the affections of the people'.[590] There was evidently a focus on emphasising the support and the 'affections' of the people in Richard's actual coronation, and the one repeated in York.

This was a focus Edward IV and Richard III had reinstated. Although the English coronation ceremony traditionally began with an acclamation for the new king, this was done away with in 1429. Henry VI's English coronation removed this ceremony of 'recognition and acceptance'.[591] Since Henry was to be the first crowned king of both England and France, the acclamation was removed to allow the English ceremony to more closely resemble the French. Edward IV and Richard III chose to reinstate it. It could perhaps be argued that they did so because, as usurpers, their claims to the throne were weak and could be bolstered by an election. It should be noted, though, that Henry IV, who usurped the throne in 1399, purposefully drew away from ideas of election. As Roy Strong noted, fourteenth-century kings - Henry IV included - 'did all they could to pull the monarchy back from any hint of election'.[592] The Yorkist kings, however, kept the focus on election, commonwealth and public consent throughout their reigns. This suggests that their authority rested in large part on the commonwealth and the assent of their subjects.

Thus in late fifteenth-century England there seems to have been a genuine belief that the commonwealth was the source of kingly power. Indeed, in 1493, Chief Justice Thomas Bryan (d.1500) noted that the law and the common weal were the same thing: 'Ley le qual est le common weal': the law is the commonweal.[593] For Bryan, the king's authority stemmed from his role as protector of law and commonwealth. Thus the role of the commonwealth and common people in kingship and politics was becoming increasingly acknowledged. Furthermore, it was not just the people that acknowledged this. Over the course of the century it was repeatedly recognised by members of the ruling elite, too.

[589] Dunham & Wood, 'Right to Rule 'p.756.

[590] *Ingulph*'*s Chronicle* ed. Riley, p. 490.

[591] Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) p.50 'Thus in 1429 the English coronation no longer began with the more popular or constitutional ceremony of recognition and acceptance, the traditional commencement of the English ceremony 'was removed.

[592] Roy Strong, *Coronation: From the 8th to the 21st Century*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2006) p.131.

[593] John Watts, 'Commonweal and Commonwealth: England's Monarchical Republic in the Making c.1450-1530 'in *The Languages of Political Society*: *Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries* ed. Andrea Gamberini, Jean-Philippe Genet, Andrea Zorzi (Rome: Viella, 2011) p.155.

The People and Kingly Power II: Government Acknowledgement

That the commonwealth was overtaking God as the source of the king's power and authority was not just noted by the people. It was also recognised by those in government and in positions of power. This was touched on previously when looking at Gloucester, York and Richard III. Powerful men appealed to commonwealth ideology and public opinion, and this in itself was a recognition of its power. There was a greater reliance upon the commonwealth as an entity and fifteenth-century kings catered to public opinion far more than their predecessors. In this way, commonwealth - both entity and ideology - in late fifteenth-century England was an important foundation of power.

Events after the death of Anne Neville (1456-1485) show that Richard III's reign depended on public support. Following his wife's death, Richard was forced to publicly refute claims that he intended to marry his niece Elizabeth of York (1466-1503). The Croyland Chronicler claimed Richard was advised by William Catesby (1450-1485) and Richard Ratcliffe (d.1485) to make the declaration:

> The king's purpose and intention of contracting marriage with his niece Elizabeth being mentioned to some who were opposed thereto, the king was obliged, having called a council together, to excuse himself…and to assert that such a thing had never once entered his mind…the king was told to his face that if he did not abandon his intended purpose, and that, too, before the mayor and commons of the city of London, opposition would not be offered to him by merely the warnings of the voice; for all the people of the north, in whom he placed the greatest reliance, would rise in rebellion against him, and impute to him the death of the queen, the daughter and one of the heirs of the earl of Warwick, through whom he had first gained his present high position…[594]

The Croyland Continuator noted that Richard needed to absolve himself of these rumours not only to the council, but to the 'commons of the city of London'. Since Anne Neville was a northern heiress, and the north had always been loyal to the Nevilles, perhaps Richard refuted the claims to keep the 'all the people of the north' on side. This might be a convincing explanation if he were denying the accusations only to the people of the north. As the chronicler noted however, he was compelled to do so before the mayor and people of London too. This statement recognises the force of public opinion, acknowledging that Richard's reign 'placed the greatest reliance' on the people

[594] *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland,* trans. Henry T. Riley (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854) p.499.

of the north. This is not dissimilar to the threats against Edward IV by the Wessex peasants in 1462. Furthermore, the fact that Richard was forced to make the statement in the first place should be noted. It is curious that it was this - not, for example, the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower - that demanded public explanation. This was the issue of importance to the northerners and commons of London, telling us something about how public opinion supported Richard's reign.

To the same end, Richard wrote a letter to the city of York on the 5th April 1485. Ross stated that this letter 'provides a…clear illustration of the dangers of seditious rumour' and 'the anxiety which it caused in government'.[595] The letter instructed the mayor of York to arrest anyone involved in the 'telling of tales or tidings' against the king or his lords, since they might be 'stirred to commotions and unlawful assemblies'.[596] All seditious bills were to be taken down by any citizen who saw them and 'without reading or showing the same to any other person, bring it forthwith to us or some of the lords or other of our council'.[597] Richard made a serious effort to combat the rumours surrounding Anne's death and his potential marriage to his niece. Both the statement and the subsequent letter to York acknowledged his vulnerability to public opinion. Richard had a strong sense of morality, but it is doubtful that his reaction to these rumours was motivated by his sense of propriety alone. Indeed, the Croyland chronicler believed that though he made the 'denial in a loud and distinct voice', 'many supposed' it was 'to suit the wishes of those who advised him' than in 'conformity with his own'.[598]

He relied on public opinion, and this was not a new development: it was as much a feature of the 1470s as the 1480s. In 1470, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick (1428-1471) and George, duke of Clarence (1449-1478), sent a letter to England that made it clear they counted on the people's support. Although they were the cousin and brother of the king respectively, Warwick and Clarence had rebelled against Edward IV and fled to France. There, they made peace with the Lancastrians and set about plotting a return to England to reinstate Henry VI. The letter was addressed to the 'commons of England':

> To the worshipful, discrete and true commons of England greeting. It is as we doubt not notarially and openly known unto you all how uncourteously that in late days we have been

[595] Charles Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda, and Popular Opinion During the Wars of the Roses 'in *Patronage, The Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England* ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Gloucester: Sutton, 1981) p.22.
[596] *York Civic Records vol. 1* ed. Angelo Raine (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1939) pp.115-116. 'stirrd to commocions and unlawful assembles'.
[597] Ibid. without reding or shewing the same to any othre persone bring it furthwith unto us or some of the lords or othre of our counsaill'.
[598] *Ingulph's Chronicle* ed. Riley, p.500.

> treated, taken and accepted for the true heart, tender zeal, love and affection that God knows we have ever born and intend for all things earthly to the weal of the Crown and the advancing of the commonwealth of England, and for reproving of falsehood and oppression of the poor people, God and our deeds our judge…[599]

The 'true commons' addressed were not parliamentary commons but the commonality. This was a public letter: John Vale, who recorded it, wrote that 'diverse copies were made and set upon the standard in Chepe, upon the stulpes [low stone posts] on London bridge and upon diverse church doors in London and in other places in England'.[600] Warwick and Clarence thus recognised that the commonality had an important role in supporting kingship and authority. They cited the 'advancing' of the 'commonweal' as their primary motivation, and in so doing appealed to the commonwealth as a political entity. If the people were not a foundation of political authority, they would have had no reason to do this.

It was an argument Warwick and Clarence continued when they landed in England. They issued a proclamation, and this was along the same lines as the letter. The proclamation mentioned how they aimed to:

> reform, redress and amend all the great mischiefs, oppressions and all other inordinate abuses now reigning in the said realm, to the perpetual peace and prosperity and commonwealth of all this his realm…[601]

This, like the letter, was made public. It contained seven articles, but the copy intended for public display ended after item three.[602] Everything after this was was clearly judged to be less important, even though this included points on the protection of the Church and men's property.[603] Both the letter and the proclamation focused on the commonwealth, the people, and the need for reform. That these were considered more relevant than something as pivotal to medieval life as the Church

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[599] Letter recorded by John Vale, *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale*'*s Book* ed. Margaret Kekewich, Colin Richmond, Anne F. Sutton, Livia Visser-Fuchs & John Watts (Alan Sutton Publishing for Richard III & Yorkist History Trust, 1995) p.218. 'To the worshipfull, discrete and trewe commones of Englond gretyng. Hit is as we doubte not notarily and opunly known unto you alle, how uncurtesly that in late daies we have bene entreated, takyn and accpted for the trewe hertis, tendir zelis, lovis and affeccions that God knoweth we have evur borne and entende tafore all thinges erthley to the wele of the crowne and theavauncyng of the commen wele of Englonde, and for reproving of falshood and oppression of the poore peopull, God and oure deedis our judge…'.

[600] Ibid, p.219. 'divers copies were made and sette upon the standarde in Chepe, upon the stulpes on London brigge and uppon divers chirche doris in London and in other places in Englonde'.

[601] Ibid, p.221. 'Reforme, redresse and amende alle the grete mischevus, oppressions and alle other inordinat abusiones now reigning in the seid reaume, to the perpetuell peax and prosperite and commone weele of all this his reaume…'

[602] BL, Cotton Charter xvii, no.11.

[603] The proclamation will be looked at more fully in the following chapter on divinity.

shows that commonwealth ideology had become an important part of politics. Both the letter and the proclamation serve as Warwick and Clarence's acknowledgement of this. Clearly it worked, they were supported by the commonality in 'overwhelming numbers', with between thirty and sixty thousand men joining them.[604]

Using populist politics as a rhetoric was, as chapter two showed, a Yorkist strategy. Earlier in the century, popular poems and ballads like the *Ballad on the Gates of Canterbury* similarly emphasised the commonwealth and appealed to the people. The *Ballad* was attached to the gates of Canterbury between March and April 1460.[605] At this point, the Yorkist lords were split between Calais and Ireland. They would leave for England in June, but needed to secure support beforehand. The poem therefore complained about the state of England: it stressed how England 'shall be desolate', 'in way to be conquered'.[606] All but the last four stanzas ended with the refrain 'omne caput languidam, et omne cor merens!': the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint.[607] This linked it to the body politic and kingship directly. This was furthered when the poem prayed that York be brought 'home' and 'set' among princes ('ut sedeat in principibus')'.[608] This was typical of York: setting up a claim to the throne and justifying his actions by claiming he acted on behalf of the commonwealth. Therefore, it is possible that in 1470, Warwick and Clarence were just using the same tactics they always had. After all, though they were acting Lancastrians in 1470, they had been Yorkists first. However, the Lancastrian government also acknowledged the political power of the commonwealth, suggesting that the use of such ideology by Warwick and Clarence went beyond Yorkist strategy.

The Lancastrian acknowledgement of this was somewhat coincidental, found in a piece of propaganda. The *Somnium Vigilantis* was written ahead of the 1459 attainder of the Yorkist lords: Richard of York, his sons Edmund, earl of Rutland (1443-60) and Edward earl of March (future Edward IV), the earl of Warwick, and his father Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury (1400-1460). Set up as a moral debate, it justified the attainder and dismissed any justification the lords gave for their actions. It began with a rugged Yorkist bursting unceremoniously into the council chamber to set out six articles in the lords' defence. A government representative subsequently took apart each and every one ('I shall answer singularly to every point that needs response') to undermine the Yorkist

[604] Hicks, *English Political Culture*, p.85.
[605] Strohm, *Politique*, p.173.
[606] ' Balat set upponne the gates of Caunterbury 'recorded in *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI* ed. John Silvester Davies (London: Camden Society, 1856) p.92.
[607] Ibid, pp.91-4.
[608] Ibid, p.93.

position.[609] The *Somnium Vigilantis* did not appeal to the people or the commonwealth.[610] It did the complete opposite and argued that the support of the people was meaningless. The Yorkist claimed 'that it belongs to every person of the commonality to oppose himself to the ruin of the good public', but the Lancastrian representative stressed it is 'not so'.[611] Only the king, the *Somnium* claimed, could act on the behalf of the commonwealth: 'no very true man…intended any point of the commonwealth, but the final subversion of the king'.[612] For Pollard this text was a 'full-blooded restatement of the absolute powers of the Crown'.[613] Yet if this was the aim, it did not succeed. The *Somnium* contradicts itself and rather than showing the absolute power of the monarchy, it reveals a reliance upon the public.

The Lancastrian representative said:

> Listen well to me now. I remember that among many things by which the commonwealth of a realm stands, the most principal is this, the due subjection with faithful and voluntary honours, and their appurtenance to be holden to the sovereign of the said realm…no thing be done by singular will…[614]

The commonwealth thus stood in the 'voluntary' willingness of the people to serve the king. This was at odds with earlier ideas about loyalty to one's king, and undermined the *Somnium*'s argument that the support of the people was of no consequence. Again the contrast can be seen between this and Edmund Stafford's 1397 speech, where the people must be 'duly obedient' rather than voluntarily subject.

The Yorkists associated their rule with the commonwealth and public support, perhaps to more definitively differentiate between themselves and the Lancastrians. The Lancastrian response, though, was that public support was no 'ground for argument':

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[609] BL, Royal MS 17 D XV, f.303r. 'I shall answere singulerly to every poynte that nedith respons'

[610] Margaret Kekewich, 'The Attainder of the Yorkists in 1459: Two Contemporary Accounts', *Historical Research*, 55(131) (1982) p.28. 'Conversely, no attempt was made to appeal to the people, a normal device of Yorkist propaganda, indeed, they were dismissed as foolish and unreliable in the reply to the fifth article, so it is unlikely that the tract was intended for wide circulation'

[611] Royal MS 17 D XV, f.306. 'that it longeth to every persoune of [th]e commynalte to oppose himselfe to [th]e ruyne of the good publique'.

[612] Royal MS D 17 XV, f.306. 'no very tru man…intended eny point of [th]e common welth, but the final subversion of [th]e kynge'.

[613] A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.50.

[614] Royal MS D 17 XV, f.305. 'Lysten welle to me now. I remembere that amonge many thinges by the whiche the commone welthe of a royame stondyth the most principall is this, a due subjeccion with fayithfull and voluntarie honours and thair appertenaunce to be yolden to [th]e soverain in the sayd royame…no thinge be done by singular wille'.

> As for the favour of the people, there is no ground of sure argument, for by cause it is so variable and for the most part it grows of opinionable conceits, and not of truth. It is a shrewd consequence: the people favour them, ergo they be good. Who so has read in the old stories, he may be sufficiently informed of the great variableness of the people and the uncertainty of their opinions.[615]

As Strohm highlighted, the text 'devotes unusual space and detail to an enumeration of the very Yorkist positions it intends to refute'.[616] However whilst the 'unusual' nature of the *Somnium* has been noted, its contradictory nature has not. The commonwealth cannot be both the 'principal' pillar of the realm and 'no ground for sure argument'. The Yorkists certainly acted like it was the latter, and the *Somnium* only confirms this. If the Lancastrian government thought the commonwealth offered no meaningful support, then we must ask why the *Somnium* spends so much time focusing on it.

Indeed when detailing the Yorkist offences, the *Somnium* put the 'most terminal offence' as the 'persuasion of the good public':

> Now it is so that they not only had no repentance for their offence…but also by their fastidious and usurped power did maintain and authorise their execrable trespass and under cororable [sic] means and subtle ambition withdrew the hearts of many of the king's people, inclining them by callous persuasions to their intent. I pass over in this, it were too long to declare all the harms and miseries that they caused to be done in that season, but I will insist somewhat more to their last most terminal offence, the which…was the point of persuasion of the good public…Trow ye they will have procured the commonwealth?[617]

It is interesting that although the battles of St Albans (1455) and Blore Heath (1459) were mentioned, these were not York's 'most terminal' offences.[618] These were, in the most straightforward definition, treason. In this text though, outright battle with royal forces was not as serious as the 'persuasion the good public'. This again contradicts the message of the text. If the

[615] Ibid, f.303-307r. 'As for the favoure of the peple thaire is no grounde of sure argument, for by cause hit is so varyable and for the moost part it groweth of oppynable conceytis, and not of trowth. Hit is a shrewyde consequence: the peple favoureth hem, *ergo* they be good. Who so hathe rede in the old storyes, he may be suffyciently informed of [th]e grete varyableness of the peple and thyncertitude of thaire oppynions.'.

[616] Strohm, *Politique,* p.12.

[617] Royal MS D 17 XV, f.305-305r. 'Now it is so that they not oonely hadd no repentaunce for thaire offence…but also by thar fastidious and usurped power did mayntein and auctoryse thaire execrable trespas and undir cororable [sic] meanes and subtyle ambicion withdrue the hartes of many of [th]e kinges peple enclyning thaim by cavyllous persuasions to thar entent. I passe over in this, hit wer to longe to declare all the harmes and myseries that thay caused to be done in that season, but I wylle insiste som what more to thaire laste mooste termynal offence, the which… was no poynt of persuacion of [th]e good publique…Trow ye thay will have procured the commone welth?'.

[618] Ibid, f.305. Although the *Somnium* calls Blore Heath 'Blake Heth'

support of the people was meaningless, then it could not have been the Yorkists' most grievous offence. If the *Somnium* was supposed to reinforce the king's absolute power - and Gilson believed it was to 'prevent any weakening on Henry VI's part' - then the emphasis on the public is curious.[619] Instead it only highlighted that Yorkist attempts at winning over the public constituted a bigger threat to Lancastrian rule than anything else. This in turn suggests that the people were the foundation of royal power and political authority.

Therefore, the idea that the people were a source of power was not something being expressed by the lower classes only. It was something that was being repeatedly acknowledged by the government and the main political players of the fifteenth century. It should be noted, as Pollard did, that after 1471, 'all…kings took action and justified politics in terms of the common weal'.[620] It is worth asking why they would have done this if the people were truly as insignificant as the *Somnium* wanted to pretend. By accepting that the commonwealth was a significant source of political power, it is far more understandable.

Treason and Treachery

One interesting way of judging the importance of the commonwealth, and by extension the role of the people in politics, is to look at ideas about treason and treachery. The fifteenth century saw a development in ideas of treason, in which treasonable acts benefitting the commonwealth were not considered criminal by the commonality. This coincided with the lack of fear displayed by the Wessex peasants of 1462, or the commons in John Berney's letter, who both felt confident threatening the king. This is something that has not been properly considered. For example, Megan Leitch believed that the king *was* the commonwealth and vice versa; going against one was going against the other.[621] This was not always the case: the actions of the Yorkists and of Humphrey of Gloucester all show a separation between ideas of the king and ideas of commonwealth. Leitch also did not consider the occasions where things that were undoubtedly treason were deemed acceptable because they were done in the name of the commonwealth. This however tells us much about the place of the king, and his role in relation to the people, and the power of the public.

[619] J. P. Gilson, 'A Defence of the Proscription of the Yorkists in 1459', *EHR*, 26(103) (1911) p.512.
[620] Pollard, *Wars of the Roses*, p.133.
[621] Megan Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.30.

There appears to have been conflicting ideas of treason in the mid-fifteenth century, with the king and government having a different idea of what constituted the crime to the commonality. This is especially evident in 1450 during Jack Cade's rebellion. The rebels were considered traitors by the government, but soldiers showed reluctance to attack them. *An English Chronicle* noted that soldiers 'would not fight against them that laboured to amend and reform the common profit'.[622] The *Great Chronicle of London* stated that:

> Certain captains with a convenient company kept still the field of Black Heath to the king's use, but among them was such murmur and words that the captains feared their own companies for they feared not to say, that the captain of Kent was in a just and rightful quarrel, for the king was ruled by flattering and false counsel…[623]

The same chronicler claimed that Cade said 'he and other of his company were coming as the king's true subjects, to reform the commonwealth of this land'.[624] By this point the rebels had marched on London and unlawfully executed several noblemen, but they were not considered by the king's soldiers to be guilty of treason. Their actions for the commonwealth superseded any treasonous activity against the king and government.

It was not the rebels who the commonality judged to be traitors, but the lords the rebels attacked, such as James Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele (1395-1450). The Chronicles of London recorded that the 'commons of the city went unto the Guildhall…to enquire of all persons that were traitors, extortioners or oppressors of the king's people'.[625] Fiennes and others were accused of treason and executed. The rebels were absolved, almost, of unlawfully executing Fiennes because their efforts were for the common 'profit'. Public perception of treachery and treason thus appeared to rest on who worked for the commonwealth, and this was sometimes at odds with the law. As the chronicler pointed out, Fiennes was the traitor because of his actions contrary to the commonwealth, not the king, and this is an important distinction. Treason was typically a crime against the king but the rebels made no mention of any action against Henry VI. Fiennes' crime was the oppression of the

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[622] *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*, ed John Silvester Davies, (London: Camden Society, 1856) p.65

[623] *GCL,* p.182. 'Certayn capytaynys wyth a convenyent company kept still the ffeyld of Blak heth to the kyngys use, but among them was such murmour & wordis that the capytaynys fferid theyr aune companyes ffor they fferid not to saye, that the capytayn of Kent was in a just & rigthfull quarell, for the kyng was rulid by fflateryng & fals counsayll…'

[624] Ibid, p.183. 'he & othir of his company were comyn as the kyngs trewe subjectys, to reffourm the common weale of thys land'

[625] *Chronicles of London*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (London, 1905) p.160. '…comons of the cite wente vnto Guyldhall… to enquere of all persons that were traitours extorcioners or oppressours off the kynges people'.

'king's people'. Crimes against the common 'profit' were therefore as significant as crimes against the king himself.

It was impossible to be guilty of treason when acting for the commonwealth, because, as a different group of rebels claimed in 1450, treason was a crime against the 'community of the realm'. This was the argument after the execution of William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk (1396-1450). After negotiating the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, resulting in the loss of Maine and Anjou, de la Pole had been unpopular in England. He had been one of the king's favourites, but in 1450 he was impeached by parliament and Henry VI was forced to sentence de la Pole to five years in exile.[626] Whilst on his way to Calais, his ship was intercepted. He was given a mock trial, taken into a rowing boat and summarily executed. Those guilty claimed that their actions were not treason: they 'did not know the said king, but they well knew the crown of England', and 'the aforesaid crown was the community of the said realm and that the community of the realm was the crown of that realm'.[627] This reveals that whilst there was separation between the commonwealth and the king, there was not necessarily separation between the commonwealth and the crown. The rebels who executed Suffolk believed it was impossible for them to be guilty of treason - a crime against the crown - when acting for the 'community of the realm' because the community *was* the crown; the king and his person did not come into it. This demonstrates the shift in power balance between the commonwealth and the king. The commonwealth as an ideology and a body of people was held in much higher regard than previously, and was beginning to be held even higher than the king himself.

Crimes committed in the name of the commonwealth were therefore not considered treason. On the other hand, acts against the commonwealth were beginning to be viewed as criminal. As John Beddon, a minor friar from Coventry, stated to the Privy Council c.1446, 'if it be in prejudice of common wele it is unlawful'.[628] Both Richard of York and Edward IV used this to accuse their

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[626] De la Pole was accused of various things including embezzlement, conspiring with the French to invade England and appointing corrupt sheriffs. He denied them all, and Henry VI banished him in order to save him from execution. E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) pp.492-494.

[627] Ancient Indictments of the King's Bench 29 Henry VI: K.B. 9/47, printed and translated in Roger Virgoe, 'The Death of William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk '*John Rylands Bulletin*, 47(2) (1965), p.499. Virgoe believes these 'astonishing words…should probably be accepted as an accurate reflection of what was said, though no doubt distorted by memory and translation'. Printed in full pp.501-502.

[628] *Proceedings and Ordinances, vol. VI* ed. Harris Nicolas, p.43-44. '…eny custom howe long so ev[er] hit be…if hit be in p[re]judice of co[mmon]e wele it is unlawfull'. Beddon was writing about the wax and candles left with a cathedral after a burial. The custom was that the 'wax remain[ed] with the said cathedral', but Beddon believed the offerings should go to 'them that ministered the sacraments to the parishioners'. He said that 'neither the Pope nor all the world may make that but that a free man in his last will may dispose the lights pertaining to his corpse wheresoever he will…'.

rivals of treason. The second duke of Somerset, Edmund Beaufort and his second son, the fourth duke (also named Edmund, c.1438-1471), were both, on separate occasions, accused of treason by Richard of York and Edward IV respectively. York's specific use of commonwealth ideology and political propaganda, combined with the rivalry between the houses of York and Beaufort mean that these accusations have undeniable bias. They are unable to serve as evidence of the connection between commonwealth ideology and treason on their own. However they show that in order to remove a political rival, both York and Edward IV used commonwealth ideology as a rhetoric to support an accusation of treason. The accusation against the second duke in 1452 was grounded in his conduct in France, and how losses there damaged the commonwealth. This is another example of how York manipulated commonwealth ideology to serve his own ends, and combined with the accusations against the fourth duke, it suggests that there was a recognised connection between commonwealth, treason, and punishment, since treason no longer referred only to crimes against the king. This was furthered by Edward IV. The fourth duke was executed after Tewkesbury in 1471 because he had 'provoked and continued the great rebellion that so long had endured in the land against the king, and contrary to the weal of the realm'.[629] That he had acted against the king should have been justification enough, but Edward IV cited the 'weal of the realm' in order to push this connection with the commonwealth. Dragged from sanctuary in Tewkesbury Abbey and executed in the town square, Beaufort's execution was connected with the commonwealth in the same way that accusations against his father had been. Both York and his son evidently felt that the best way of removing their rivals was to accuse them of treason, and they grounded these accusations in commonwealth ideology and rhetoric.

The accusations against the dukes of Somerset also seem to be indicative of wider ideas about treason and the punishment for going against the commonwealth. This is indicated by a text written by John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (1427-1470). The *Declamation of Noblesse*, printed by William Caxton in 1481, was a translation of Buonaccorso da Montemagno's (1391-1429) *Controversia de Nobilitate* (1428). The text is presented as a debate between two men on what constitutes nobility. Several passages concern the commonwealth, and there is an indication in these sections that Tiptoft connected actions against the commonwealth with treason. Whilst he did not label it treason as such, he suggested that actions against the commonwealth should be punishable by death. One of the characters, Gayus, says that those of noble character who endanger the commonwealth will be judged by their ancestors and punished:

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[629] *The Arrivall,* ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society, 1838) p.31. 'provoked and continuyd the great rebellyon that so long had endured in the land agaynst the Kynge, and contrye to the wele of the Realme'.

> Their said fathers preferred our weal public… It is not then to doubt that if their fathers were alive and certainly advertised of their vices, they would judge them according to their demerits to great torments, death, or perpetual exile…[630]

Tiptoft then gave examples of great nobles who had punished their sons for actions against the commonwealth:

> For many like young men…have been by their forefathers condemned by judgement, as Brutus, for when he had understood that his sons conspired against our weal public, he made them first to be beaten with rods, and afterwards to be beheaded. Also, Cassius made his son which rebelled against the empire of Rome to be taken, and forthwith sent him sore scourged to the Senate, there by judgement to receive his death…[631]

The examples Tiptoft used are relevant: Brutus had his sons executed after they attempted to restore the monarchy, and Cassius' son was a rebel. Brutus therefore upheld the republic and Cassius upheld justice. These were the qualifiers for nobility. Finally, Tiptoft stated that:

> our city hath so long suffered patiently thine errors and vices unpunished. And I dare say, if they were alive, they would be the first that should punish thee, either with death or with exile.[632]

There was a focus on the death or exile of those damaging the commonwealth in the *Declamation*, regardless of birth or status. The punishment matches that for treason - execution, specifically, beheading. In connection with the reaction towards the Cade rebels, the rebels' actions, and accusations against the dukes of Somerset, it seems clear that there is some connection between treason and actions that are deemed derogatory to the commonwealth.

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[630] *Declamation of Noblesse* printed in full in Appendix 1, Rosamond Mitchell, *John Tiptoft (1427-1470)* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1938) p.231. 'theyr said faders preferred our weal publyque…It is not thenne to doubte that yf theyr faders were on lyue and certaynly aduertised of their vyces, they wold juge theym accordyng to theyr demerytes to grete turmentys, deth, or perpetuel exyle…'.

[631] Ibid. 'ffor many lyke yong men… haue ben by their forfaders condempned by jugement, as brutus, ffor whan he had vnderstonde that his sonnes conspired agayn oure weal publyque, he made theym fyrst to be bete with roddes, & aftirward to be byheded. Also, Cassius made his sone whiche rebelled ageynst thempyre of Rome to be taken, and forthwith sent hym sore scorgyd to the Senate, there by jugement to receyue his deth…'.

[632] Ibid, p.238. 'our cyte hath so long suffred paciently thyne errours and vyces vnpunysshed. And I dar saye, yf they were a lyue, they wolde be the first that shold punysshe the, eyther with deth or with exile'.

A later text, translated by Caxton at the end of the century, supports this. The *Lytell Necessarye Treatyse* was a translation of Jacques Legrand's (c.1360-c.1425) *Le Livre de Bonnes Mouers*. It mentioned tyranny, and how: 'they that be tyrants and that grieve the people and the poor innocents ought right well to be advised for it reason that they die an evil death'.[633] Caxton continued, writing that:

> by these examples ought the princes and lords to take heed, the which by their tyrannies do many evils to their subjects, and by their cruelness made many men to die, and by their vengeance for to have their good for certainly their evil life by rights requires an evil death.[634]

This text proclaimed that kings who abused their subjects deserved death, and is similar to the message in Tiptoft's *Declamation*. The focus in these parts of the *Lytell Treatyse* is very much on the subjects, and furthers the idea that crimes against the commonwealth were treasonous.

It could perhaps be argued that connecting the commonwealth to treason was similar to criticising the king's councillors rather than the king himself: it provided a safer space in which to judge government and justify rebellion. It seems to have been more than that, though. The commonwealth was put on a level with the king unseen before the fifteenth century. In 1388 for example, Richard II's despised favourites were accused of treason in parliament, but this accusation rested on damage they did to the king's regality. They:

> falsely and treacherously conspired… to make a statute and commission in the same parliament contrary to the regality of our lord the king and to the detriment of his crown.[635]

In 1388, the commonwealth was placed far below the king's person in importance. Primarily, they were traitors because they were:

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[633] *Here Begynneth a Lytell Necessarye Treatyse Whiche Speketh of the Estate of the Comonalte* (Manchester: John Rylands Special Collections, 15463) (c.1535) p.30. they hat be tyrauntes and that greve the people and the pore innocentes oughte ryght well to be advuysed for it reason that they dye an euyl deth'.

[634] Ibid. 'By these examples oughte the prynces and lordes to take hede the whiche by theyr tyrannyes do many euylles to theyr subgettes & by theyr cruelnesse make many men to dye and by theyr vengeaunce for to haue theyr good for certaynely theyr euyll lyfe by ryght requyreth an euyll deth.'.

[635] 'Richard II: February 1388, Part 2', *PROME*, [accessed 1 June 2021].

> hanging to themselves the royal power, lordship, and sovereignty of the person of the king, to the great dishonour and peril of the king, the kingdom, and his realm.[636]

It was the king's regality, prerogative and authority that had been damaged, not the commonwealth. In the fifteenth century, however, it was a crime in itself to go against the commonwealth. Since actions against it carried the same weight as treason, and earned the same punishment, it suggests that the commonwealth was an entity with recognised and growing importance.

This brings us back to the *Somnium Vigilantis*, because there are ideas about treason and commonwealth there too. The Yorkist representative mentioned how the Yorkists 'intend the commonwealth of all the realm, for the which it is reasonable and worshipful to expose himself to the great jeopardy of goods and life…'.[637] Given that this is a piece of Lancastrian propaganda, it is notable that the Yorkists saw the defence of the commonwealth as a justifiable excuse to risk one's 'goods and life'. Indeed the Yorkist representative claimed the Yorkists should be thanked:

> this ought to be ascribed rather to virtue and magnanimity than to rebellion or such other odious names, and so to have rewards and thanks and not to be put to… destruction.[638]

It is clear that though the Yorkists had gone against government, their actions were not considered treasonous by their supporters. The fact that the government felt the need to issue the *Somnium* to justify their attainder may also suggest that it was not just the Yorkist lords that felt the attainder unjustified, but the wider population also. Whilst the *Somnium* dismissed Yorkist arguments, that the government felt the need to dismiss them in this way at all is indicative of the spread of such ideas. It would therefore seem that treasonous actions done for the benefit of the commonwealth were considered by many to not be treacherous.

Thus there is an atmosphere in mid- to late-fifteenth century England where going against the king was viewed as less severe than working against the commonwealth. Those that executed Suffolk placed the 'community' above the person of the king and they 'did not know' or recognise his authority. Combined with the threats made to Edward IV by the Wessex peasants and by John

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[636] Ibid.

[637] Royal MS D 17 XV, f.303. 'entende the commen welthe of alle the royame, for the which it is resonable and worshipfull to expose himselfe to the grete jeoperde of goodis and lyfe…'.

[638] Ibid. 'This oght to be ascrybed rather to vertue and magnanymite than to rebellyoun or such other odious names, and so to have reuardis and thankynges and not to be put to…destruccion'.

Berney's commons, the commonwealth was certainly important. It is also worth noting that both Richard III and Henry VII linked attainders they issued to the commonwealth. In Richard III's first parliament, he issued indictments for the 'subversion of this his said realm of England and the commonweal'.[639] Henry VII in his first parliament (from November 1485 to March 1486) blamed Richard III for the 'subversion of this realm, and commonweal of the same'.[640] This almost formulaic accusation speaks to how commonwealth ideology had become a staple in politics and governance, and how going against the commonwealth had become tied up with treason and treachery.

Commonwealth, Consent and Conciliar Rule

The recognition of the role of commonwealth ideology in politics coincided with growing ideas about conciliar rule and more 'republican' ways of viewing monarchy. Not only were the people the foundation of a king's power, the king needed their consent and acclaim. The scene at Clerkenwell is a notable example but not unique. J. W. McKenna believed that Clerkenwell had been a formality only, but this is not the case.[641] As Charles T. Wood noted, late medieval kings essentially abandoned legitimacy in favour of election.[642] The election of the king, it will be argued here, contributed to a kind of "monarchical meritocracy" in England. Civic humanism and republicanism operated in a meritocracy, with conciliar rule by public consent. We begin to see something similar in England, where kingship was no longer based only on blood, but also on the skills and merits of a ruler. At the same time, there was greater focus on consent. The *Somnium Vigilantis* shows that emphasis was placed on the 'willingness' of the subjects to be ruled, and individuals like John Fortescue were pushing for a more conciliar style of government. Coinciding with this, there were two occasions where different rebel groups proposed to abolish the monarchy altogether and rule with a council of common men. These ideas were growing and affecting ideas of kingship and rule.

John Fortescue's *Governance of England,* written a decade after Clerkenwell, explored ideas of conciliar rule and popular consent.[643] Written between 1471 and 1475, it compared English governance to French before concluding the English model was superior, and it has been described

[639] 'Richard III: January 1484', *PROME*.
[640] 'Henry VII: November 1485, Part 1', *PROME*. [accessed 27 May 2021].
[641] J. W. McKenna, 'The Myth of Parliamentary Sovereignty in Late Medieval England', *EHR*, 94(372) (1979) p.491.
[642] Charles T. Wood, 'The Deposition of Edward V', *Traditio*, 31 (1975), p.279. Wood argues that the parliament that 'elected 'Richard was of dubious legality and so instead he chose to focus on the assent of the 'lords spiritual and temporal'; William Hughes Dunham, Charles T. Wood, 'The Right to Rule in England: Depositions and the Kingdom's Authority '*The American Historical Review*, 18(4) (1976), p.761. They note that kings 'came increasingly to make their final appeal to the authority of the kingdom'.
[643] Also called *De Domino Regale et Politco*, or *The Differences Between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy*.

as an ‘assessment of the problems facing the country’.[644] The text was written for Edward IV and was Yorkist in its approach, and so it should not be surprising that Fortescue's model of governance was, as Geoffrey Hindley argued, ‘constitutional’.[645] In the text, the king could do nothing without the consent of the people, making the *Governance* another example of Yorkist ideas about the role of the people within governance and politics. Richard of York used the rhetoric of commonwealth and conciliar rule throughout the 1450s, and this did not end with his death. Although the constitutionalism of government and parliament at this time has been debated, it remains that the Yorkist government, through Fortescue, advocated a system of governance that put emphasis on the people.

When writing about the king, he claimed that:

> All that he doth owe to be referred to his kingdom, for though his estate be the highest estate temporal in earth, yet it is an office which he minister to his realm's defence and justice…[646]

The king may occupy the highest office in the land, but he is still restricted by the people and must “refer” to them. This does not suggest an absolute monarch with a great source of power. On the contrary, Fortescue's monarch is subdued and restricted, and this is a good thing. For Fortescue, this is the kind of rule that made England greater than France. The French had a *dominium regale*, where the king could do as he wished. The English, on the other hand, had a *dominium politicum et regale*, where the king needed popular consent:

> There be two kinds of kingdoms, of the which that one is called in Latin *dominium regale* and that other is called *dominium politicum et regale*. The first king may rule his people by such laws as he make himself, and therefore he may set upon them…impositions such as he will himself without their assent. The second king may not rule his people by other laws

[644] E. W. Ives, ‘Fortescue, Sir John, c.1397-1479) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [Accessed 2 May 2023] https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9944

[645] Geoffrey Hindley, *England in the Age of Caxton*, (London: Granada, 1979) p.54.

[646] John Fortescue, *The Governance of England*, printed in *John Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.235. ‘All that he dotthe oweth to be referred to his kingdome, for thoughe his estate be the highest estate temporal in erthe, yit it is an office whiche he mynistreth to his realmes defence and justice…’.

> than such as they will assent unto, and therefore he may set upon them no impositions without their own assent…[647]

The focus on assent is clear: the king of England is almost powerless without the people. This leads us to wonder what independent power the king has in a *dominium politicum et regale*. Though a French king has free reign to do as he wishes, Fortescue pointed out that this leads to tyranny:

> When Nimrod by might for his own glory made and incorporated the first realm and subdued it to himself by tyranny he would not have it ruled nor governed by another rule or law but by his own will… And therefore though he thus had made him a realm, holy scripture disdains to call him a king… he did not but oppress the people by might, and therefore he was a tyrant…[648]

Thus Fortescue endorsed a government where the consent of the people is taken into account.

Further in the text, he also suggested that the security of England rested with the common people, giving them a role of great importance. In a section titled 'here is showed what harm would come to England is the commons thereof were kept in poverty', Fortescue highlighted the importance of the common people, especially the archers. They defend the realm and ensure security:

> And if [the commons] were made poor they should not have wherewith to buy their bows, arrows, jacks or other armour or defence whereby they might be able to resist our enemies when they list to come upon us, which they do on every side… but if we [be] mighty of our self, which might stand most upon our poor archers… every man expert therein knows right well, wherefore the making poor of the commons which is the making poor of our archers shall be the destruction of our realm.[649]

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[647] Ibid, p.226. 'There beene twoo kyndes of kyngdomes of the whiche that oon ys callid in latyn dominium regale and that other is called dominium politicum et regale. The firste king may rewle his peopull by suche lawes as he maketh hym selfe and therfore he may sette upon theim tailes and imposicions suche as he woll him selfe withoute their assent. The secunde king may not rewle his peopull by other lawes thanne suche as they will assenten unto, and therfore he may sette upon theim noon imposicions without their owne assente…'.

[648] Ibid, p.227. 'Whanne Nempbrothe by mighte for his owne glorie made and incorporate the firste reaume and subdued it to hym selfe by tyrannye he wolde nat have it reuled nor gouverned by another reule or lawe but by his owne wille…And therfore thoughe he thus had made hym a reaume, holy scripture disdaynethe to calle hym a kyng…he did nat but oppressed the peopul by mighte, and therfore he was a tirante…'.

[649] Ibid, pp.240-41. 'And yif they [the commons] were made pouere they shulde nat have wherewith to bye hem bowes, arowes, jakkes or any other armour or defence wherby they mighte be able to resiste our enemyes whan they liste to come uppon us, Which they mow doo on every side…but yif we [be] mighty of oure selfe, whiche mighte stondith

That the defence and security of the realm rests with the commons and archers is significant. Archers had been pivotal to military victory during the battles of the Hundred Years War, and Fortescue's emphasis on them reflected this. It was they who ensured the "security" of the realm - not the king, or the nobles and their great retainers. The *Governance* thereby tells us something about where power lay, because if security rested in the commonality, they are given a position of responsibility reminiscent of that written about by civic humanists. It is thus the king's duty to ensure they do not fall into poverty ('he ought to defend them and their goods') and is 'greatly against his conscience…if he took from them their goods without lawful cause'.[650]

There was mutual reliance in the *Governance* between king and subject: the king cannot rule without his people as they "sustain" him. Fortescue noted that: 'right as every servant ought to have his sustenance of him that he serve, so ought the pope to be sustained by the Church and the king by his realm'.[651] The king needed the people as much as they needed him, and so the *Governance* gave the people a role of importance.

Fortescue was not unique in his thinking. Ideas about conciliar rule can be found lower down too. One example is two brothers from Sussex who rebelled in 1451. John and William Merfold were indicted after publicly calling for the deposition of Henry VI and the murder of all nobility. Though an extreme example, and clearly not representative of all of society, it demonstrates that ideas about conciliar government and public assent were being considered years before Fortescue. The King's Prosecution Indictment recorded that the rebels wanted to be ruled by a council of 24 elected men, and they wished to 'hold everything in common'.[652] David Rollison believed this rebellion reflected class antagonism between the lower and upper classes, but this does not seem a completely satisfactory explanation.[653] As Mavis Mate showed, few of the rebels were husbandmen, and some of them held no land whatsoever.[654] Most were skilled craftsmen. Whilst class antagonisms may have played a part, it is also likely that the Merfold brothers were responding to new ideas about governance, the new significance of the commonwealth, and the increased desire for conciliar rule.

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moste upon oure pouer archieres…every man experte therinne knowith right wele, wherfore the making pouer of the comones whiche is the making pouer of oure archieres shalbe the destrucctioun of our reaume'.

[650] Ibid, p.241. he oughte to defende hem and their goodes'; 'gretly ageinste his conscience….yif he toke from hem theire goodes withoute lawfull cause'.

[651] Ibid, p.235. 'right as every servaunte ought tahave his sustence of hym that he servitor, so ought the poope to be susteined by the chirche and the kyng by his reaume'.

[652] Mavis Mate, 'Economic and Social Roots of Popular Rebellion', *Economic History Review*, 45(4) (1992) p.665.

[653] David Rollison, Andy Wood, 'Class, Community and Popular Rebellion in the Making of Modern England', *History Workshop Journal*, 67(1) (2009)

[654] Mate, 'Economic and Social', pp.668-9.

Nor were the Merfold brothers alone: in 1451 there was other risings in the Weald, and in Easter week there were gatherings at Rotherfield, Mayfield, Burwash in Sussex and some areas in Kent.[655] They made the most 'radical demands yet', calling for twelve of their own men to rule instead of the king. These were not only similar to the demands of the Merfold rebels, but also the demands of the Cade rebels. A desire for conciliar rule and a focus on the commonwealth was a feature of fifteenth-century popular rebellion, highlighting that these ideas had much greater spread and influence than previously thought. Furthermore, these demands prove that this was believed to be an ideal mode of governance decades before Fortescue wrote *The Governance of England.* When the claims of the Wessex peasants and popular ballads about how the people enable kingship are also considered, it is clear that ideas about governance and commonwealth were being considered by all levels of society from 1450 onwards.

The Act of Accord

The idea of consent and election came to a significant head in October 1460. Following the Battle of Northampton in July 1460, Henry VI was in Yorkist custody. York himself had remained in exile on the continent, but in October he returned to England, 'marched into London, seized the king, and entered parliament… announcing that he intended 'to challenge his right' to the crown'.[656] Expecting parliament to confirm him as king, York entered the chamber and placed his hand on the empty throne. Yet he miscalculated, and the parliamentary lords were far from prepared to offer him the crown immediately. As a result, they retired to Blackfriars to discuss York's claim and, in the end, presented York with a compromise. He would be acknowledged as Henry VI's heir instead of king, and though this was not at all what York had intended, it is still significant. The Act of Accord was essentially a parliamentary election, appointing York heir to the throne.

A letter from a secretary to John Tiptoft, then in Venice, shows York felt the assent of the lords was necessary:

> There came my lord of York with thirteen hundred horse and men...and entered the palace with his sword borne upright before him through the hall and parliament chamber. And there under the cloth of estate standing he gave them knowledge that he purposed not to lay down his sword but to challenge his right… The lords…departed…and kept their counsel at the

[655] Ibid, p.667.
[656] John Watts, 'Richard of York, third duke of York, 1411-1460) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23503

> Blackfriars and...sometime wrote to my lord of York till at the last it was agreed to take such direction as they would advise him..[657]

In agreeing to 'take such direction as they would advise him', York was using the rhetoric of conciliar and elective rule to serve his own ends, just as he had done in the 1450s. He set out his claim in parliament rather than simply taking it by force and this shows that he was making a concerted effort at presenting himself as a conciliar and elective leader. Had he wished to, he could have simply taken the throne by force and invoked the right of conquest. He had arrived in London with an army, in the parliament chamber with (according to Tiptoft) over a thousand men, and had already succeeded in battle against the king at Northampton. However, he agreed to take their advice and accepted the position of heir instead of king. The parliamentary lords may have felt they had no choice but to offer York this compromise, given that he had entered the chamber surrounded by armed soldiers. However, it is worth noting that York had been proposed as heir before and parliament had refused. Thomas Young put the idea forward in 1451. Not only was the proposition shot down, Young was imprisoned in the Tower for suggesting it.[658]

Thus in 1460, the Act of Accord represents not just a compromise between York and parliament. It also shows that parliament had the power to make York an eventual king, diverting the succession away from Henry VI's legitimate son. This was revolutionary in its implications. In the Act, divine right was brushed over. Whilst York's ancestry was detailed and his descent from Edward III outlined, by deciding who was heir to the throne, the Act went against earlier ideas of kingship which specifically stated that only God could create an heir to the throne.[659]

In the opening paragraph it stated that the purpose of the Act was to resolve 'certain matters of variance', namely 'upon the claim and title unto the crowns of England and France, and royal power'.[660] It represented a 'said agreement, appointment and accord to be authorised by the same

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[657] Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale de France, MS. Fr. 20136 fo.65-66 printed in Johnson, *Duke of York*, p.212-3. 'Ther cam my lorde of york with xiij hundred horse and men…and entered the paleis with his swerde born uppe right by for him thorowe the halle and parleament chambre. And ther under the cloth of estate stondyng he gave them knowlich that he purposed nat to ley daune his swerde but to challenge his right…the lordes…departed…and kept ther counsaille atte the blak Freris and…sum tyme wrote to my lorde of York tille atte the last yt was agreed to take such direction as they wolde avise him'.

[658] Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p.98. Young was sent to the Tower, parliament was dissolved, and the petition was unsuccessful.

[659] Item 11, 'Henry VI: October 1460' *PROME* [Accessed 27 May 2021] 'The presentation of the title of Richard, duke of York, to the crown' details York's ancestry and descent from Edward III; *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England Commonly Called Glanvill* ed. and trans. G. D. G. Hall, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p.71. This treatise from the reign of Henry II stated that only God, not man, could create an heir.

[660] Item 19, 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME,* [accessed 27 May 2021]. 'certayne matyers of variaunce', namely 'uppon the clayme and tytle vn to the corones of Englond and of Fraunce, and royalle power.'.

parliament'.[661] It thereby implied that parliament had the power to settle this debate over York's claim, and by appointing him heir, it directly contradicted the idea that only God can create a king. Parliament, therefore, had a much more constitutional role, since kingship was not decided by God alone.[662] Indeed the Act implied that kingship needed parliamentary consent:

> For the more establishing of the said accord, it is appointed and consented that the lords spiritual and temporal, being in this present parliament, shall make oaths to accept, take, worship and repute, the said Richard duke of York, and his said heirs, as above is rehearsed, and keep and observe…in as much as appertains unto them, all the things above said, and resist to their power all them that would presume the contrary, according to their estates and degrees.[663]

Whilst taking oaths to the king was nothing unusual, what was unusual was that the oath was taken before York was king in order to ensure he did eventually get the crown. The oaths enabled and endorsed York's kingship, and this suggests that conciliar and elective kingship was a significant part of medieval rule.

Furthermore, the Act was dominated by the language of council and agreement:

> The king, understanding certainly that the said title of the said Richard duke of York just, lawful, true and sufficient, by the advise and assent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this parliament assembled, and by authority of the same parliament, declare, approve, ratify, confirm and accept the said title, just, good, lawful and true, and thereunto giveth his assent and agreement, of his free will and liberty. And over that, by the said advice and authority declare, entitle, call, establish, affirm and repute the said Richard duke of York very, true and rightful heir to the crowns, royal estate and dignity of the realms of England…[664]

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[661] Ibid. 'seid agrement, appointement and accord to be auctorised by the same parlement'.

[662] The debate over parliament and constitutionalism began with William Stubbs' *Constitutional History of England* in 1827. It has since been argued that the Yorkist monarchy was a constitutional one, and that constitutionalism in the fifteenth century was a response to the weakness of the crown. Dunham and Wood, however, argued that Richard III's election 'showed that, despite the continuing need for royal writs and regal ceremonial, parliament's authority now derived from that of the kingdom; and hence that in politics, if not in law, that body had become transcendent'. Dunham & Wood, 'Right to Rule', *American Historical Review*, p.761.

[663] Item 25, 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME*, [accessed 27 May 2021]. 'For the more estabylysshyng of the sayde accord, it ys appoynted and consented, that the lordes spirituelle and temporalle beyng in thys present parliament, shalle make othys to accept, take, worshyppe and repute, the sayde Richard duk of York, and hys sayde eyres, as aboue ys rehersed, and kepe and obserue… in as moche as apparteynethe vn to thaym, alle the thynges abouesayde, and resyste to theyre power alle thaym that wold presume the contrary, accordyng to thayre astates and degrees.'.

[664] Ibid, item 27. The kyng, understandyng certainly the said title of the seid Richard duc of York juste, lawfull, true and suffisant, by thavis and assent of the lordes spirituell and temporelx, and commens, in this parlement assembled,

This section is important because it mentions Henry VI, and how the Act passes through the authority of parliament and the agreement of the king. The king is placed in second place to parliament. Although parliament has no authority without the king, the Act stated that parliament declared and approved York as heir - Henry VI merely gave his 'assent and agreement'. Combined with the element of public assent in fifteenth century kingship, this suggests that kingship was drawing away from the divine right and personal power of the monarch.

It has been argued that the 1420 Treaty of Troyes was the precedent for the Act of Accord.[665] The Treaty of Troyes was agreed between Henry V and Charles VI of France, and stated that after Charles' death, the French crown would pass to Henry rather than Charles' son. In this there are similarities, but there are significant differences. Troyes was Charles VI handing over his kingdom as an act of surrender after a long, drawn out military campaign. It was in the wake of Agincourt, at the height of the English success in the Hundred Years War. Furthermore, the Treaty of Troyes was written in first-person from Charles' perspective ('after our death', 'our son in law'), and it bears his seal. Whether or not Charles was happy about signing the treaty, it remains that it was - ostensibly at least - drawn up with his involvement, his agreement, and his seal. The Act of Accord, on the other hand, is markedly different. It was written from parliament's perspective, and was the lords deciding that York should be king after Henry VI.

Henry is a fairly passive figure in the Act, which is unusual. Wishing to reject York's proposal, the lords went so far as to ask the king to 'search his memory to see if he could find any reasonable matter that might be objected against the said claim and title'.[666] Evidently he could not, and the Act states that, eventually, after 'serious deliberation and the advice of all his lords', Henry 'agreed to a settlement… to be authorised by [the] authority of this present parliament' in order to 'avoid the shedding of Christian blood'.[667] Whilst it is true that at this point he was essentially York's prisoner and likely agreed to the Act under duress, this is perhaps of less importance than the fact that the Act was carried through by the authority of parliament. The Act was written from a parliamentary perspective, even after making clear that the king was involved in the debate over

and by auctorite of the same parlement, declareth, approveth, ratifieth, confermeth and accepteth the said title, just, good, lawfull and [true] and therunto yeveth his assent and agreement, of his free will and libertee. And over that, by the seid advis and auctorite declareth, entitleth, calleth, stablissheth, affermeth and reputeth the seid Richard duc of York verrey, true and rightfull heire to the corones, roiall estate and dignite of the realmes of Englond…'.

[665] Philip Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State 1460-1660,* (London: Palgrave, 2001) p.34

[666] Item 12, 'Henry VI: October 1460' *PROME.* ' And the seid lordes besaught the kyng that he wuld remember hym, yf he myght fynde any resonable mater that myght be objected ayenst the seid cleyme and title…'

[667] Item 18, 'Henry VI: October 1460' *PROME* [Accessed 27 May 2021] 'All these premisses thus shewed and opened to the kynges highnes, he, inspired with the grace of the Holy Goost, and in eschuyng of effusion of Cristen blode, by good and sad deliberacion and avyce had with all his lordes spirituelx and temporelx, condescended to accord to be made betwene hym and the seid duc, and to be auctorized by thauctorite of this present parlement'.

York's title. This is unlike the Treaty of Troyes and must have been a deliberate choice. This is especially the case when compared to other parliamentary records, such as the roll recording the parliament of November 1459. From only eleven months previous, this presents Henry as being in complete control of governance and is written from the king's perspective (frequently mentioning 'our kingdom').[668] At this point, however, it was his wife Margaret of Anjou who had the more active role, and it was she who was raising armies in Cheshire. It is seems fair to suggest, therefore, that the Act could have been written from the king's perspective - like the 1459 roll and the Treaty of Troyes - had that been the intention of the parliamentary lords. It was not, thus suggesting that the Act of Accord was parliament exercising a degree of constitutionalism. Troyes may have served as inspiration, but the Act of Accord revealed that the king's authority rested on both parliament and the people.

This is further suggested by events surrounding the drawing up of the Act. Archbishop George Neville encouraged the king's Serjeants of arms to go against the Act, since they 'received their fees and wages' from the king.[669] The Serjeants responded that they 'were the king's counsellors in the law, in such things as were under his authority', but 'this matter was above his authority, wherein they might not meddle'.[670] If the king is supposed to be the head of the body politic, and issues such as this are believed to be 'above' his authority, it is worth asking what power the king really holds. It is suggested in their remark that the matter is above the authority of the monarchy not just of Henry himself, thus the power of the king is diminished. This was considered by Dunham and Wood to be evidence of parliament's constitutionalism in this period. They drew on this, and the fact that the Act of Accord uses the phrase 'by the authority of parliament', to argue that this 'gave precedent and principle for a parliamentary monarchy'.[671] As noted by Fortescue, English kings needed parliamentary consent, and this came from both the lords and the commons (the commons being knights and landholders elected from the shires, with knights summoned in the thirteenth century 'for the community of the county').[672] Thus the Act tells us something about the perceived power of parliament at this time, in that it felt able to displace a legitimate heir. Although

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[668] 'Henry VI: November 1459', *PROME.* [accessed 1 June 2021]. Henry was presented as having control of governance at this parliament, even though at this point it was his wife, Margaret of Anjou, who was recruiting armies in Cheshire. Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2005) p.166.

[669] Item 12, 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME.* [accessed 8 June 2021].

[670] Ibid.

[671] Wood and Dunham, 'Right to Rule', p.751.

[672] Maddicott, *Origins of the English Parliament*, p.412. Knights in 1265 and 1275 summoned 'for the community of the county', and in 1264 'for the whole county'. Maddicott pointed out that they were 'explicitly representative 'not of 'dispersed groups of rural tenants, but for geographical units'.

there was certainly reluctance to appoint York, the fact remains that parliament was able to divert the succession, directly opposing the divine right of kings.

<u>Monarchical Meritocracy?</u>

The Act may also represent the creation of a kind of monarchical meritocracy. The Act of Accord, the *Titulus Regius*, and the *Declamation of Noblesse*, written by John Tiptoft c.1460, all show that kingship was being viewed less as a hereditary office. In this way it became more like a meritocracy, the system of government found in republics like Florence. In accordance with more secular ideals, Alan Cobban pointed out that humanism encouraged the idea that a meritocracy was a 'surer and more equitable basis for government'.[673] Those appointed to positions of power were given office because of their competency, regardless of their heritage. This can certainly be seen in the appointment of skilled but non-noble councillors and officials: Richard III's court was filled with humanist scholars given official appointments. It is not too far of a stretch to suggest that the way the monarchy itself was viewed shifted to reflect this. Whilst the English monarchy certainly did not become a complete meritocracy, there are suggestions that it began to change. The Act of Accord, *Titulus Regius*, and the *Declamation* all focused on merits and skills of the king.

Whilst there remained some focus on blood and heritage - the crown would not be given to just anybody - this does not seem to have been as important as previously. Edward of Lancaster had been cast aside easily in the Act of Accord.[674] Although heirs had been chosen before - like Henry II with the 1153 Treaty of Winchester (of which more on p.184) - these earlier examples still focused on the blood claim of the new heir.[675] The Treaty of Winchester mentioned how Henry II received the throne through 'hereditary right', but this was more or less absent in the Act of Accord, *Titulus Regius* and the *Declamation of Noblesse*. In 1460, the Yorkists needed an excuse to seize the throne from the Lancastrians, and the Act of Accord did so. It could be argued that the Act served this purpose and this purpose only, and so should not be taken as evidence of wider ideas about meritocracy and kingship. However, *Titulus Regius* ran along the same lines. It justified Richard's usurpation through his ability to rule more than his status as legitimate heir. Although it

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[673] Alan Cobban, *English University Life in the Middle Ages*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999) p.33.

[674] The Act of Accord as a document removed him as heir without a single mention of his name, as shown in more detail on p.194. Although in reality he was cast aside less easily (Margaret of Anjou certainly did not agree to the disinheritance of her son, nor did many Lancastrian supporters and so the conflict continued) the fact remains that in the parliamentary document that disinherited him, the position of heir was given to York fairly easily considering that previously, it was believed that only God could choose an heir.

[675] ' Charter of Stephen describing the Treaty of Winchester between the king and Henry, son of the Empress Maud, at the conclusion of the civil war (November 1153) '*English Historical Documents: Vol II* ed. David C. Douglas https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=291

could be said that in 1460 parliament had little choice in appointing York heir, and in 1483 little choice in recognising Richard as king, the fact remains that the merits of each were heavily emphasised. In neither case was parliament judging a range of candidates for the throne, and yet both the Act of Accord and *Titulus Regius* focussed much on the merits of both Richard of York and Richard III. In this way, kingship had a more meritocratic focus than before.

It has been observed already that the Act of Accord focused on conciliar rule and elective kingship. What is also significant about the Act is that whilst it detailed York's ancestry, it was on his merits that parliament granted him the throne, not his birth. It mentioned how York 'tenderly desir[ed] the weal, rest, and prosperity of this land, and to set apart all that might be a trouble to the same'.[676] This came straight after his ancestry was mentioned, the implication being that his right to the crown rested on his heritage and desire for the 'prosperity' of the land equally. It could be argued that the weakness of Henry VI meant the strengths of other candidates for the throne were all the more important, but this does not seem a satisfactory explanation. If this were the case, it would not extend beyond Henry's reign, but the focus on merit and skill remained through Edward IV's reign - a much more able and skilled ruler - to Richard III's.

This can be seen in Tiptoft's *Declamation of Noblesse*. This features two sets of orations: one from Cornelius, who believes nobility can be inherited, and one from Gayus, who believes it cannot. Whilst this is seemingly nothing to do with kingship, parts of Cornelius' speech describe how those with nobility should be worshipped as gods. This is similar to the divinity of kings. Those who earned a Roman triumph should 'exalted in worship' as if they were 'immortal', as should their heirs: 'if…so great worship was due unto the graven images, the same and greater is due to their children'.[677] Gayus does not agree with this and believes all men are born equal:

> For there is no man so needy, so vile, nor so little set by, but when he is brought into this world he is endowed with as good courage as the son of an emperor or a king, and as apt to virtue and manhood, and peradventure in this cause I shall not need to give many examples. What shall I say of them that have been born of simple and low kin, which have grown to great worship?[678]

[676] Item 20, 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME*. [accessed 27 May 2021]. 'tendrely desyryng the weele, reste and prosperyte of thys lande, and to sette aparte alle that myghte be a trouble to the same'.
[677] *Declamation of Noblesse* in Mitchell, *Tiptoft*, p.218. 'Yf suche and so grette worship was due vnto the grauen ymages, the same and gretter is due vnto theyr childeren'.
[678] Ibid, p.227. 'For ther is no man so nedy, so vyle, ne so lytil sette by, but whan he is brought in to this world he is endowed with as good coutage as the sone of an emperour or a kynge, and as apt to vertue and manhode, and peraduenture in this cause I shal not nede to gyue manu examples. What shal I saye of them that haue ben born of symple and lowe kynne, which haue gown to grete worship?'.

No man is born worthy of worship, and this could relate to kingship. Both Gayus and Cornelius agree that worship stems from protecting the commonweal, thereby advocating a meritocracy where those in power serve the commonwealth. Their dispute is over whether this worship can be inherited, and this shows that ideas about divinity, meritocracy and monarchy were being explored in fifteenth century England.

Significantly, Buonaccorso's original did not mention worship. Tiptoft opened the *Declamation* with a paragraph about how Fulgens was worshipped, but Buonnaccorso just said he was honest, friendly, and lucky.[679] Henry Medwall (as will be looked at in chapter five) later used the *Declamation* as a basis for his play *Fulgens and Lucres*, and he mentioned nothing about worship in this section either. Tiptoft apparently was unique in connecting the debate over nobility to divinity. Later in the text, he mentioned the 'noble and worshipful blood' of Cornelius, where Buonaccorso only said 'illustri'.[680] On both occasions, the 'worship' was connected to the individual serving the commonwealth. Whilst divinity may not be conferred by virtue of being king alone, the implication is that divinity and worship were earned through service to the commonwealth. This was also implied by Archibald Whitelaw, whose address to Richard III in 1484 claimed Richard was 'almost divine; for you make yourself not simply at ease with important individuals, but courteous to the common people, too'.[681] The king was therefore not divine because of his office, but because of his actions towards the people and his ability to serve the realm.

Similarly, Richard III's 1483 petition - *Titulus Regius* - chose to emphasise merit and skill over inheritance and ancestry. Like those assembled at Clerkenwell in 1461, Richard was offered the crown by the mayor of the city and acclaimed by the commons. Whilst it is possible that this was, like McKenna believed, mere formality, other examples suggest this popular element of kingship was not just for show. In the petition, Richard's skill and merit took precedence over his ancestry. In the Act of Accord, York's heritage was mentioned first and his merits second, in the 1483 petition this was reversed. This shows that his merits were taking precedence over his blood, and that this was recognised by parliament as being more significant. Thus the 1483 petition, combined with the Act of Accord, as well as with the writings of Fortescue, the actions of the Merfold brothers and the Clerkenwell assembly, highlights that ideas about conciliar rule and public consent

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679 Buonaccorso da Montemagno, *Controversia de nobilitate*, https://search-proquest-com.mmu.idm.oclc.org/docview/2090328295/fulltextPDF/519B88614B2D4DD6PQ/1?accountid=12507 (Milan, 1480) p.14 [Accessed 26th April 2021] 'Fulgentiusfelix amplissimus opib[us] honestate amicis…'

680 Ibid, p.17. 'illustri cornelioru[s] sanguine genitum'

681 Whitelaw's address printed in the appendix of A. J. Pollard, *The North of England in the Age of Richard III*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996) p.194.

were growing. Further, the *Declamation of Noblesse* and Richard III's 1483 petition suggest that not only were conciliar rule and public consent important parts of medieval rule, but that the skill of the king was being taken into account more than previously. Whilst this could be a response to Henry VI's weakness as king, it seems also have been a response to the idea that the people were an important foundation of kingly power.

Conclusion

Therefore the commonwealth as both ideology, rhetoric, and public body had a significant role within medieval politics. The 1462 statement of the Wessex peasants, and the threat mentioned by Berney, shows that even the lowest in society felt they had some involvement in kingship. This was echoed in parliament, where in 1460 and 1483, parliament made the final decision over who was to reign. This tied into a new focus on consent and conciliar rule, and suggests that kingship was much more reliant upon the people. The development of a "monarchical meritocracy" followed this, where kingship had a greater focus on election and consent. The protection and defence of the commonwealth was paramount, and had become a pivotal part of kingship and governance. Thus there seems to have been a drawing away from hereditary kingship in favour of elective and conciliar rule that focused on the needs of the commonwealth.

In the twelfth century, John of Salisbury wrote that:

> all power is from the Lord God, and is with Him always and is His forever. Whatever the prince can do, therefore, is from God, so that power does not depart from God, but it is used as a substitute for His hand.[682]

The king held power through 'divine disposition'.[683] Thus his office was one that was, in the twelfth century, defined by its divinity and connection to God. By the fifteenth century, this had apparently started to wane. Earlier chapters have argued that the role of the commonwealth in politics and governance became larger as the century wore on. Humanism fostered secular ideals, both on the continent and in England, drawing away from the Church to focus on ancient, pre-Christian, modes of governance. In England, where the commonwealth became a foundation of kingly power, and kingship became more elective and meritocratic, there were significant ramifications on the Church, on divine right, and on the king himself.

In earlier centuries the Church had been the king's priority. This was reflected in the fact that it was typically placed first in documents and political statements. In 1399, churchmen were dissolved of their loyalty to the former Richard II before anyone else. In 1215, Magna Carta first confirmed the rights and liberties of the Church, and Henry V's first parliament in 1413 confirmed 'firstly' the Church's liberties 'out of reverence for God and holy Church'.[684] Even things as small as wine subsidies, as late as 1427, mention the Church before anything else.[685] This prioritisation of the Church, however, seems to be compromised from the middle of the fifteenth century, and especially during the reigns of the Yorkist kings. At this point, the commonwealth was more frequently placed first. The monarchy was already weakened because of civil war and poor management; this prominence of the commonwealth only weakened it further. The divine right of kings - which had for centuries been fundamental - declined, and greater focus was placed on merit, skill, and election.

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[682] Salbisbury, *Policraticus* ed. Nederman, p.28.

[683] Ibid, p.69.

[684] ' Henry V: May 1413', *PROME.* [accessed 30 September 2021].

[685] Wine subsidy from 1427 recorded by the Great Chronicle of London mentions the 'worship of God for the grete love & entier affeccion the which we pouere comons of this Reaume have to our souverain lord the king'. *GCL,* ed. A. H. Thomas & I. D. Thornley (London: George W. Jones) (1938) p.151.

All of this exacerbated the already weakened state of the monarchy. Although the various reasons for the weakness of the monarchy have been noted by many, the effects specifically of commonwealth ideology have yet to be studied. The frequent placement of the commonwealth above both the Church and the king, combined with emphasis on popular election and meritocracy, undermined the strength of the monarchy in the mid- and late-fifteenth century. Although Ernst Kantorowicz argued that a separation between king and crown allowed the monarchy to continue even when the identity of the king changed, this actually enabled the opposite.[686] As argued by Thomas Pendergast, 'rights and lands…were now interpreted as belonging to the Crown (thus to the whole realm) and not simply the king'.[687] It further entrenched the idea that the king was disposable. Because of this, the body politic needed to come first. The separation of the king's bodies began much earlier, enabling the depositions of Edward II and Richard II, but in the fifteenth century this coincided with new thinking around commonwealth and governance. It also calls into question the king's divinity. John Watts believed that the king's 'universal authority was shrouded in the mystery of divine appointment and it was inappropriate for subjects to question his judgements'.[688] Yet as we have seen, subjects did question the king's judgements. The prominence of commonwealth ideology and the focus on meritocracy all but encouraged subjects to question their king and hold him to account. The king was less frequently said to be appointed by God and as a result, his divinity was diminished. We therefore have kings separated from the crown, with an office that was vulnerable, witnessing fundamental changes over how they were appointed and by whom. That the commonwealth took precedence over both king and Church shows that the foundations of monarchy were shifting.

The Ascendancy of Commonwealth over the Church

From the middle of the century onwards, the commonwealth increasingly took precedence over the Church in public proclamations and parliamentary speeches. This created a separation between Church and state that did not previously exist. As will be shown here, there were calls for the Church to be completely separated from secular laws, and the needs of the people were put above the needs of the Church. This lead to a diminished Church presence, and may have contributed to an overall decline in the mysticism of medieval kingship.

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[686] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.371-2.
[687] Thomas A. Prendergast, 'The Invisible Spouse: Henry VI, Arthur and the Fifteenth-Century Subject', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 32(2) (2002), p.316.
[688] Watts, *Henry VI*, p.19.

It is first important to stress that though there seems to have been a decline in the importance of God and the Church within medieval governance, it did not disappear completely. This chapter is not to argue that medieval governance became entirely secular, (or that the change was permanent) but there was a shift. It has been noted in previous chapters that Bishop Alcock's parliamentary speech contained no biblical quotations and was entirely secular. Furthermore, the commonwealth came before both king and Church in advice literature like *The Active Policy of a Prince*, and the *Fall of Princes.* There is a lack of Church presence in these sources, which is also the case in proclamations, parliamentary statements, and in the writings of Sir John Fortescue. Though the Church remained important, it was overtaken by the commonwealth in politics and governance. Therefore, this section will explore the frequency with which the commonwealth took precedence over the Church and consider the effects on divine kingship.

The commonwealth was frequently and deliberately emphasised at the expense of the Church. The 1470 letter from Warwick and Clarence, looked at previously, is again illuminating. It has been noted in earlier chapters that this letter was addressed to the people and focused on the commonwealth. From the offset, it was concerned with the interests of the people, opening with a greeting to the 'discrete and true commons'.[689] The Church was not mentioned at all, and instead Warwick and Clarence stressed their zeal for the commonwealth. They were:

> aggrieved of the great enormities and inordinate impositions contrary to law and all good customs newly laid upon you, and also greatly sorrowing and abhorring of the cruel and detestable tyranny, the vengeable murder and manslaughter reigning among you.[690]

As a result, it was very much a letter tailored to the people's concerns, and this was deliberate on Warwick and Clarence's part. Warwick, like York before him, was popular with the common people and used commonwealth rhetoric. He knew his audience and so appealed to the commonwealth in order to secure popular support. The letter claimed that they needed the help of 'God and… of every well disposed man'.[691] They 'call…to our aide' God, the saints, 'and every true English man'.[692] This implied that they could not succeed by God's aid alone, and needed the people. The letter was publicly distributed: it was 'set upon the standard in Chepe, upon…London

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[689] Warwick and Clarence's letter, *Vale's Book,* ed. Kekewich, p.218.
[690] Ibid, p.219. 'agrugged of the grete enormytees and inordinat imposicions contrary to lawe and alle good custumes newlye leyde uppon you, and also gretly sorowing and abhorryd of the cruell and detestable tyranny, the vengeable murder and manslaughter reigning among you'.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Ibid.

bridge and upon church doors in London and in other places in England'.[693] Despite this, Warwick and Clarence did not mention the Church at all, even though the letter was pinned to church doors. Usually, when accusing a king of misdeeds, harm done to the Church was cited. For example, Edward IV accused Margaret of Anjou and Edward of Lancaster of attacking Church property in 1461, and in 1399 Richard II was accused of 'impoverish[ing] and oppress[ing]' the Church in the official records of his deposition.[694] The absence of the Church in the letter is therefore notable, especially considering Warwick's brother was the Archbishop of York. A deliberate decision must have been made to exclude the Church and focus instead on the commonwealth. Since Warwick and Clarence's invasion in 1470 was intended to depose Edward IV and reinstate Henry VI, this suggests that it was not by divine right that Henry VI would reclaim his throne, but by the will of the people.

The absence of the Church in the letter is made more curious by the proclamation issued when Warwick and Clarence landed in England. This was also intended for public display, but unlike the letter, did mention the Church.[695] It mentioned how the liberties of the Church would not be 'violently' broken.[696] Firstly, the inclusion of the Church in the proclamation suggests the omission in the letter was deliberate. In turn this suggests that the protection of the Church was not chief amongst the concerns of the people. This is backed up by the position of the Church in the proclamation. It came at number four in the proclamation's seven articles:

> The said duke and earls…charge and command that no manner of man…disturb or violently break the liberties nor privileges of holy church, nor…rob nor take any goods of the church…upon pain of death.[697]

That the Church came so far down this list is significant in itself. It is preceded by a request to pardon all men who previously fought for Edward IV, and an instruction to all men between sixteen

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[693] Ibid. The mayor of London took the letters down, so it is impossible to know how many of the 'true commons' actually saw the letters.
[694] The Record and Process printed in *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400* ed. Chris Given-Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) p.179.
[695] 'Proclamation by Warwick and Clarence upon landing in England, 1470', in *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.222. The copy survives in BL Cotton Charter xvii, no. 11. Made of paper, it 'looks as if it was a contemporary duplicate produced to be put up in a public place'.
[696] Ibid, p.221.
[697] Ibid. 'The seid duc and erles…charge and commaunde that no maner of manne…destourbe or violently breke the libertees ne priveleges of hooly chirche, nor…robbe nor take any goodis of the chirche…uppon peyne of detthe'.

and sixty to aid Warwick and Clarence 'in their journeys to the intent afore rehearsed'.[698] The first point stated that Henry VI was to be:

> restored…to his royal estate and crown of this said realm…[In order to] reform, redress and amend all the great…oppressions…to the perpetual peace and prosperity and commonwealth of all this his realm.[699]

Therefore the articles concerning the people and the commonwealth were put first. Hicks believed the inclusion of these clauses in the proclamation was to avoid 'alienating local people'.[700] However, it was not this version of the proclamation that was displayed publicly, but a shorter version. The original has been lost, so it is unclear who exactly the longer proclamation was sent to or where the shorter version was displayed.[701] However, the shorter version ended after article three, meaning that though the longer version mentioned the church, the public version left it out.[702] The inclusion would therefore not seem to have been about avoiding alienating local people as Hicks suggested. If this were the case, these articles would have been included in the version intended for public display. Although the shorter version had a heading of 'Jesus, Maria, Johannes', there is no other mention of God or Church, despite its inclusion in the longer proclamation. This focus on the commonwealthat the expense of the Church, especially in a document intended to garner public support, indicates that protecting the Church was not a primary concern for the commonality. In turn, the commonwealth had primacy over the Church, and thus an important role in politics and governance.

The placement of the commonwealth over the Church was not unique to Warwick and Clarence in 1470. It was also evident in Edward IV's first parliament of 1461. This stressed that Edward took the throne firstly for the 'defence and protection of your said realm and subjects'.[703] Only 'secondly' did the speaker mention how Margaret of Anjou and Edward of Lancaster were 'destroying and despoiling the realm on their way, not sparing God's Church or refraining from its violation'.[704]

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[698] Ibid.
[699] Ibid. 'Restor[ed]…to his roiall estate and crowne of this saide reaume… [in order to] reforme, redress and amende alle the grete… oppressions…to the perpetual peax and prosperite and commone wele of all this his reaume'.
[700] Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) p.300.
[701] *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.222.
[702] Article three on the church joins the others also cut out: article five, ordering that no man 'defoule nor ravisshe… [no]… manys wyfe, doughter nor servant ageinste theire willes'; article six, concerning fighting amongst soldiers within the ranks; and article seven, that 'no maner man dislogge nor put no man from his logging'. *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.221.
[703] 'Edward IV: November 1461', *PROME,* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1461 [accessed 2 September 2021].
[704] Ibid.

This placement is very deliberate, and it is only in the mid- and late-fifteenth century that the Church starts to be placed second, third, or fourth in lists such as these. Whilst the Church was still an important part of medieval life, its role in government and politics seemed to diminish.

This created a separation between Church and state unseen before the fifteenth century. Even John Fortescue advocated a separation between Church and governance, which is surprising given that he is generally described as a political conservative. In his *Governance of England* (1471-5), he mentioned religion and Church only once, discouraging the king from endowing monasteries.[705] Whilst 'other kings have founded bishoprics, abbeys and other houses of religion', it is he who permanently endows crown land who is 'the greatest founder of the world'.[706] In so doing, he 'shall then have founded a whole realm'.[707] This 'manner of endowing', Fortescue suggested, was an even 'greater prerogative' than the founding of monasteries and abbeys, as it benefits the entire realm: 'every man of the land shall by this foundation every day be the merrier'.[708] Fortescue thus placed the interests of the people above the interests of the Church. David Starkey, flippantly, reduced this to: 'in other words, God bless the king for abolishing taxes!'.[709] This ignores that Fortescue deliberately advised against the founding of religious houses in order to strengthen the crown and please the commonality. This reflects the position of the commonwealth, rather than the Church, as the king's priority.

It must, though, be emphasised again that official documents and proclamations were not entirely secular. There were still occasions where the Church was mentioned, and still occasions where it was mentioned first. This might seem to undermine arguments about the declining presence of the Church. Yet on closer reading, these sources often contradict themselves. Whilst they may ask for the help of God or mention the rights of the Church, this was never their primary concern. For example, Warwick and Clarence's letter calls:

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[705] David Starkey, 'England' in *The Renaissance in National Context* ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.151; *Governance of England* in *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.248-9.

[706] *Governance* in *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.249. 'other kinges have founded bisshopriches, abbeys and other houses of religeoun'; 'the grettest foundur of the worlde'.

[707] Ibid. He 'shal thanne have founded an hole reaume'.

[708] Ibid. 'every man of the londe shalby this foundacioun every day be the merrier'.

[709] Starkey, 'England', *Renaissance*, p.151.

> First to our aid, help, and assistance of almighty God, his blessed mother and glorious virgin, Saint George our patron, and every true English man, dreading God, loving his realm and the weal of his neighbours…[710]

It has been noted already that this seems to imply that their mission cannot be accomplished by God's help alone, as they need 'every true English man' too. However the wording may also be significant. A completely different text, the *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV* (1471), uses the same saints, in the same order, with almost exactly the same words. This piece of Yorkist propaganda argues that Edward has 'the help of Almighty God, the most glorious virgin Mary his mother, and of Saint George, and of [all] the saints of heaven'.[711] In the *Arrivall*, the same three figures are mentioned repeatedly, saying that Edward IV was 'trusting verily in God's help, our blessed lady, and Saint George'.[712] The use of these figures in the *Arrivall* and in Warwick and Clarence's letter are almost identical, and yet were written on different sides of the conflict with a year or so between them. There is a third invocation of the same religious figures with the same wording: in 1470, Edward IV issued a response to Warwick and Clarence's letter which followed suit. It said: 'we take God and our blessed lady, saint George and all the saints of heaven to our witness…'.[713] Although it could be argued that Edward mirrored the language deliberately to undermine the letter from his brother and cousin, this does not explain the almost identical language in the *Arrivall*.

They all appeal to Saint George and this shows they were deliberately appealing to the saint with the strongest association with both the people and the country. Although Saint George was adopted as England's patron saint relatively late (no earlier than 1351), he had significant links with the country and people.[714] Edward I and Edward III both used St George to justify their wars and 'prescribed his protection for all levels of the army'.[715] George thus began as a military saint, but during the reign of Edward III, his patronage expanded from the army to England as a whole. He became 'a saint around which both rulers and ruled could unite to declare their common

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[710] *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.219. 'firste to our aide, helpe and asistence of almighti God, his blessid moder and glorious virgine, seint George our patron, and every trewe Englisshe man, dreding God, loving his reaume and the wele of his neighebores…'.

[711] *Historie of the The Arrivall of Edward IV and the Finall Recoueryе of his Kingdoms from Henry VI* ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society, 1838), p.39. 'the helpe of Almighty God, the moaste glorious virgin Mary his mothar, and of Seint George, and of [all] the saynts of heven'.

[712] Ibid, p.19. 'trusting verily in God's helpe, owr blessed ladyes, and Seynt George'.

[713] Edward's reply printed in *John Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.220. 'we take God and oure blessed lade, seinte George and all the seintis of hevun to oure witnesse…'.

[714] Jonathan Good, *The Cult of Saint George in Medieval England*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), p.1.

[715] Ibid, p.19.

purpose'.[716] In 1405 Archbishop Richard Scrope declared that he was the 'special protector and advocate of the kingdom of England'.[717] He was a saint that existed both for the king and independent of the king, and was a patron of, as Good put it, 'an England that could hold the king accountable for his misgovernance'.[718] He became 'a means through which contenders for the throne justified their worthiness for it, and through which people declared their membership in an English nation'.[719] The focus on Saint George above all others in these documents therefore shows that Warwick, Clarence, and Edward were appealing to this sense of nationhood and worthiness for the throne. Whilst the use of the saint shows that the Church was still an important part of medieval society, the appeal to Saint George suggests that the idea of England as a nation and the king's duty to the realm was beginning to be seen as more important.

The indication that England and the commonwealth was a bigger priority than the Church can also be seen in a 1460 letter from Richard, duke of York to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Bourchier (c.1411-1486). The letter began:

> We, the duke of York…offered to have come unto the king…to have declared there afore him, for our duty to God and to his highness, and to the prosperity and welfare of his noble estate, and to the commonweal of all his land…the matters following, that is to say: for the first, the great oppression, extortion, robbery, murder, and other violences done to God's church, and to his ministers thereof, against God's and man's law…[720]

Here, York not only placed the commonwealth last in his list, but claimed his 'first' concern was the 'oppression' of the Church. This would seem to suggest that the Church still held pre-eminence, especially as York mentioned his 'duty' to God above his duty to the king. However, further in the letter, York admitted that his 'true' concern was:

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716 Ibid, p.7.
717 Ibid, p.81.
718 Ibid, p.82.
719 Ibid, p.20.
720 *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*, ed. John Silvester Davies, (London: Camden Society, 1856) p.86. 'We the duk of York…offred to haue come vnto the kyng…to haue declared there afore hym, for oure dewte to God and to hys hyghenesse, and to the prosperyte and welfare of his noble estate, and to the comon wele of alle his londe…the matters folowyng, that ys to say: For the furst, the grete oppressyone, extorsion, robry, murther, and other vyolencys done to Goddys churche, and to his mynystres therof, ayens Goddys and mannes law…'.

> for none other cause but for the true heart that God knows we ever have borne, and bear, to the profit of the king's estate, the commonwealth of the same realm, and defence thereof.[721]

That there was 'none other cause' so important suggests that the attention paid to the Church at the start of the letter was more performative than genuine. After all, he was writing to an Archbishop, so would naturally mention the Church. In York's own words, the commonwealth was his true 'cause'. The commonwealth was therefore a large part of fifteenth-century politics, and though the Church retained its primary position in things such as York's letter, it's prominence was still undermined by the commonwealth.

Indeed an address by York dated 1450-1 betrayed his lack of primary concern for the Church. Recorded in the common place book of the London astrologer and moneylender, Richard Trewthyian, York's address showed a desire for the Church to be restrained.[722] Trewthyian copied the points that 'my lord of York put to [th]e counsel', mentioning first the king's 'debts', but also the Church and the clergy. York spoke of the:

> powers that bishops, abbots and priests have unto great disworship to the king and great oppression of the king's poor people, the which bishops and abbots under power of the king do great oppression.[723]

He also mentioned abbots paying for lordships and lands, to the 'great damage to the king & destruction of rule'.[724] He suggested that, for the:

> relief of the king and the saving of his people, let [him] resume all his power…and let him be king and his people be governed by the king's laws, and not by bishops and abbots.[725]

York advocated a greater separation between Church and state. Not only did he want separation between the Church and the laws of the land, but when discussing the king's debts, he suggested the

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[721] *An English Chronicle* ed. Davies, p.88. 'For none other cause but for the trew hert that God knoweth we euer haue borne, and bere, to the profyte of the kynges estate, to the commone wele of the same reame, and defens thereof.'
[722] BL, Sloane MS. 428. f.120b.
[723] Ibid. 'powers [th]at byssopys abbates & pryests [have] unto gret dysworsyp to [th]e kyng [and] gret oppressyon of kyngys pore pepul [th]e whyche byssops & abbotes under power of [th]e kyng doyt gret opp[re]ssion'.
[724] Ibid. 'Great damage to [th]e kyng & destrocyon of reule'.
[725] Ibid. 'relef of [th]e kyng and savyng of hys pepul, let resume al hys power…& let hym be kyng & hys pepul be govynyd by [th]e kyngis laws & no[u]ght bi byssops & abbotys…'.

king take back ‘all his goods again’.[726] This links to Fortescue’s suggestion that kings should not endow monasteries but crown land instead. Overall York’s address advocated the preeminence of the state over the Church for the good of the ‘people’. In light of this, it would seem that his letter to the archbishop in 1460 mentioned the Church first to satisfy convention. In the letter, and in the 1450-51 address, the commonwealth and the people were more important.

The case is exactly the same in a poem from 1461 titled ‘Twelve Letters to Save England’. This details how Richard duke of York, Richard earl of Salisbury, Richard earl of Warwick and Edward earl of March would save England. Like York’s letter, it too mentioned the Church above the commonwealth. The last line stated that the Yorkists work for ‘the pleasance of God & the welfare of us all’.[727] However, this was the first real mention of God or Church in this 72-line poem.[728] In the same way as York’s letter, the poem then mentioned the true ‘intent’ of the Yorkist lords, and this was not the protection of the Church. Rather, it was ‘to destroy treason & make a trial of them that be faulty & hurt full sore… That is the most purpose that we labour for’.[729] It would seem that both the author of this poem and Richard of York were only following convention when putting the Church first. Their “true” concern was always the commonwealth and good of the realm.

In light of these changes, it is worth considering anti-Church sentiment in England at the time, and how this ties into humanist influence and commonwealth ideology. There are certainly references to anti-papal and anti-Church feeling throughout the 1450s, 1460s, and 1470s. One chronicler recorded in 1468 that ‘some men said that…the Pope’s curse would not kill a fly’ after the Pope banned the wearing of shoes with excessively long pointed toes.[730] In 1472 the Milanese ambassador Pietro Aliprando said that the English were ‘as devout as angels’ in the morning, but ‘after dinner they are like devils, seeking to throw the pope’s messengers into the sea’.[731] It was not just the commonality; in 1474 the new Bishop of Hereford Thomas Myllyng was keen to emphasise

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[726] Ibid. ‘al ys godes agayn…’.

[727] ‘ Twelve Letters to Save England ’printed in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* ed. Rossell Hope Robbins, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) p.221, line 72. '[th]e pleasaunce of god & [th]e welfare of vs all’.

[728] It mentions ‘grace of God ’when introducing Richard of York, and says 'god be his gyde ’about Warwick, but the first real mention of God is in the last line. Ibid, p.219, p.220.

[729] Ibid, pp.220-221. 'to destroy treson & make a tryall of hem [th]at be fauty & hurten full sore… That is [th]e moste purpos [th]at we labor fore’.

[730] Gregory’s Chronicle printed in *The Historical Collects of a London Citizen* ed. James Gairdner (Camden Society, 1876) p.238.

[731] Copy of the letters of Pietro Aliprando, from Gravelines on the confines of England, on the 25th of November to the Duke of Milan. 'Milan: 1472', in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1912), pp. 162-172. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp162-172 [accessed 2 September 2021].

his election as by the king, not the pope.[732] He was appointed ‘by the most illustrious prince, Edward IV’.[733] There was no mention of papal election, which further suggests the role of the Church in English affairs was declining. This dates back to the 1450s. A poem from 1456 titled ‘The Bisson Leads the Blind’ criticised the growing power of the people and lack of holiness accompanying it. The anonymous author lamented the lack of worship among the people, stating that ‘worship from us long hath been slow’, and ‘holiness comes out of hell, for absolutions wax ware’.[734] The poem also declared that the ‘commons love not the great’ and gave a warning: ‘every man may care, lest the weed grow over the wheat'.[735] As early as the 1450s, connections were being drawn between the declining position of the Church and the rising role of the people within politics. It is possible to connect this to ideologies popular in Italian republics. Civic humanism emphasised the freedom of the state, and a commonwealth subject to no foreign power. In these acts of resistance against the Church we can see elements of this. It can also be seen in Warwick and Clarence’s letter in 1470, when they said they wished to ‘redeem forever the said realm from thraldom of all outward nations and make it as free within itself as ever it was heretofore’.[736] This may help explain why the commonwealth was able to take precedence over the Church. There is greater separation between Church and governance, a rising desire for the freedom of the state, and a greater emphasis on the primary importance of the commonwealth.

Decline in the Divine Right of Kings

This placement of the commonwealth over the Church, combined with the focus on election and meritocracy, created a monarchy less divine and a government more separate from the Church. In the words of Anthony Goodman, there was a ‘shattered’ relationship between God and the king in the fifteenth century.[737] This has not, though, been linked specifically to the king’s divine right or the commonwealth ideology popular in England at this time. Anthony Gross claimed the ‘sacerdotal shield’ of the Lancastrian dynasty had ‘ero[ded]’.[738] However for Gross this was a result of Henry

[732]‘ The heading of Bishop Myllyng’s register, stressing the king's role in his appointment ’translated in *English Historical Documents, Vol IV* ed. A. R. Myers, https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=1323 [accessed 2nd September 2021]
[733] Ibid.
[734]‘ Bisson leads the Blind ’printed in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* ed. Rossell Hope Robbins, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) p.128-9. ‘worschyp fro us longe hath be slawe [slow]’, and ‘Holynes comyth out of helle, ffor absolucions waxyn ware’.
[735] Ibid, p.130. ‘euery man may care, Lest [th]e wade [weed] growe ouer [th]e whete’.
[736] *Vale*’*s Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.219. ‘redeme for evur the seide reaume from thraldome of alle outward nacions and make it as free withinne it selfe as evur it was heretafore’.
[737] Anthony Goodman, *The New Monarchy: England 1471-1534* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) p.80.
[738] Anthony Gross, *The Dissolution of Lancastrian Kingship: Sir John Fortescue and the Crisis of Monarchy in Fifteenth-Century England* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1996) p.14.

VI's illness and nothing else. This does not explain why the 'shield' of divinity remained damaged for Edward IV, Richard III, or Henry VII. However, the king was more frequently said to be appointed by the people than by God, and this calls into question the divine right of kings.

The idea that the king was appointed by God and had 'some form of sanctity' had been 'held from very early times', claimed John Neville Figgis in the nineteenth century.[739] As early as 787AD in England, going against the king 'even in thought' was akin to 'regicide, as on a level with Judas'.[740] The Norman Conquest in the eleventh century moved English kingship away from election and towards primogeniture. By the time of the civil war (1135-1153) between Empress Matilda (1102-1167) and Stephen (d.1154), the idea of succession by primogeniture allowed Matilda, the king's daughter, to amass support.[741] Figgis claimed that, by the time of Edward II in the fourteenth century, 'the right to crown [was] no longer that of election or coronation, but that of the next heir, who only God [could] make'.[742] This divine right did not disappear, and indeed was strengthened in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In the middle of the fifteenth century, though, it appears to have temporarily declined.

The king's divine right may have been questioned from as early as 1447. Earlier chapters noted how the *Epitaphium,* written after Humphrey of Gloucester's death, praised the late duke's 'study, labour and merit for commonweal'.[743] In the *Epitaphium*, the duke had been robbed of a crown: he received no 'reward…in recompense'.[744] This has not been considered a criticism of divine right before, but the author urged God to 'crown him in heaven, that in his days had no pare'.[745] Gloucester was the 'very father and protector of the land' who worked tirelessly for the good of the realm.[746] By suggesting he had been robbed of a crown, the *Epitaphium* highlighted the issue with divine right: those that rule are not always capable, and those capable do not always rule. That the *Epitaphium* based the request for him to be crowned in Heaven on his merits shows that eligibility for rule began to rest on more than God-given right.

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[739] John Neville Figgis, *The Theory of the Divine Right of Kings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896) p.17.
[740] Ibid, p.19.
[741] Ibid, p.21.
[742] Ibid, p.27.
[743] Add. MS. 34360, f.67b.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Ibid, f.66b.
[746] Ibid, f.67.

In earlier centuries only God could make an heir to the throne, but in 1460, this was precisely what parliament did with the Act of Accord. The legitimate heir to the throne, Edward of Lancaster, was replaced by Richard of York:

> It is accorded, appointed, and agreed, that the said Richard, duke of York, shall be…from henceforth, very and rightful heir to the crowns, royal estate, dignity, and lordship above said: and after the decease of the said king Henry…the said duke and his heirs shall immediately succeed to the said crowns, royal estate, dignity, and lordship.[747]

The accord was 'authorised by…parliament', and this parliament acknowledged that they had a duty to the people.[748] When York put forth his claim, 'all the…lords…agreed' to hear his petition, 'because every person high and low suing to this high court of parliament must of right be heard'.[749] The decision to make him heir was presented as one made by parliament alone, and though Richard was said to be 'the true heir of the said crowns, in accordance with God's law and all natural laws', ultimately it was 'all the said lords' that 'decided and agreed' to subvert the succession.[750] This was not the first time the heir to the throne had been chosen. Similar agreement was made between Stephen and Matilda with the 1153 Treaty of Winchester, where Stephen agreed that Matilda's son would be his heir. This was presented as Stephen's choice: 'know that I, King Stephen, have established Henry, duke of Normandy, as my successor in the kingdom of England, and have recognised him as my heir by hereditary right'.[751] Stephen frequently mentioned throughout the Treaty how he followed 'the counsel of holy Church'.[752] The Act of Accord, on the other hand, presented the election of York as heir as the decision of parliament alone. The Church was not mentioned once.

Indeed, God himself was only mentioned three times in the Act. All three were in one single statement by York himself:

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[747] 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME.* [accessed 27 May 2021]. 'It ys accorded, appoynted, and aggreed, that the sayde Rychard duke of York shalle be called and reputed from hensfoorth verray and ryghtefulle heyre to the corounes, royalle astate, dygnyte and lordeshyp abouesayde: And after the decees of the sayde king Harry… the sayde duke and hys heyres shalle immediately succede to the sayde corones, royalle astate, dygnyte and lordshyppe'.
[748] Ibid.
[749] Ibid.
[750] Ibid.
[751] ' Charter of Stephen describing the Treaty of Winchester between the king and Henry, son of the Empress Maud, at the conclusion of the civil war (November 1153) '*English Historical Documents: Vol II* ed. David C. Douglas https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=291
[752] Ibid.

> In the name of God, Amen. I Richard, duke of York… swear by the faith and truth that I owe to Almighty God, that I shall never do…anything that may be or sown to abridgement of the natural life of King Henry…so help me God…[753]

Although Richard was clear that his claim to the throne did not go against God's laws, by having parliament make him king, the Act fundamentally contradicted the divine right of kings and this has not been given enough scholarly attention.[754] A treatise from the reign of Henry II specifically stated that 'only God, not man, can make an heir', and this was completely ignored in 1460.[755]

A poem (c.1453) by Charles of Orleans (1394-1465) reveals that he too, after twenty-five years imprisoned in England, saw kingship as no longer ordained by God alone:

> Have not the English always betrayed their kings? Certainly, everyone knows of it. And once again their king is now in a precarious position. Each Englishman pushes himself forward by speaking ill of him. They show sufficiently by their evil words that they would readily do him injury. There is a great dispute among them about who will be king…[756]

The 'great dispute among them' implies that it was the people who decided who would be king. Although Scattergood believed the poem was 'both acute and prophetic', he focused more on how it summed up the 'disorganized and factional state of...England and the weakness of the crown'.[757] He did not ask what this meant for the king's divine right, and instead linked it to how civil war 'became inevitable'.[758] The civil war alone does not satisfactorily explain the decline in the king's divine right, however. In 1453 it was not yet clear that Richard of York had his sights on the throne.[759] That Orleans' poem dates from this time shows kingship was being called into question before the wars even began. The very suggestion of a 'dispute' fundamentally contradicts the divine right of kings, and this is something that has not properly been considered.

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[753] ' Henry VI, 1460', *PROME,* 'In the name of God Amenne. I Rychard, duke of York… swere by the feythe and trowthe that I owe to Almyghty God, that I shalle neuer do…any thyng that may be or sowne to abrygement of the naturalle lyfe of kyng Harry…so helpe me God…'.

[754] Ibid. It was said that Richard was the 'heir of the said crowns, in accordance with God's law and all natural laws'.

[755] *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England Commonly Called Glanvill* ed. and trans. G. D. G. Hall, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p.71.

[756] Printed in Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.172.

[757] Ibid, p.171.

[758] Ibid.

[759] Though attempts had been made on his behalf to have him recognised heir apparent, it is not until the end of the 1450s that there is any solid evidence that York was after the crown. Further, Orleans' poem comes before the first battle of St Albans (22 May 1455) which is traditionally held as the start of the Wars of the Roses.

Language around kingship also evolved to suggest a role that was more meritocratic and elective than mythic and divine. When referring to kings, individuals like John Fortescue used words like 'officer'.[760] Chapter two noted that Fortescue believed that the king's 'estate', though the 'highest' in the realm, was still just 'an office'.[761] He reduced the king to an officer, providing defence and justice, rather than any divinely appointed individual. The difference is small but semantically significant, and it was not just Fortescue who did this. In the Act of Accord and in *Titulus Regius*, words like 'officer', 'chosen' and 'elected' came at the expense of words like 'sent' or 'appointed'.[762] J. W. McKenna doubted that, though this language was used, the 'sense of 'choice' or 'selection' implied there were 'other candidates for the distinction'.[763] He believed it was a 'formality' only. This, however, ignores that there were other candidates. In 1460, there was the king's legitimate son. In 1483, there were the sons of Edward IV, the sons of George, duke of Clarence, and also John de la Pole, earl of Lincoln.[764] The choice was a literal one, and a drawing away from ideas of succession by primogeniture in favour of succession by election. Though the king was still 'chosen', he was not chosen by God alone. It should also be noted that there had been attempts to recognise York as heir before 1460. In 1451, Thomas Young, a servant of York's, encouraged parliament to formally recognise York as heir, but this was shot down.[765] This undermines McKenna's statement that it was not a choice in the strictest sense of the word. Choices were made both to grant York's (previously denied) request in 1460, and to fill the official documents surrounding Richard III's accession with elective language in 1483.

The Act of Accord has already been considered, but the *Titulus Regius* shared its focus on election. In this, Richard was 'chosen' by the three estates.[766] Although it is noted that Richard's accession was 'in accordance with [God's] will and pleasure', it was the lords who 'have wholeheartedly chosen, and by this our writing choose, you, high and mighty prince, to be our king and sovereign lord'.[767] Ultimately, Richard was made king by the authority of parliament and the 'assent of the

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[760] Watts, *Henry VI*, p.21.

[761] *Governance of England* printed in *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.235.

[762] Henry IV's first parliament in 1399 refers to him being sent by God to rule five times. 'Henry IV: October 1399, Part 1', *PROME*. [accessed 26 August 2021].

[763] J. W. McKenna, 'The Myth of Parliamentary Sovereignty in Late-Medieval England', *EHR*, 94(372) (1979) p.492.

[764] Lincoln was the son of Elizabeth of York (1444-c.1503), Richard III's elder sister. That this claim stemmed from his mother should not have worked against Lincoln, given that the entire Yorkist dynasty was based on a claim to the throne through the female line from Edmund of Langley.

[765] In 1451 it was proposed that Richard be recognised as heir. Sheila Delany, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints and Society in Fifteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.142

[766]' Richard III: January 1484', *PROME* [accessed 27 May 2021].

[767] Ibid. It is said that: 'Our Lord God, king of all kings, by whose infinite goodness and eternal providence all things are principally governed in this world, lighten your soul and grant you grace to do, in this matter as well as in all others, everything in accordance with his will and pleasure, and for the common and public weal of this land…'.

lords…and…[the] commons'.[768] Though this was in line with God's wishes and God's laws, the conciliar and elective language used suggests that Richard's accession rested just as much on the 'assent' of the lords and the commons as on divine right. As a result, the king occupied an office that was less divine and more meritocratic and elective than before.

These ideas took precedence too in the reign of Edward IV. Charles Ross pointed out that in 1482 it was 'held in the royal courts that the authority of convocation must give way to the authority of the royal prerogative'.[769] The authority of the Church was not exactly the same as divine right, but this illustrates that kingship was not as sacral and more secular. Although on occasion Edward encouraged the idea he was chosen by God - like adopting the parhelion of Mortimer's Cross as his symbol - in others he drew away from it. A genealogy of Edward IV, which may have been intended for public display, interestingly highlights Edward's connection to religious figures.[770] Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs suggested it was hung up somewhere, and Sonja Drimmer took this further, believing it to be a 'political poster' 'designed for public presentation and persuasive ends'.[771] Little else is known about it, neither its creation date nor its provenance.[772] It may, however, reflect a drawing away from the mysticism of kingship. Depicting Edward IV on Fortune's Wheel, a personified figure of Reason has thrust a spike in the wheel to stop it turning. Whilst Sutton, Fuchs, and Drimmer note this, none paid it too much attention. Fortune is absent, despite the fact that, in other wheels depicted in this period, she was generally included.[773] Henry IV, V and VI precede Edward on the wheel, with his brothers following him. Reason is keeping Edward king, halting Fortune's Wheel. Reason occupied a significant role within humanism, with reason or *ratio* considered equal in importance to eloquence.[774] Combined with the focus on election during his reign, Reason in this poster may represent the focus on meritocratic and elective government over divine appointment.

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[768] Ibid.
[769] Ross, *Edward IV*, p.300.
[770] Harley MS 7353 (digitised) http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_7353 [accessed 21st September 2021]; Sonja Drimmer, 'A Political Poster in Late Medieval England: British Library, Harley MS 7353 'in *Harlaxton Medieval Studies Volume XXX, Performance, Ceremony and Display in Late Medieval Britain: Proceedings of the 2018 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Julia Boffey (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020), p.343.
[771] Ibid, p.334; Anne F. Sutton & Livia Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books: Ideals and Reality in the Life and Library of a Medieval Prince* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997) p.206.
[772] Although Sutton and Fuchs suggest it may have been created in Gloucester, and Drimmer suggested Wales. Ibid, p.206; Drimmer, 'Political Poster', p.334-5.
[773] She is, for example, included in the wheel of fortune in Lydgate's *Troy Book.* British Library, Royal 18 D. ii, f. 30v.
[774] Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p.108.

Kingship thus did not seem to be an office defined solely by its divinity. Unlike in previous centuries where it was believed that only God could make a king, in the mid-fifteenth century this appears to have changed. God still played a significant role, but others were emphasised too. The 1462 poem ‘A Political Retrospect’, for example, mentions how: ‘the commons…have ready every hour the voice of the people, the voice of Jesus, who keep and preserve [the king] from all languor’.[775] When this is combined with the statements that claim ‘the people had chosen’ Edward as king, it seems that God had a lesser role in Edward’s accession.[776] Furthermore, the Serjeants in 1460 did not seem to see the crown as something given by God alone, and so whilst the crown was never completely divorced from God, kingship as an office no longer seemed to be defined solely by its divinity.

Naturally there were exceptions to this. Thomas Langton’s 1483 letter to the prior of Christ Church, examined in previous chapters, mentioned how Richard III was sent by God for the welfare of them all.[777] Whilst the letter acknowledges that Richard was ‘sent’ by God, it is important to note two things. Firstly, Langton served as a chaplain to Edward IV and in 1483 was made bishop of St Davids. The letter was from one cleric to another, so naturally God’s role in kingship was emphasised. Secondly, even though Langton believed God sent Richard to be king, he believed this was for the good of the commonwealth and so the importance of the commonwealth is reflected even in this letter.

Similarly, a letter written by Edward V upon his accession in 1483 recorded that although God appointed him king, it was for the good of the realm and nothing else:

> It hath pleased him [God] to ordain and provide us to succeed and inherit my said lord father in the... permanence and dignity royal of the crown of England…We intend by him that sendeth all power, with the faithful assistance of you and other…loving subjects…to govern, rule, and protect the realm of England…[778]

[775] ‘A Political Retrospect (1462) printed in *Historical Poems,* ed. Robbins, p.225-226. 'the commens [th]erto have redy euery houre the voix of the peuple, the voix of Jhesu, who kepe & preserve hym from all langoure’.
[776] Oxford: MS Gough London 10, fol.46V. This links with the earlier statement of the Serjeants examined in the previous chapter. They did not appear to have seen the crown as something given by God, as they were silent when asked whose authority the crown fell under. Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME* [accessed 26 August 2021].
[777]‘ Doctor Thomas Langton, Bishop of St Davids to the Prior of Christ Church (1483) ’*Christ Church Letters: A Volume of Medieval Letters Relating to the Affairs of the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, vol. 19,* ed. Joseph Brigstocke Sheppard (Camden Society, 1877) p. 46.
[778] Add. MS 24346, f.26. ‘It hath pleased hym [God] to ordeyne & provide us to succede & enherite my said lord ffadir in [th]e…permynence & dignite royal of the crowne of England…we entend by hym [tha]t sendeth all power w[ith] [th]e feithful assistence of you & other…loving subgetts…to gou[e]rne rule and p[ro]tecte [th]e realme of Englonde…’.

Although the young king noted that God 'sendeth all power', he still acknowledged the reliance upon his 'loving subjects'. Furthermore, he also acknowledged that his primary purpose was to rule and 'protect' the realm. Whilst these statements continued to acknowledge God's presence in kingship, they also highlight the role of the people and the commonwealth. The divinity of the king's office did not completely disappear, but it diminished and there was a greater focus on the role of the king as protector of the commonwealth.

'For the King Himself is Holy'

If the king was no longer appointed by God alone, this affects his status as a divine individual. In earlier centuries, kings were seen as divine themselves because of their divine appointment. In 1340, the English ambassador to Venice, Friar Richard of Bisaccia, claimed that 'true' kings could not only safely face 'ravenous' lions, but also heal the sick as a result of their divinity.[779] Similarly, Peter of Blois said of Henry II in the twelfth century: 'the king himself is holy; he is the Anointed of the Lord'.[780] Even in the first half of the fifteenth century, John Lydgate wrote a poem, seemingly a pre-cursor to the *Fall of Princes*, which mentioned the divinity of Richard II: 'See how Richard, of Albion the king...sacred with hart [gown], with crown, and with ring…'.[781] The king was as 'sacred' as the vestiges of his kingship. By the second half of the century, references to the king being divine himself seem to all but disappear. This would not seem to be a result of the civil wars and frequent usurpations alone. It seems to have also been a result of differing ideas about how kings come into power, where their power comes from, and what position they hold within the body politic.

That said, there were still occasions where the king was said to be divine in some way. Initially this might seem to undermine arguments about declining royal divinity. It should be noted, though, that when kings are treated or described as divine, it is often not because of any inherent divinity in their office. Instead it is based on the king's ability to rule well, strengthening arguments about a meritocratic monarchy. This links back to William Worcester's *Boke of Noblesse* (c.1450s). In the *Boke*, it was claimed that only those who work for the commonwealth should be worshipped. Although the text was set up as an argument between two opposing sides, both agree on this

[779] 'Venice: 1317-1399', *CSPV,* pp. 3-39 [accessed 27 September 2021].
[780] Quoted in Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, (London, Routledge, 1973) p.22. 'sanctus enim et christus Domini'.
[781] John Lydgate, 'The Sudden Fall of Princes' printed in Robbins, *Historical Poems* p.174. 'Se howe Richard, of Albyon [th]e kyng,…Sacred with abyt [gown], with corone, and with ring…'.

particular point. It is a meritocratic worship, and this reflects the way some kings, such as Edward IV, were treated. On 30th August 1461 the Milanese ambassador Count Ludovico Dallugo wrote to Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan (1401-66). Of Edward IV he said:

> I repeatedly asked the king's good leave to come away, and always by fair words he made me delay taking me every day to his castles… On my departure, he came from London as far as Sandwich…visiting on the way his towns, whose inhabitants bear him so much love that they adore him like a God, so that his affairs proceed daily from good to better.[782]

That Edward was treated 'like a God' may initially suggest the survival of the more traditional type of kingly divinity as seen in the time of Richard II. At this time, men spoke to the king' as if praying to him', as if he was 'supra-mortal 'and 'god-like'.[783] However, it should be noted that the Warkworth chronicle says the people of England looked to Edward to restore 'prosperity and peace'.[784] By the time of Dallugo's visit, he had been 'elected' by the people at Clerkenwell and appeared to be popular. This popularity extended throughout most of his reign. He had such good relationship with merchants that some dubbed him the 'Merchant King', and he later introduced legislation to boost English farming and manufacturing.[785] As a result, Dallugo's comment about him being treated 'like a God' may not reflect his position as king, but his ability. It was the merchant class that treated him 'like a god'. He was not divine in his own right any longer, and any divinity he did have was reliant upon his ability to govern.

Divinity needed to be earned. The *Boke of Noblesse* claimed a prince should bear 'natural love…to his people…to do' what is best for 'the commonweal'.[786] Watts believed this was necessary for a king to 'rise to the godlike attributes of his office'.[787] Similar ideas are found in the political treatise *The Three Consideracions Right Necesserye to the Good Governaunce of a Prince.* This was a mid-fifteenth century translation of a 1347 French tract, which survives in three different manuscripts.[788] The original stated that a prince asked for a book to describe 'l'estat et le gouvernement de

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[782] 'Milan: 1461', in *CSPM*, pp. 37-106, [accessed 26 August 2021].

[783] Nigel Saul, 'Richard II and the Vocabulary of Kingship', *EHR,* 110(438) (1995) p.854, p.856.

[784] John Warkworth, *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth* ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: Camden Society, 1839) p.12.

[785] Anthony Corbet, *Edward IV: England's Forgotten Warrior King*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2015) p.220. In 1463 he limited the import of corn to boost English farming, and introduced similar legislation regarding wool in 1465 and manufactured goods in 1464-6.

[786] BL Royal MS 18 B xxii f.10v. 'naturalle love…to his peple…to doo 'what is best for 'the common wele'.

[787] John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.24.

[788] *Camden Camden Fourth Series: Four English political Tracts of the Later Middle Ages, vol. 18* ed. Jean-Philippe Genet (1977) p.174.

seigneurie temporelle'.[789] Genet suggested this prince may have been John, duke of Normandy (later King John II of France) (1319-1364), who was 'associated with some changes in the methods of government'. This included the 'resumption of popular consultation with the provincial estates…which gave duke John the public image of one…anxious to bring about *reformatio*'.[790] The English translation did not change this. It urged the king to 'love especially and principally the common profit of the people'.[791] It said:

> The kings and princes of this world be ordained and established…principally for the common profit of the people and their subjects. And therefore they should not give whole and principal attendance to their own particular profit, but to the common profit of their subjects.[792]

It also compared a good king to Jesus:

> And it is great laud…to a king…when he keeps truly the law which he commands to be kept in his land. And so did our lord Jesus Christ, God's son: he kept in himself the laws and justices that were ordained…and if the king...will keep in himself justice…he shall be loved…[793]

The worthiness of the king therefore seems to have been linked to his ability to govern. The *Three Consideracions* and the *Boke of Noblesse*, both written in the middle of the century, suggested that only the king's work for the commonwealth made him worthy of being - in the *Boke's* words - 'worshipped'.

These ideas about meritocracy and earning worship extended to the king's heir. The status of the heir appears to have temporarily diminished, and nowhere is this more clearly evidenced than in the 1460 disinheritance of Edward of Lancaster. The Act of Accord shifted the status of heir from Edward to Richard of York with no regard for divine right, further suggesting that kingship was no

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[789] Ibid, p.177. 'The estate and the government of the lords temporal'.
[790] Ibid, pp.177-178.
[791] ' The Three Consideracions Right Necesserye to the Good Governaunce of a Prince 'printed in *Camden Fourth Series,* ed.Genet, p.197. 'love especially and principally the comyn profite of the peeple'.
[792] ' Three Consideracions 'in *Camden Fourth Series* ed. Genet, p.198. 'The kynges and princes of this worlde beth ordeyned and establish…principally for the comyn profits of the peeple and theire subgites. And therfore they shuld nat yive hoole and principall attendaunce to theire owne particuler profite, but unto the comyn profite of the subgites.'.
[793] Ibid. 'And it is greet laude…to a kinge…whan he kepith truly the lawe which he commaundeth to be kept in his lande. And so dyd oure lorde Crist Jhesu, Goddys sone: he kept in hymself the lawes and justises that were ordained…And yf the kyng…will keepe in hymself justise…he shall be loved…'.

longer decided solely by God. Instead, kingship was based on skill and merit, and decided by the people and parliament. Edward of Lancaster being the king's legitimate son was almost insignificant, and indeed, the Act did not mention Edward once. At this point, he had been Prince of Wales for six years, having been invested with the title in Windsor in 1454. Whilst York was compelled to swear an oath not to shorten the life of Henry VI ('I…shall never do...anything that may…abridge the natural life of King Henry…'), this was not extended to Henry's son.[794] On the other hand, it was declared treason to 'imagine or encompass the death of the said duke', and all the lords present swore:

> to accept, take, worship and repute, the said Richard duke of York and his said heirs…and keep and observe…in as much as appertains unto them, all the things above said.[795]

Kingship was less divine and less hereditary, and more meritocratic than previously. The heir to the throne was not considered an extension of the king, and Edward of Lancaster was an entirely invisible figure in this document. He was disinherited without so much as a mention of his name.

The same lack of attention was paid to Edward's successor as Prince of Wales, Edward of York, future Edward V. There was little mention of his birth among contemporary chronicles.[796] This should not initially be surprising: not only could it be a result of the high infant mortality rates of the time, but he was also born whilst his father was in exile and Henry VI was on the throne. The lack of mention of Edward's birth in contemporary chronicles should not, therefore, come as a shock. However, Yorkist propaganda similarly downplayed the birth of the prince. In the *Arrival*, Edward's birth was given one sentence only: the queen 'had brought into this world… a fair son, a prince'.[797] This was hot on the heels of Edward's second seizure of the throne. Given that the Wars of the Roses were primarily a dynastic conflict, presenting Edward IV as an established king with an heir waiting to follow would have been wise. Edward of York may have been Edward IV's first son, but he was the third child born to Edward and Elizabeth Woodville. Edward IV was a king who had an heir waiting to follow, but this was not given much consideration in the *Arrival*. Instead, the *Arrival* suggested the birth of the prince was not as important as Edward's own actions.

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[794] 'Henry VI: October 1460', *PROME* [accessed 30 September 2021]. I Rychard, duke of York, promytte…I shalle neuer do… any thyng that may be or sowne to abrygement of the naturalle lyfe of kyng Harry VIth'.

[795] Ibid. 'To accept, take, worshyppe and repute, the sayde Richard duk of York, and hys sayde eyres, as aboue ys rehersed, and kepe and obserue and streynghte, in as moche as apparteynethe vn to thaym, alle the thynges abouesayde.'.

[796] The Great Chronicle of London said nothing about either Edward of Lancaster or Edward of York's birth, but did mention both the birth of prince Arthur in 1486. *GCL* ed. A. H. Thomas & I. D. Thornley (London, 1838)

[797] *Historie of the Arrival of Edward IV in England and the Finall Recouerye of th Kingdomes from Henry VI* ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society, 1838) p.17. The queen had 'browght into this worlde…a fayre sonn, a prince…'.

The *Arrival* placed much more emphasis on an incident with a statue of Saint Anne in Daventry. The statue:

> made of alabaster…fixed to the pillar, closed and clasped together with four boards, small, painted and going round about the image… And this image was thus shut, closed, and clasped… Suddenly… the boards encompassing the image about gave a great crack, and a little opened, which the king well perceived and all the people about him. And anon, after, the boards drew and closed together again, without any man's hand… The king, this seeing, thanked and honoured God and Saint Anne, taking it for a good sign and a token of good and prosperous venture that God would send him.[798]

This incident shows that the role of God within kingship did not completely vanish, but the fact that God and St Anne only sent Edward a 'token' is notable. Not only does this tie in with the argument that nowhere is God said to send or give the crown of England, it also suggests that whilst God may have sent Edward a 'venture', he did not send him an heir. This further entrenches the idea that monarchy was no longer as hereditary as previously assumed. Even the Treaty of Winchester in 1153 made the point that Henry II was appointed Stephen's heir by 'hereditary right'. By the mid- and late-fifteenth century, this emphasis on hereditary kingship shifted. Although much earlier - and in France - one of the best examples of the kind of earlier thinking about divinity comes from Louis the Pious (d.840AD). He supposedly said:' I know that it is not through my merits but through His grace that Christ has made me heir to the throne'.[799] By the fifteenth century, kingship rested more on merit and the heir to the throne was not necessarily evidence of divine favour. This would not be a result of civil war and usurpations alone. It would seem to have also been a result of new thinking about commonwealth and the desire for elective and meritocratic rule.

Thus the king no longer seemed to be divine in his own right. Where kings were described as divine, it was generally in relation to something they had done or earned. Furthermore, God's blessing no longer seemed to come in the form of an heir, but in the qualities making a man worthy

[798] Ibid, p.13. 'made of alleblastar…fixed to the piller, closed and clasped togethars with four bordes, small, payntyd and gowynge rownde abowt the image…And this ymage was thus shett, closed, and clasped…sodaynly…the bords compassynge the ymage about gave a great crak, and a little openyd, whiche the Kynge well perceyveyd and all the people about hym. And anon, aftar, the bords drewe and closed togethars agayne, withowt any mans hand…The Kyng, this seinge, thanked and honoryd God, and Seint Anne, taking it for a good sign and a token of good and prosperous aventure that God wold send hym…'.

[799] Anne Duggan, *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000) p.66.

of the throne. Overall the focus on the commonwealth over the Church and divine right created a decline in the divinity of the king himself, and this affected the status of the monarch.

Decline in the King's Status

This emphasis on meritocratic and elective government did not just affect the king's divinity. It also changed the status of the king himself and his role within the body politic. Just as the commonwealth began to take precedence over the Church and divine right, it also took precedence over the king. As a result, he was no longer the head of the body politic, fundamentally changing the role kings occupied within medieval governance.

If the king was still the head of the body politic, then nothing could come before him. As the most important and prominent individual within government, he should come first. However, over the course of the century, the king was repeatedly placed second to the commonwealth. There was not only less emphasis on the king as a divine individual, but also lesser emphasis on the king as the pre-eminent figure within the body politic. For example, in 1459 the earl of Warwick wrote a set of articles from Calais, in which he placed the king's estate second in importance to the commonwealth. Although appealing to the common good was an established part of Yorkist policy, putting the commonwealth before the king was an interesting choice. The articles opened with:

> Forasmuch as the common weal and the good politic laws…notably and virtuously used…for the keeping and maintaining of the said common weal…the due and evenly ministering of justice within the land has been piteously overturned.[800]

Only after this did Warwick mention 'that the crown of the king our sovereign lord' is 'so unmeasurably and outrageously spoiled'.[801] The king was very much a secondary concern. This is furthered by the fact that Warwick did not appear concerned with the affects of the 'spoiled' crown for the king himself. The real concern is what this did to the people:

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[800] ' Articles of the earl of Warwick, on his way from Calais to Ludlow, 1459 'in *Vale's Book* ed. Kekewich, p.208. 'Forasmoche as the commone wele and the good politik lawes hereaforne notable and virtuously used…for the keping and maynetenyng of the seide commone wele… the due and evenly minestering of justice with inne the lande beene piteouslye ovurturned'.

[801] Ibid. 'the crowne of the king our soveraigne lorde 'is 'soo unmesurable and outerageously spoiled'.

> his household…be sought by novelties by one way into the great hurt of merchants and by another way upon the poor people, great extortion of their goods and cattles by the ministers of the king's household without payment.[802]

The issue was that the king's estate was not being 'sustained in as great honour' as it should be, and that the king was not living off of his own means.[803] These were popular concerns, voiced also by Jack Cade in 1450. Yet Warwick went a step further than Cade by deliberately placing the commonwealth above the king. These articles, as noted by Watts, have been 'little discussed' and so the placement of the commonwealth over the king has not been properly considered.[804] Perhaps the articles have been overlooked because a year later the Yorkist lords re-issued Cade's petition, and this receives greater attention in comparison. However, the 1459 articles explicitly put the commonwealth in a position of greater prominence than the king. At the end of the articles, Warwick stated that he acted 'for the tender love that we bear to the commonweal and the prosperity of this realm and secondly to the king's estate'.[805] The king was very clearly placed below the commonwealth, and this indicates that both the status of the king as an individual, and the status of his office, was reduced.

Perhaps it could be argued that Warwick placed the king second because he valued the commonwealth over Henry VI specifically. With the Yorkists wanting to replace Henry VI with Richard of York, perhaps it not the king's office but only Henry VI he wished to devalue. However this seems counter-productive. By placing the king second, it suggested that the commonwealth was more significant than the monarchy itself, no matter who sat on the throne. Furthermore, by also recycling Cade's petition it suggests the Yorkists were deliberately putting the commonwealth and the people in a position of importance.[806] It could be argued that Warwick was only telling the people what they wanted to hear, but this could have been done without putting the king in second place. The articles thus indicate that the status of the king was, like the Church and divine right, in decline as the prominence of the commonwealth rose.

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[802] Ibid, pp.208-9. 'His housolde…be soughte by novelries by oon waye into the grete hurte of merchauntes and by another weye upon the pore peopull, grete extorcion of their goodes and catalles by the minesters of the kinges houseolde withoute paymente…'.

[803] Ibid, p.208.

[804] Watts 'notes in *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, p.210.

[805] 'Articles of the earl 'in *Vale*'*s Book* ed. Kekwich, p.209. 'for the tendre love that we bere unto the commune wele and prosperite of this reaume and secondly to the kinges estate'.

[806] 'Articles of the Commons of Kent at the coming of the Yorkist lords from Calais, 1460 'in *Vale's Book*, ed. Kekewich, pp.210-212.

This changed the role of the king within the body politic. In the twelfth century Salisbury believed the king was 'on top of the republic', and God 'prefers him above all others'.[807] In 1413, Thomas Hoccleve wrote:

> Right greet to thank god in Trinity, that of his grace has sent this region so noble a head. Look up thou Albion! Thank God, and for thy Christian prince pray… He, of thy soul's health, is lock and key![808]

Yet by the second half of the fifteenth century, the king was no longer the 'head' of the kingdom. This is suggested implicitly by the placement of the king in Warwick's articles, and also by the statement of the Serjeants in 1460. That anything can be placed above the king or his authority suggests he was no longer the head of the body politic.

Far more explicitly, in John Russell's 1483 drafts for the parliaments of Edward V and Richard III, there was no question of the king's position, and it certainly was not the head:

> It is well assumed in nature that the middle members of the body, that is to say, the stomach, the belly, and the parts adjoining, be not unoccupied, but have a right busy office… What is the belly or where is the womb of this great public body of England, but that and there where the king is himself, his court, and his council?[809]

The king was the 'belly' and the 'womb'. This is a significant shift, as the king had not before been referred to as anything but the head of the body politic. Christine de Pisan, writing about the body politic in the early years of the fifteenth century, had the king as the head and the commons as the stomach:

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[807] Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Nederman, p.69.

[808] Thomas Hoccleve, 'Richard II Interred in Westminster (1413) 'printed in Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.107. 'Right greet to thanke god in Trinite, [th]at of his grace hath sent this Regioun so noble an heed. Looke vp thow Albioun! God thanke, & for thy cristen Prince preye…He, of thy soules helthe, is lok and keye!'.

[809] *Grants, Etc. from the Crown During the Reign of Edward V, from the Original Docket Book* ed. John Gough Nichols, (London: J. R. Nichols and Sons, 1854) p.lx.. Also included in draft for Edward IV on p.xlvi. 'hyt ys well assured in nature, that theys myddelle membres of the body, that ys to seye, the stomake, the bely, and the partes adjoignaunte, be not unoccupied, but have a ryghte busy office…What ys the belye or where ys the wombe of thys grete publike bodye of Englonde, but that and there where the kynge ys hymselfe, hys courte, and hys counselle?'.

> The princes hold the place of the head... the knights and the nobles hold the place of the hands and the arms… the other types of people are like the belly and the feet and the legs.[810]

Russell reversed this. The king was not rendered unimportant, but there was still a significant demotion. The stomach was 'that without which no man may live', where was 'brought all matters of weight, peace and war'.[811] Instead of the head, in Russell's speech, the king was an organ who worked for the good of the whole body rather than one with supremacy over the rest.

In his second and third drafts for the parliament of Richard III, Russell opened the speech with the acknowledgement that generally, the king was assumed to be the head of the body politic.[812]

> So is it in the politic body resulting of much people having one prince or sovereign for a head, that every estate, be he high be he low, is ordained to support [the] other… to the intent as the apostle saith that all manner [of] strife and division whereby this public body is often times disgraced should be eschewed.[813]

In his final draft, this was followed by an examination of the limbs of the body politic and the role of the three 'chief and principal' estates, before once again concluding that the king is, in fact, the stomach and the womb.

> In this great body of England we have many diverse members under one head… They may all be reduced to three chief and principal… that is to say, the lords spiritual, the lords temporal, and commons… It is expedient that every estate… remember his own office. The prince to give equal justice with pity and mercy, and to defend his land from outward hostility, the subjects to do their true labour and occupations whereby his royal and necessary charges may be supported. This is the means to keep this body in good health and estate, for that body is whole and strong whose stomach… is ministered by the… upward

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[810] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'Death as Metamorphoseis in the Devotional and political Allegory of Christine de Pizan ' in *The Ends of the Body: Identity and Community in Medieval Culture* ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari & Jill Ross (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) p.290.

[811] *Grants, etc*, p.lx. 'broughte all maters of wei[ght], peax and warre'.

[812] Ibid, p.li. Draft one for Richard III - and draft two of three for this parliament - states: 'the hede ys owre soverayne lord the kynge here presente.'

[813] Ibid, p.li (draft one for Richard III) and p.lviii (draft two for Richard III). 'So is hyt in the politicke body resultynge of moche peuple hauynge oo prince or souverayne for ther hede, that every estate, be he hye be he lowe, ys ordeyned to support othyr… to thentent as thapostil seythe that alle maner stryfe and divisyon where by thys public body ys oftyme discrased shuld be echewed.'

> members… What is the belly or where is the womb of this great public body of England but that and there where the king is himself…?[814]

Thus Russell seems to have been deliberately subverting the usual place of the king in order to explore the role of the nobility and the people in relation to political power, and experiment with the idea of the body politic. He emphasised the need for conciliar rule and the need for the nobility to listen to the 'common voice'. Whilst it should also be noted that he was not, like the Merfold brothers for example, advocating common rule, he was experimenting with the body politic whilst putting the king on a much more equal footing with other members. He was careful to point out that the governance of England still rested with the nobility. He wrote that the 'politic rule of every region well ordained standeth in the nobles', and that 'the people must stand afar and not pass the limits'.[815] Thus Russell was not proposing a drastic change nor was he describing England as a complete republic like, for example, Florence. However, there is evidence of some of these ideas in his speeches and in particular in the way he spoke of the king and the king's position in the body politic.

An earlier text, *The Descryuyng of Mannes Membres*, from the second quarter of the fifteenth century, runs on similar lines. Whilst not going quite so far as Russell, the author still emphasised that the master could not exist 'without servant'.[816] The king was still the head of the body politic and 'lord sovereign of all'.[817] Yet though the king remained head of the body politic, he relied on his 'limbs'.[818] This, combined with Russell's statement, suggests that the king was in a weaker position than his forbears. His office no longer bestowed him with the kind of sacrality and innate power that we see in the reigns of previous kings. Instead he was reduced to an officer or, to borrow from a later Tudor idea, the 'first among equals'.[819] Even in texts like *The Descryuyng*, which acknowledged the king's preeminence, he ultimately relied on his subjects. The commonwealth was therefore in a position of greater importance than the king, diminishing his own status.

The importance of the people and the commonwealth, and the pre-eminence of this over the king, was also noted by John Lydgate. In a poem that is not dated but appears to be a pre-cursor to the

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[814] Ibid, p.lix-lx.

[815] Ibid, p.xliii. '…the polityk rule of every region wele ordeigned stondith in the nobles…'; 'The peuple must stond afarr, and not pass the lymittes'.

[816] Ms Digby 102, *The Descryuyng of Mannes Membres* printed in Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.269.

[817] Ibid, p.268.

[818] Ibid.

[819] Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2015) p.79. This will be explored more fully in the next chapter on Tudor government and restoration of divinity.

Fall of Princes, Lydgate acknowledged the king as head of the realm but believed his ultimate duty was to the people.[820] Titled 'Advice to Several Estates', he advised those of 'high degree' to 'set all your minds and chief intention to see the poor have right and equity, rather with favour than wrong extortion'.[821] Addressing the king directly, he said that: 'you that are king, head of the region, see that each man in manners live and do after the degree which he is called to'.[822] The king may have a 'diadem royal', but should ultimately rule for the good of his people only.[823] There was no mention of him being God's appointed or being divine himself. This reduced the king's status because he was not divinely appointed or blessed, and was there to serve a very specific purpose: the 'right and equity' of the people.

Thus the king appears to have occupied a more diminished role than previously. Not only was he placed second to the commonwealth, but there was uncertainty over his authority as demonstrated by the sergeants in 1460. Furthermore, people like John Russell suggested the king was no longer head of the body politic. Neither the *Descryuyng*, the 'Advice', or Russell's speech mentioned the king being a divine individual and all suggested he was reliant upon his subjects. The strength and sacrality of the king's office appears to have been reduced.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the commonwealth rose at the expense of both the Church and the king himself, and as a result the king's office was not as sacral as before. This was exacerbated by the focus on elective, conciliar and meritocratic rule. The monarchy had already been weakened by the civil wars, usurpations, and poor management. The ascendancy of commonwealth ideology and populist politics over both the Church and the king weakened the monarchy even further, significantly reducing the status of both the king's office and his person.

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[820] Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.233-4 suggests this poem was an introduction to the *Fall*.

[821] Sloane Ms 4031, 'Advice to Several Estates', in Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.234. Those of 'hye degre 'should 'set all yovr myndes and chefe entencyon to se the pore have ryght and eqvyte, rather wyth favovr than wronge extorcyon'.

[822] Ibid. 'ye that are kynge, hede of the regyon, se that eche man en maners lyve and do after the degre whyche he es callyd to'.

[823] Ibid.

Henry VII may have won the day at Bosworth, but his work was far from finished. An anonymous quote from the 1490s claiming that 'we need not pray for the king by name' since 'tis hard to know who is rightwise king' reveals how, even years after the battle, Henry's rule remained unstable.[824] The weakness of his claim, combined with the weakness of the monarchy, meant he could never be completely secure on his new throne. Previous chapters have shown that the divine right of the king was on a much more equal footing with commonwealth ideology by the middle of the fifteenth century. This meant that the rhetoric of governance was often tied to ideas of conciliar and elective rule for the good of the realm as a whole, and kingship was linked to meritocracy. By the time of Henry's accession, the crown was weakened by both decades of conflict, and the kind of commonwealth ideology that placed the king as the stomach of the body politic rather than the head.[825] In 1485, Henry VII needed to secure his rule, and it seems that he did so by restoring the divinity and authority of the crown which had been undercut by ideas of commonwealth and monarchical meritocracy.

This was done partly through patronage: contemporary writers like Bernard André deliberately painted a version of history that was little more than propaganda.[826] Although Sydney Anglo believed propaganda was used by the Tudors only 'sporadically', writers presented a very specific image of the Tudor dynasty.[827] Henry also emphasised his position as "other" and distant. Where Edward IV had excelled in being an approachable and personable monarch - he had been 'easy of access to his friends and others' - Henry VII took the opposite approach.[828] David Starkey and others have put this down to the king's personal desire for privacy. However, it seems plausible that this was a deliberate attempt at emphasising the divinity of the crown, which did increase at the end of the fifteenth century.
As well as this, Henry eventually drew away from ideas of conciliar rule that had previously been a prominent part of commonwealth thought and rhetoric. A more authoritarian style of government and an increased emphasis on divine right meant there was less focus on conciliar and elective rule in the interests of the commonwealth as a body. Henry VII emphasised much more traditional

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[824] Anonymous quote printed in David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious and Treasonable Speech in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.47.
[825] As shown in Russell's speeches in chapter four.
[826] J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the West Country* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) p.36. Cooper noted that 'propagandist writers at Henry's court, notably Bernard André and Pietro Carmeliano reworked the story of Henry VI's murder 'and other events.
[827] Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, (London: Seaby, 1992), p.99.
[828] Domenico Mancini, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie* ed. Annette Carson (Horstead: Imprimis Imprimatur, 2021) p.47.

kingly rhetoric, and though ideas about commonwealth and meritocracy continued well into the sixteenth century, these were no longer put above the king. Watts recognised that 'by the 1510s and 20s, it was routine for common weal and common wealth to indicate the political order and… usage of res publica increased sharply'.[829] However, the commonwealth was not generally placed higher than the king as it had been in the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century there developed a division between commonwealth and *res publica*, with Thomas Elyot believing in 1529 under Henry VIII that England was a 'public weal' not a 'common weal': the country was to be ruled by the king, advised by a council 'of wise men','chosen out of that estate of men which be called worshipful' (the gentry).[830] The commonality and 'vulgar people' were to offer only 'reverence and due obedience'.[831] Thus ideas of commonwealth had reverted to what they had been before the 1430s: the commonwealth was a prominent ideology, but subservient to the king with no real political power. As this chapter will show, the increased emphasis on divine right and Henry VII's more authoritarian style of governance meant that a more traditional hierarchy was restored. Under Henry VII the mid-fifteenth century focus on the commonwealth relented. The king was once more head of the body politic, subject to no earthly authority.

Restoration of Divinity

In 1483, Richard III had insisted that he was king by the will of the commons. Two years later, Henry VII stressed that he was king by God's will, and God's will alone. His accession was pinned firmly on divine right, with Bernard André (1450-1522) writing that Henry 'liberated the land by divine and human right, with divine power vindicating, willing, and assisting'.[832] In and of itself, this was not unusual. However, it was different to the actions of his immediate predecessors. Both Richard III and Edward IV had chosen to rely on ideas of commonwealth and monarchical meritocracy to legitimise their reigns. Henry VII chose instead to emphasise his divine right and in so doing relied on much more traditional kingly rhetoric to justify his seizure of the throne. Whilst this is not necessarily at odds with commonwealth ideology, it shows that Henry was not relying on his subjects to legitimise his reign. Whilst it could be argued that he deliberately did the opposite of

[829] Watts, 'Commonweal 'in *Languages of Political Society* ed. Gaberini, Genet & Zorzi, p.152.
[830] Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named The Governour,* (London: J. M. Dent & Co) *Renaissance Editions*, http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/gov/gov1.htm#.I [Accessed 20th April 2022] no pagination, 'chosen out of that astate of men whiche be called worshipfull'; Watts, 'Pressure of the Public 'in *Political Culture* ed. Clark & Carpenter, p.159.
[831] Elyot, *The Boke named The Governour*, http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/gov/gov1.htm#.I [Accessed 20th April 2022] no pagination.
[832] Bernard Andre, *The Life of Henry VII*, trans. Daniel Hobbins (New York: Italica Press 2011) p.8

Edward IV and Richard III to separate his rule from theirs, this is not quite convincing. By insisting that he was the legitimate heir to the throne, Henry VII relied on the weakest claim he had. His claim stemmed from his mother, Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509), who was the great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, third son of Edward III. It was far from a strong claim, but it was placed on equal footing with his victory in battle. He could have claimed the throne indisputably by right of conquest, but this was tempered by claims of legitimate inheritance. He dated his reign from the day before Bosworth, drawing away from the notion that he claimed the crown through conquest alone. This was a king determined to claim the throne by his right - granted by God - as Henry VI's heir. His first parliament noted that: 'his coming to the right and crown of England was as much by lawful title of inheritance as by the true judgment of God in giving him victory over his enemy in battle'.[833] His inheritance and the 'true judgment of God' were given equal importance, and doing so implied that the crown could not be won by force alone. For a king unstable on his throne, this was wise. It suggested that anyone who wished to take the crown from him would need more than military might. Inheritance and divine right were what mattered.

The first Tudor parliament contained the same focus on divine right. This parliament put forth a bill concerning the king's title, in which it was claimed that 'the inheritance of the crowns of the realms of England and of France' were Henry's, 'to endure forever by God's grace'.[834] The divinity of the king formed a large part of Bishop Alcock's opening sermon, too:

> And so that we may more readily attain that age of gold, our gracious God has sent us a second Joshua: a vigorous king, invincible against our enemies, who has snatched us from the depths of despair and will strive either to reform the wicked or to drive them out and destroy them, and to promote good, just and very wise men to reilluminate the realm and make it shine brightly, so that we, rejoicing, may all say, as we read that the Israelites said, in applauding Solomon, 'Long live the king, long live the king'.[835]

It was argued earlier that the Yorkist kings were never said to be *sent* by God. Other parliamentary sermons - even those also given by Alcock - did not emphasise the God-given nature of the monarch the way this November 1485 sermon did. The deliberate use of the word 'sent' may reflect a desire on Henry VII's part to return to traditional ideas of divine right, where the king was literally sent by God to reign.[836] This did not mean the king had *carte blanche* to rule as he wanted;

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[833]' Henry VII: November 1485, part 1', *PROME*, [Accessed 28 February 2022]
[834] Ibid. Item 5.
[835] Ibid.
[836] As argued on p.207, Alcock's speeches seem to have reflected the thinking of the reigning monarch.

he was still subject to the law as Fortescue had outlined half a century earlier. However, Henry Tudor 'manipulated the discourse of divine right', and 'so long as the monarch behaved in accordance with the social and political expectations of the *communitas*, the fiction of divine right was maintained'.[837] Where Edward IV and Richard III used the rhetoric of commonwealth, Henry VII appears to have deliberately pushed the rhetoric of divine right in order to secure his kingship. This meant that his was a reign based not on the will of the people, but on the will of God. The role of the commonwealth did not disappear completely from Henry's reign, but it was in a much more subservient position. There was thus a return to more traditional language surrounding the accession of the king. As Geoffrey Elton recognised, the 'Tudor monarchy was a monarchy by divine right'.[838] Traditional ideas about the crown as sacral and the king as divine returned. As Peter of Blois had claimed in the twelfth century, the king himself was holy.

This was emphasised over Henry's personal skill and ability. Alcock's sermon only mentioned the 'merits' of the king in the very last sentence:

> [Pray that]…he may remain among us for many years of joy and prosperity, and…when the Highest calls him from us to be rewarded forever with eternal blessedness for his great merits, in which merits and reward may God grant that we may be sharers, who lives and reigns without end.[839]

It was not said what exactly these merits were. Unlike the merits of Richard III in the parliament of 1484, and the merits of Humphrey of Gloucester in the *Epitaphium*, the 'merits' of Henry VII were not the focus here. This, combined with no mention whatsoever of the commonwealth, is illustrative of the shift away from monarchical meritocracy. Perhaps Alcock's emphasis on divine kingship should not be surprising. He was, after all, a bishop. But it must be remembered that Alcock had given plenty of parliamentary sermons, many of which focused on meritocracy and commonwealth over divine right. It would not seem to be his own views his sermons reflected, but those of the reigning king. For example, as noted in chapter one, his 1471 sermon was entirely secular, with no mention of the church whatsoever. In 1471, Edward IV's focus was on elective, conciliar and meritocratic rule, which Alcock's speech echoed. The 1485 sermon therefore mirrored the Tudor desire to reinforce the divine right of kings.

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[837] Kristin M. S. Bezio, *Staging Power in Tudor and Stuart English History Plays: History, Political Thought, and the Redefinition of Sovereignty*, (London: Routledge, 2015), p.25.
[838] Geoffrey Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p.2.
[839] ' Henry VII: November, 1485, part 1 '*PROME*.

In 1497, Alcock gave a different sermon to a wide audience at St Paul's Cross.[840] This sermon has been mostly overlooked, despite it giving a significant message about kingly divinity.[841] He spoke much more explicitly here about the king's status; who could question the king and who had the right to deal with him. This again reflected the aims of the Tudor regime, as at the time Henry VII was under threat from the pretender Perkin Warbeck (d.1499). Warbeck had been elected king in Ireland and declared 'Richard IV' in Cornwall. In response, Alcock's sermon proclaimed that those who had risen against Henry VII had no right to do so. He listed anointed individuals, and gave them status above ordinary men:

> bishops, kings, prophets and priests… all these persons and things thus anointed should be had in honour, and no man to deal with them but they which were anointed and stand in the same dignity.[842]

This tells us two things. Firstly, the traditional hierarchy was being restored. The king in this list came second to the bishops, with the Church above all. Secondly, Alcock was quite clear that only the anointed can 'deal with' other anointed individuals. Only those of the 'same dignity' can question the king, and this excluded all members of the laity. Later in the sermon, he claimed that 'no temporal judge shall have any jurisdiction in a spiritual person'.[843] In this there are elements of John Watts' argument that the divinity of the king rested on the reluctance of subjects to question him.[844] That the sermon was given at St Pauls, a place which W. J. Torrance Kirby claimed was 'always perceived as belonging more to the subjects than to princes', shows that Alcock was reminding the people that they had no power to question the king.[845] Around the time of this sermon, parliament was 'enacting a relatively minor curtailment of the benefit of the clergy'.[846] This explains the focus on the rights of the anointed, but there was not necessarily any need to

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[840] W. J. Torrance Kirby, 'The Public Sermon: Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1534-1570', *Renaissance and Reformation,* 31 (2008), p.6. St Paul's was a 'bustling public space, a…venue for the announcement of royal proclamations and papal bulls to citizens of the capital… From the earliest records it is clear that the cathedral churchyard was one of the favoured settings for popular protest, a place where public grievances could be aired'.

[841] Lucy Wooding, 'From Tudor Humanism to Reformation Preaching 'in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington & Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.339. The sermon has been studied only in relation to its comparison between those criticising the church and barking dogs, and not for it messages on kingship and governance.

[842] Manchester: John Rylands Special Collections, 15463. John Alcock and Wynkyn de Worde. *Sermo Ioh[ann]is Alcok Epi[scopi] Elien[sis]. Enprynted at Westmestre: bi Wynkin the Worde*, (Westminster, 1497), no pagination. 'Bysshops, kynges, prophets & preestis… all thyse persones & thy[n]ges thus anoyntyd sholde be had in honour & no man to deale wyth them but they which were anoyntid & stode in the same dignytee'

[843] Ibid. 'noo temporal iuge shall haue ony iurisdicc[i]on in a spyrytuall persone'.

[844] John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.19.

[845] Torrance Kirby, 'The Public Sermon', *Renaissance and Reformation*, p.6.

[846] Peter Marshall, *Heretics & Believers: A History of the English Reformation,* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), p.86.

include the king. The king is not part of the clergy and so Alcock's case could have been made without mentioning him at all. In doing so, Alcock did not just imply that clerics were above secular law. He implied that the king was on a level above his people. No layman - noble or common - could 'deal' with the king. This reinforced ideas of the king as divinely ordained.

This was stressed elsewhere in the sermon, where Alcock spoke of how the king was appointed by God to serve the realm. He spoke of how the sacrifice of Jesus was a:

> privilege granted by almighty God to his church [and] there be other privileges granted to it by... emperors and kings, and by general councils which bind all the world, for there be present all kings for their lands and commonality, and all bishops for their churches…[847]

The sacrifice of Jesus was the 'privilege' granted to the Church by God, but other privileges were granted by emperors and kings, according to Alcock. One such privilege was the insistence made by kings that churches be held 'in honour'.[848] It was, then, for the interests of the 'commonality' that the king protected the Church. In describing the way that privileges filter down from God, through the king to the people, Alcock was doing much more than defending clerical benefits. He implied that commonality relied upon the king. This was akin to the ideas of Salisbury from the twelfth century. Since Alcock's other sermons reflected the interests of the reigning monarch, it is likely that this did, too. Thus both the 1485 and 1497 sermons show that there were attempts to emphasise the divinity of both king and crown.

Divinity was woven back into English kingship, something which was aided by attempts at having Henry VI officially recognised a saint. As the heir to Henry VI, the canonisation was an obvious way for Henry VII to bolster his own claim to the throne.[849] However, it must also be considered an attempt to bolster the divinity of the monarchy itself. It never succeeded (the break with Rome in the 1530s brought the process to an end) but had Henry been officially canonised, it would have provided Henry VII with a divine predecessor. Though Henry VII was not directly descended from Henry VI, they were still related, and Henry VII claimed the throne as Henry VI's heir. As Alec Ryrie noted, Henry 'leaned heavily on the sacral, religious dimension of English kingship' and as a result, he wanted to 'redeem' Henry VI.[850] Indeed, Francis Bacon noted in the sixteenth century that

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[847] Alcock and de Worde, *Sermo,* no pagination. 'prevylege graunted by almyghty god to his chyrche [and] there ben other prevyleges graunted to it by…emperours & kynges And by generall counselles whyche byndeth all ye worlde, for there ben present all kynges for theyre londes & comynaltee, & all bysshops for theyr chyrches…'
[848] Ibid.
[849] John M. Thielmann, 'The Miracles of King Henry VI of England '*The Historian*, 42(3) (1980) p.456.
[850] Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms, 1405-1603,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) p.47.

the canonisation was to 'bring into the house of Lancaster celestial honour'.[851] It was not only Henry VI or the house of Lancaster that needed redeeming, though, and Henry VII used the attempted canonisation to reinforce the divinity of kingship.

Shortly after the death of the Lancastrian king in May 1471, a cult sprang up, and his grave became a pilgrimage site.[852] Sites associated with the king also attracted pilgrims: in 1479, the archbishop of York, Lawrence Booth (c.1420-1480) put forward a motion forbidding worship at any place a statue of Henry VI had once stood.[853] The accounts of miracles attributed to Henry VI seem to suggest that kingship contributed to his saintliness. In order to make the case for Henry VI's sainthood, accounts of hundreds of miracles were collected and compiled in *The Miracles of King Henry VI.*[854] In Windsor alone, the book recorded 300 miracles. They range from a boy being brought back to life after drowning in a mill-stream, to stolen pigs being returned, and lost treasure being recovered.[855] The way these miracles were recorded and discussed may tell us something about how the status of the king was viewed. One account tells of a William Hill, a chaplain, and a John Raynold, who had fallen into a well and 'given themselves up for lost'. They 'invoked that worthy prince King Henry and were supported by the divine power' of the king, who saved them from drowning.[856] There is no explanation of where this 'divine power' comes from, whether it is a result of Henry's martyrdom, his piety, or his status as king. Compare this to accounts of another English martyr who, also uncanonised, reputedly performed miracles: William of Norwich (1132-1144). The *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich* (1173) was compiled by Thomas of Monmouth, recording the 'glorious display of miracles which the divine power carried out through the merits of the blessed martyr William'.[857] In this account, there is no question of the 'divine power' being God, and William of Norwich is only the conduit for such power. God carried out the miracles 'through' William, not William himself. Further, the divine power is mentioned first ahead of the saint, and this is the opposite in the case of Henry VI. Hill and Raynold invoked only Henry's

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[851] Francis Bacon, *History of King Henry VII* in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 3, (London: William Pickering, 1825) p.400.
[852] Dale Hoak, 'The Iconography of the Crown Imperial 'in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.72; Ellen Ettlinger, 'Notes on a Woodcut Depicting King Henry VI Being Invoked as a Saint', *Folklore*, 84(2) (1973) pp.115-9.
[853] *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, vol. 3, ed. James Raine (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894) p.336.
[854] British Library, MS Royal 13 C VIII. This was commissioned by John Morgan (dean of Windsor until 1496, bishop of St Davids thereafter). The *Miracles* is in Latin, and contains a dedication to Morgan and a hymn to Henry VI.
[855] *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, ed. Father Ronald Cox and Shane Leslie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), pp.34, 41, 49.
[856] Ibid, p.142.
[857] Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, Fordham Medieval Sourcebook [https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1173williamnorwich.asp] [Accessed 5th May 2022]

name, and the 'divine power' is more ambiguous. It is not clear whether the divine power is Henry's or that of God.

Kingship itself may have made Henry divine, and Leigh-Ann Craig argued that for Henry VI's supporters at least, 'kingship may have evoked sanctity'.[858] As shown by Katherine Lewis, Henry's kingship was 'perceived as part of his intercessory power', and images of him 'placed emphasis on kingship as an intrinsic dimension of his sanctity'.[859] This connection between kingship and divinity is reminiscent of the royal touch, the ceremony by which kings could heal scrofula (also called the King's Evil) by virtue of being king alone. Many of the miracles Henry VI was credited with are akin to this. One account specifically told of how a nine-year-old girl was cured of the King's Evil when her parents promised to visit Henry's tomb.[860] Thus it is possible that the accounts were intended to show the miracles as a result of Henry's kingship as much as of his piety and martyrdom. Indeed, not once in the text is he referred to as a martyr. The manner of his death was not a fundamental part of his saintliness.[861] This is not the case for other saints mentioned in the same text: it refers often to the 'holy martyr Erasmus', 'St Thomas of Canterbury,' and the 'victorious martyr Saint George'.[862] There would thus seem to be some ambiguity over where Henry VI's power to perform miracles comes from.

John Theilmann in 1980 wrote that Henry's 'position as king reinforced the impact of his personal piety'.[863] What has not been considered is that his position as king also impacted his ability to perform miracles in the first place. It may well be suggested however, that this power stemmed from his status as king. Not only were many of the miracles similar to the royal touch, but the text often referred to Henry VI as a divine or holy king. This is not surprising - the whole point of the work was to recognise Henry s sainthood - but there seems to be some connection between Henry's saintliness and his role as king. For example, it was claimed that one man:

[858] Craig, 'Royalty', *Albion*, 198.
[859] Katherine Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Medieval England*, (London: Routledge, 2013) p.245-6. Pilgrim badges show Henry with royal regalia, and he was depicted in some instanced beside other saintly kings. Lewis points out one example, a rood screen at Barton Turf, that shows Henry VI alongside kingly saints such as Edward the Confessor.
[860] *Miracles,* ed. Cox and Leslie, p.109.
[861] This was also pointed out by Lewis, who noted that 'Henry was rendered recognisable to his devotees not by the emblem of his martyrdom… but by objects of his royal regalia: crown, orb, sceptre, and frequent inclusion of the antelope which was his heraldic device'. *Kingship and Masculinity*, p.245-6.
[862] *Miracles*, ed. Cox and Leslie, p.80, p.165, p.85.
[863] John M. Theilmann, 'The Miracles of King Henry VI of England', *The Historian*, 42(3) (1980) p.458.

> had long been troubled with a fever and death seemed the only remedy he could look for, but, the holy King Henry appearing to him in a dream, he recovered at once after no more than three days illness.[864]

Another mentioned how:

> Among the noise of their lamentation some mention was suddenly heard of the blessed name, King Henry, the glorious champion of Christ that was gone to his reward…[865]

This language is similar to that used for other kings, kings that were in no way thought of as saints or in line for canonisation. Notably, Henry was referred to as Christ's champion more than once.[866] Edward IV was, in a similar vein, described as God's 'knight' in one fifteenth-century poem.[867] Therefore, some of the miracles recorded could suggest that the king's power to heal came as much from his status as king as from any saintliness. In this way, the canonisation would have done much to restore the sacral nature of the crown itself, as well as given Henry VII a saintly predecessor.

Henry VII went to a great deal of effort to secure the canonisation. Steven Gunn believed that he was just trying to keep up with the French; several French kings were saints already.[868] However, it would seem to be about more than just surpassing the French. Henry VII hounded various popes, had the plans drawn up for a Westminster shrine, and commissioned the *Miracles*.[869] It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Henry VII was using the divinity of kingship as a rhetoric of its own to bolster the crown. Instead of using the rhetoric of commonwealth like his predecessors, Henry VII emphasised the divinity and sacrality of the monarchy. Indeed, it would not have been unthinkable for the *Miracles* to suggest Henry VI's ability to perform miracles came from his kingship as well as his piety. John of Salisbury in the twelfth century claimed the king is the 'image of God'.[870] Kingship bestowed a divinity and power of its own, and Henry VI's ability to work miracles seems to have stemmed from this.

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[864] *Miracles*, ed. Cox and Leslie, p.124.
[865] Ibid, p.116.
[866] ' Christ's worthy champion', *Miracles*, Cox and Leslie, p.94.
[867] *Historical Poems of the XIV and XVth Centuries*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) p.221.
[868] Steven Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558,* (London: Macmillan, 1995) p.196.
[869] John A. F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society 1485-1529,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) p.36; Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) p.355. Henry VII petitioned Innocent VIII before 1492, Alexander VI before 1494, and Julius II in 1504.
[870] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.142.

An undated prayer to Henry VI further suggests that his divinity stemmed from his kingship, not his piety:

> O crowned king with sceptre in hand
> Most noble conqueror I may thee call
> For thou has conquered I understand
> A heavenly kingdom most imperial…
> All apostles and patriarchs shall thee honour
> Martyrs and confessors will all their diligence
> And eke virgins in the heavenly tower
> Are glad and joyful of the presence
> Now sweet king Henry pray for me.[871]

The prayer distinguished between Henry and 'martyrs and confessors'. Henry was not to be prayed to because of his piety or the manner of his death, but because he conquered Heaven as a king. He was above even the apostles. The divinity of Henry VI and his saintliness therefore appears to have stemmed from his status as king. This reflected well on Henry VII, but also on kingship as an institution. The canonisation of Edward the Confessor in the twelfth century, Thielmann claimed, had given the monarchy 'an aura of holiness'.[872] With the portrayals of Henry VI as another saintly king, this 'aura of holiness' - lost over the reigns of the Yorkist kings - was regained.

That the king had special powers from God was one thing, and can be observed in the ceremonies of the royal touch. Ambiguities in the records make it difficult to ascertain how often kings performed the ceremony of the royal touch, particularly in the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III.[873] However, it is clear that Henry VII did perform the ceremony, touching around thirty people,

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[871] ' A Prayer to Henry VI 'printed in *Henry VI: A Reprint of John Blacman's Memoir* ed. M. R. James, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919) p.50. 'O crownyd kyng with sceptur in hand/ Most nobyll conqueror I may thee call / For thou hast conquered I undyrstand/ A heavynly kyngdome most imperyall…/ All Apostels and Patriarchs shall thee honour/ Martyrs and Confessors with all their delygens/ And eke Virgynes in the hevynly tour/ Ar glad and joyful of the presens…/ Now swet kyng Henre praye for me.'

[872] Theilmann, 'Miracles', p.458.

[873] David J. Sturdy, 'The Royal Touch in England' in *European Monarchy: Its Evolution and Practice from Roman Antiquity to Modern Times,* eds. Heinz Duchhardt, Richard A. Jackson, David Sturdy (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992) p.173.; Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch : Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, (London, Routledge, 1973) p.164. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the accounts of the ceremony were combined with alms and recorded as normal expenditure, making it impossible to differentiate between the ceremony and general almsgiving. Nevertheless, there is evidence that in the reigns of Henry VI, Henry VII and Henry VIII the ceremony was still performed. The difficulty of the sources means that it is much harder to tell whether or not the ceremony continued as normal under Edward IV and Richard III, with much less evidence surviving.

and perhaps more, annually between 1491 and 1505.[874] There were also instances, though, in Henry VII's reign where the king was directly compared to a god himself. One such occasion was in 1501, when Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536) made her processional entrance into London. The occasion was marked by great spectacle, with pageants at various points around the city. At the final pageant, a figure dressed as a god waited. A bishop compared this god directly to the king:

> The king of Heaven is like an earthly king that to his son prepares a wedding. And right so as our sovereign lord, the king, may be resembled to the King Celestial as well as any prince earthly now living… as he whom it has pleased God to accept and call of all honour and dignity unto height most Christian king and most steadfast in the faith.[875]

Henry VII had not been present at any of the other pageants along Katherine's route, but watched this one from a nearby building. His presence suggests this pageant was designed to invite comparison between the 'King Celestial' - dressed in gold and sitting on a throne - and King Henry. The implication that the king was a god himself could not have been less subtle.

It is worth comparing this to the entrance of Henry VI into London in 1432. On this occasion there was also a display of pageantry and spectacle, where Henry VI was presented with two tableaux vivant. These were "living pictures", where actors in costume enacted a scene. One of these tableaux displayed the ancestry of Henry VI, and the other recreated a Jesse tree, depicting the genealogy of Christ. By putting these two tableaux together, it was implied that Henry VI was a descendent of Christ. This, according to Sonja Drimmer, 'raised some eyebrows'.[876] John Lydgate even felt compelled to justify and defend the stunt in his account of it:

> And why the Jesse was set on that part
> This was the cause in especial
> For next to Paul's, I dare well specify,
> Is the part most chief and principal,
> Called of London the church cathedral

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[874] Stephen Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England: Politics, Medicine and Sin* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015) p.45.

[875] *The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne* ed. Gordon Kipling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.29. 'The Kyng of Heven is like an erthely king that to his sonne prepareth a weddyng. And right so as oure soveraign lord, the Kyng may be resemblid to the Kyng Celestiall as well as any prince erthely now lyvyng… as he whom hit hath pleasid God to accept and calle of all honour and dignite unto height moost Cristen kyng and moost stedfast in the faith'.

[876] Sonja Drimmer, 'A Political Poster in Late Medieval England: British Library, Harley MS 7353 'in *Harlaxton Medieval Studies Volume XXX, Performance, Ceremony and Display in Late Medieval Britain: Proceedings of the 2018 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Julia Boffey (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020) p.339.

Which ought of reason the devise to excuse,
To all those that would against it frown or muse…[877]

That it needed excusing at all shows that Drimmer was right when she claimed that it was considered a ‘regal overreach’. Complaints were even made to the mayor of London over it.[878] Under Henry VI, it was too far to show the king as a descendent of Christ. Under Henry VII, though, showing the king as god-like was acceptable: there were no complaints or apologies in 1501 as there had been in 1432. This suggests that by the early sixteenth century, Henry VII had significantly bolstered the reputation and divinity of the crown.

The pageants for Katherine further reinforced the idea of divine kingship with their very design. Her journey began properly at the second pageant staged - called Castle Policy - where she was met by a figure named Policy. This was the earthly, temporal part of the pageant. Afterwards, she was led to the sphere of the moon and the sphere of the sun, before being delivered to the final pageant: the Throne of God. At this pageant, overlooked by Henry VII, she was invited to take a throne beside a personified figure of Honour.[879] Gordon Kipling pointed out that the pageant showed how her husband Prince Arthur, ‘a Tudor star-god, await[ed] Katharine, a Spanish mortal, from his stellar home in the heavens’.[880] Katherine thus ascended into the divine and the celestial by her marriage to the prince. The pageants followed her ascent from the earthly castle to the throne in heaven. In this way the pageants underlined the divinity and the otherness of the Tudor monarchy, and suggested that by marrying into the dynasty, Katherine herself became divine.

All of this aimed at putting distance between the king and his subjects. During Katherine’s processional entrance, Henry was not on a grandstand as a king typically would be. Instead he was inside the house of a wealthy merchant, watching from the windows.[881] He ‘had conveyed himself somewhat privily and secretly and stood in a merchant’s chamber’.[882] His servants, and those of his men, were such a ‘great and huge number’ that they lined both sides of the street.[883] Although the

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[877] John Lydgate, ‘Henry VI’s Triumphal Entry into London ’ed. Claire Sponsler, *Middle English Texts Series* [https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sponsler-lydgate-mummings-and-entertainments-henry-vi-triumphal-entry-into-london] [Accessed 18th February 2022] lines 419-425. 'And why the Jesse was sette on that partye/ This was the cause in especyall,/ For next to Paulis, I dar well specefye,/ Is the partye moste chief and princypall,/ Callyd of London the chirche cathederall,/ Which ought of reson the devyse to excuse,/ To alle thoo that wholde ageyn yt froune or muse…'
[878] C. Sponslor, *The Queen*'*s Dumbshows: John Lydgate and the Making of Early Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) p.243, n.50.
[879] *Receyt* ed. Kipling, pp.34-5.
[880] Ibid, p.XIV.
[881] Ibid, p.30.
[882] Ibid. He 'hade conveyed himself sumwhat prevy and secretly and stode in a marchauntes chambre’
[883] Ibid, p.31.

king was in 'open sight', he was removed and distant from his subjects.[884] The physical separation reflected the metaphorical separation between the king and his people: the "other-ness" and "other-worldliness" Henry VII cultivated. Like Alcock's 1497 sermon, this was done to emphasise his status as a divine individual sent by God, elevated above the ordinary man. This bolstered not only Henry's rule but the crown itself. It was further drawing away from the personable style of rule that Edward IV had employed, and highlighted the sacrality of the crown.

The development of the privy chamber in the 1490s further entrenched the distance between king and subject.[885] The king's apartments were divided into the privy chamber - containing his bedroom, library and private space - and the presence chamber, containing his throne - a more public space. The privy chamber was 'insulated from the hurly-burly of the court', giving the king a much greater degree of privacy.[886] It was, in the words of Thomas Penn, an 'institutional black hole'.[887] Those who served the king in these chambers changed too. Previously, positions went to knights and noblemen, esquires of the body. Henry VII employed men of lower status as grooms instead: 'those of talent but no connection gradually rose'.[888] These men acted not as councillors, but 'as accredited or actual members of the royal household'.[889] He created men who were completely reliant upon him for their positions in order to ensure their loyalty. He also, though, became 'more remote from the staff of the chamber, which in turn…saw the personal connection between its staff and the king weakened'.[890] This was combined with an 'increasing rigidity of court ceremonial'.[891] Rank and precedence was enforced by men like the king's uncle and chamberlain, Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford (1431-95). The 'formal precedence' of the court was 'carefully defined', with 'parallel tables of male and female ranks being drawn up'.[892] This, along with the privy chamber and the move of finances from the Exchequer to the king's own chambers, reflected the new rigidity and formality of governance.

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[884] Ibid. 'Opyn sight'

[885] David Starkey, 'Court, Council and Nobility in Tudor England' in *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age,* ed. Ronald G. Asch & Adolf M. Birke (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1991) p.176.; Steven Gunn, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR*, 108(426) (1993), p.38. Starkey suggested 1495 and Steven Gunn 1493.

[886] Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, p.37.

[887] Thomas Penn, *Winter King* (London: Penguin, 2012) p.33.

[888] James Hooker, 'Some Cautionary Notes on Henry VII's Household and Chamber System', *Speculum,* 33(1) (1958), p.70.

[889] Ibid, p.75.

[890] David Grummit, 'Household, Politics and Political Morality in the Reign of Henry VII', *Historical Research,* 82(217) (2009) p.400.

[891] Grummit, 'Household', *Historical Research,* p.400.

[892] Steven Gunn, 'The Court of Henry VII' in *The Court as a Stage: England the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. Steven Gunn & A. Janse (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006) p.141.

There is no clearer indication of how separated the king's chamber was than the events following Henry VII's death in 1509. His death was successfully kept secret for two full days whilst a group of councillors made necessary arrangements. That an event as pivotal as the death of the monarch could be concealed for so long demonstrates how isolated the privy chamber was from the rest of the court. This isolation emphasises not just the physical distance between the monarch and his court, but the metaphorical and divine distance too. By enforcing distance between the king and his court, Henry VII emphasised the sacrality of the crown.

Starkey, however, believed that all of this was to 'preserve his privacy on the one hand and his freedom on the other'.[893] Grummit believed it was motivated by suspicion and fears of disloyalty.[894] But the creation of the privy chamber and the separation between king and court cannot be ascribed only to Henry VII's suspicion or desire for privacy. Henry VII had 93 esquires of the body by 1509, compared to Edward IV's 30-40, and Richard III's 48.[895] Privacy does not seem to have been his driving force, and it is just as likely that he was deliberately putting himself - and by extension, the crown as an institution - on a pedestal above his ordinary subjects. He seems to have instilled the same values in his son, as Prince Arthur may have been just as reserved. Sean Cunningham pointed out that Arthur would likely 'have had a similar ruling style to his father'.[896] More convincingly, Henry VII's behaviour towards the future Henry VIII after 1502 suggests that Henry VII deliberately encouraged his heirs to cultivate this distance. The young Prince Henry was not raised with the same emphasis on distance and reservation. This changed in 1502, when he became heir after Arthur's death. After this, the young prince was stifled under his father's overbearing influence. Historians have thought this a product of Henry VII's paranoia and fear - an attempt at keeping his remaining heir safe.[897] However, it seems equally as likely that he was trying to instil in his son the value of distance and reservation. After Arthur's death, the Spanish ambassador Fuensalida noted that Prince Henry was kept 'like a girl', and was 'so subjected' he only spoke when the king spoke to him:

> He takes his meals alone and spends most of his day in his room, which has no other entrance than through the king's bedchamber. He is in complete subjection to his father and

[893] Starkey, 'Court' in *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility,* eds. Asch, Birke, p.176.
[894] Grummit, 'Household', *Historical Research*, p.400.
[895] Gunn, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR*, 108(426) (1993), pp.41-2.
[896] Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Stroud: Amberley, 2016) p.160.
[897] Ibid, p.242. Henry VII 'could afford to take no risks with the safety of Henry, his only surviving son'.

> grandmother and never opens his mouth in public except to answer a question from one of them.[898]

This was a much different prince than the one who had previously loved to be the centre of attention. At Arthur and Katherine's wedding celebrations in 1501, Henry, 'encumbered with his clothes' had 'suddenly cast off his gown and danced in his jacket'.[899] The change in the prince's character could perhaps be ascribed to grief following his brother's death, and his mother's, which followed soon after, or a response to his new position as heir apparent. His character after he became king, however, suggests otherwise; he never lost his desire for attention. Fuensalida's report also dates from 1508, six years after the death of Arthur, and five after Elizabeth of York. It would seem, then, that the prince was deliberately isolated from the rest of the court, and this was not just about privacy. It was a calculated cultivation of an otherworldly, divine image.

This image was one furthered by literature and patronage, or, "Tudor propaganda". John Warren pointed out that Henry 'employed the techniques of propaganda by using a biographer [Bernard André] to argue that he was God's agent of reconciliation' between the Yorkists and Lancastrians.[900] Alistair Fox also argued that Bernard André's Henry VII:

> displays all the qualities of a saint, showing exemplary humility, faith, and piety, patience in adversity and magnanimity in victory. In short, he is presented as the divinely sanctioned saviour of prophecy whose mission is to rescue England from the cruel tyranny of Richard III and the civil strife of the Wars of the Roses.[901]

Historians therefore agree that Henry VII used patronage to further his divine image. What has not been considered is that it was not only his own divinity he was emphasising, but that of the crown in general.

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[898] Fuensalida, *Correspondencia de Gutierre Gomez de Fuensalida* (Madrid, 1907) p.449, translated in David Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince* (London: Harper Press, 2008) p.240.

[899] *The Antiquarian Repertory: Volume II* ed. Francis Grose, & Thomas Astle, (London: E. Jeffrey, 1808) p.302. The prince, 'accombred w[ith] his clothis', had 'sodenly cast of his gowne and dauncyd in his jaket'.

[900] John Warren, *The Wars of the Roses and the Yorkist Kings*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), p.140.

[901] Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p.109.

One example of this are the Opicius poems. This is a collection of five Latin poems, written in 1492, that draw attention to the king's 'sacred majesty'.[902] These were not circulated, and probably read by nobody other than the king. This does not detract from their significance. As David Carlson pointed out, the fact that it was so 'wasteful' was part of the purpose: 'the more wasteful the literary production was, the more magnificent the patronage'.[903] Although the poems were not published, it is still significant that the poet referred to Henry VII as sacred. In this way, Henry not only used poetry and patronage to display his wealth and strength, but also to reclaim some of his lost divinity. One poem is about the invasion of France, and talks of roses in a garden threatened by nettles:

> The bright flower, ever the fount of profound piety, paid it the wage due crime so great. Thus the nettle, now supplicant, reverenced the rose, and you have ever to honor star-wielding God, for God can settle things for ever. If I have any credence with you, there is a new divinity on earth.[904]

This is the most significant part of the poem in relation to Henry's divinity. There is a 'new divinity on earth'. It does not mention what this 'new divinity' is, but, given the context, it is likely that the 'new divinity' is the new king. The king is, in these poems, very much a divine individual.

Henry's divinity and piety was emphasised from the moment he stepped on English soil. Later accounts of his arrival in England stressed the role of God and piety in his accession. Robert Fabyan's chronicle recorded the moment he landed, and made sure to emphasise Henry's subservience to God. According to Fabyan, Henry fell to his knees and made the sign of the cross when he landed at Milford Haven:

> When he was coming into the land, he incontinently kneeled down upon the earth, and with meek countenance and pure devotion began this psalm: 'Iudica me Deus, et decerne causam meam'… When he had finished to the end, and kissed the ground meekly and reverently, [he] made the sign of the cross upon him…'.[905]

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[902] British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. iv, printed and translated in David R. Carlson, 'The 'Opicius' Poems (British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. iv) and the Humanist Anti-Literature in Early Tudor England', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 55(3) (2002) p.877.

[903] Carlson, 'The 'Opicius' Poems', *Renaissance Quarterly,* p.880.

[904] Carlson translation p.888-9, this passage on p.889; Latin original: "Si mihi quid credis, numen in orbe novum est"

[905] Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France* ed. Henry Ellis (London: F. C. and J. Rivington etc, 1811) p.672. 'When he was commyn vnto the lande, he incontyently knelyd downe vpon the erth, and with meke countenaunce and pure deuocion began this psalme: "Iudica me Deus, et decerne causam meam"…The whiche whenne

Henry's 'pure devotion' to God takes centre stage, and it implies that as king, he was bound to God only. There was no mention of commonwealth or ideas about the people in this account of his landing. It should be noted that no other contemporary recorded this story of Henry VII falling to his knees, only Fabyan.[906] This does not mean it did not take place, but it is curious that Fabyan chose to emphasise it. Perhaps he included this story deliberately to reflect the increased focus on divine kingship post-1485.

In trying to appeal to Henry, Fabyan was going about it the right way. Henry VII from the start cultivated the divinity of his office, drawing away from the more rational kingship of his predecessors. Reason had stopped Fortune's Wheel and made Edward IV king; Henry VII instead emphasised the mysticism of kingship, embracing prophecy and mythology. Political prophecies had been banned in 1402, and though they were still written throughout the fifteenth century, they were not directly encouraged by the monarch.[907] This reflected the more practical nature kingship had taken on in the fifteenth century. Although eventually he would ban political prophecy himself, initially Henry was content to encourage it.[908] He linked himself frequently with the Welsh legendary king Cadwaladr and with King Arthur. He had a volume of prophecies made for him containing, amongst others, the prophecies of Merlin.[909] Many of these related to order and unity, and the coming of legendary kings. By encouraging such prophecy, Henry VII suggested he was the fulfiller of these prophecies: long-promised, divine, and mythical himself. This was emphasised in 1485, when his supporters referred to him as Mab Darogan, the mythical "son of prophecy" who, in Welsh legends, was destined to reclaim Britain.[910]

The Cadwaladr connection was one of the most prominent exploited by Henry VII. He was not the first to do this: Edward IV had a genealogy made connecting him to Cadwaladr, but Henry VII used the myth with much more frequency. Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth century *Historia Regnum*

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he hadde fynysshid to the ende, and kyssed the grounde mekely and reuerently, made the signe of the crosse upon hym….'

[906] Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History,* ed. Henry Ellis (London: Camden Society, 1844) p.216. Vergil only mentioned how: 'The weather being very fayre he came unto Wales the 7th day after… entring thaven caulyd Milford…'. The Chronicles of London do not mention the landing at all, only the battle of Bosworth, Richard III's death and the aftermath. *Chronicles of London* ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905) p.193.

[907] V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1971) p.22.

[908] Hilary Carey, *Courting Disaster: Astrology at the English Court and University in the Later Middle Ages*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1992) p.96**.**

[909] Jonathan Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy*, (Stroud: Sutton, 2002) p.305. British Library, MS Arundel 66. It also contains the prophecies of St John of Bridlington; the prophecy of the eagle, telling of a tree that, being cut from its trunk and separated from its root, returned to its trunk and restored itself; and a prophecy of a great king who would save England and unite the realm.

[910] J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) p.109.

Brittaniae asserted that the ancient king Cadwaladr, last king of the Britons, sacrificed himself for his people. According to Monmouth, a prophecy by Merlin stated that the Britons would overcome the Saxons if Cadwaladr gave up his rule. Cadwaladr then did so, supposedly, travelling to Rome where he later died. The Tudors claimed descent from Cadwaladr, and Henry VII exploited this. When he landed in Wales in 1485, he adopted the red dragon flag, Cadwaladr's symbol. The writer of the Worcester pageant in 1486 also presented Henry as Cadwaladr's heir: 'Cadwaladr's blood lineally descending, long hath been told of such a prince coming... this same is the fulfiller of the prophecy…'.[911] At his coronation, Henry's horse wore Cadwaladr's arms, and after the coronation ceremony, he created a new pursuivant named Rougedragon in reference to both Cadwaladr and Saint George.[912] The idea that Henry was the fulfiller of prophecy was a world away from ideas of rational kingship. It is not quite the same thing as insisting that the king is divine, but it certainly implies that he is some kind of mystical figure. Although political prophecies were eventually banned, that Henry began his reign by leaning on them is telling.

Henry VII appears to have been reinforcing the divinity of the monarchy through a variety of methods. He was determined to emphasise at any opportunity the fact that he was chosen by God, and this would appear to have been more than just an attempt at securing his own reign. The return to mysticism, the attempted canonisation of Henry VI, the distance between himself and his subjects, and the frequent reminders of divine right seem to suggest that he was trying to restore the divinity of the monarchy itself.

Restoration of Strength and Authority

The restoration of divinity goes hand in hand with the restoration of monarchical authority. This too had been damaged; the authority of the crown had been curtailed by ideas that put the king below the commonwealth. Henry needed to restore not just divinity, but the strength, authority, and reputation of the English crown. This he attempted to do by sheer will and activity, seeming to be endlessly busy. He also appears to have been in favour of a more authoritarian and autocratic monarchy. It has been observed before that Henry tried to rule in a less conciliar and elective manner than his predecessors. W. C. Richardson believed the 'Tudors achieved a complete royal supremacy' that surpassed that of their predecessors.[913] Similarly, R. W. Heinze suggested Henry

[911] Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry,* p.214. 'Cadwaladers blodde lynyally descending, longe hath bee towlde of such a prunce comyng….this same os the fulfiller of the profecye…'
[912] Lorraine Attreed, 'England's Official Rose: Tudor Concepts of the Middle Ages' in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture,* eds. P. Gallagher & H. Damico, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), p.87.
[913] W. C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration 1485-1547*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952) p.1.

wanted to rule without parliament.[914] Henry certainly seems to have wanted more autocratic rule, akin to Fortescue's *dominium regale*. One ambassador said as much, claiming Henry wanted to rule in the 'French fashion'. Henry was, in the words of R. A Griffiths, an 'unrepentant Francophile', who was 'thought by some observers to prefer the habits and methods of government which he had witnessed at the Breton and French courts'.[915] David Grummit, though, argued that all of this confused 'Henry's character' for his 'style of kingship'.[916] He argued that 'the personal nature of Henry's rule, his suspicion of others and the absolute trust he placed in those who had stood by him in exile were distinctly his, products of his unique upbringing'.[917] However, although Henry's character no doubt played a role, his desire to rule in a 'French fashion' is also evidence of a desire to restore and strengthen the authority of the monarchy.

Alcock's 1497 sermon insisted that only the anointed could 'deal' with a king. Whilst this says something about how Alcock viewed kingship, it perhaps also reflects Henry Tudor's desire to reign unchecked. In 1498, the Spanish ambassador Don Pedro De Ayala (d.1513) reported that:

> [Henry] would like to govern England in the French fashion, but he cannot. He is subject to his Council, but has already shaken off some, and got rid of some part of this subjection. Those who have received the greatest favours from him are the most discontented… The King has the greatest desire to employ foreigners in his service. He cannot do so.[918]

The 'French fashion' of rule de Ayala mentioned would appear to be Fortescue's *dominium regale*. Fortescue explained how English kings were 'bound by oath…to the observance of [the] law' in a way French kings were not.[919] In France, the king *was* the law: 'what pleased the prince has the force of law'.[920] The English king is more restricted than his French counterpart, and de Ayala acknowledged this by noting how the royal council "subjected" royal authority. Because of this, it is not surprising that Henry VII should wish to rule in a French style and be rid of any encroachments on royal power. He had, after all, spent fourteen years in exile in France.

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[914] R. W. Heinze, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p.65.
[915] R. A. Griffiths, 'Henry Tudor: The Training of a King', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly,* 49(3) (1986) p.211.
[916] David Grummit, 'The Establishment of the Tudor Dynasty 'in *A Companion to Tudor Britain*, ed. Norman L. Jones, Robert Tittler, (New Jersey: Wiley, 2008) p.14.
[917] Ibid.
[918] 'Spain: July 1498, 21-31', in *CSPS, Volume 1, 1485-1509*, ed. G A Bergenroth (London, 1862), pp. 167-180. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol1/pp167-180 [accessed 11 January 2022]. No.210.
[919] John Fortescue, *The Governance of England*, ed. Shelley Lockwood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.48, p.86.
[920] Ibid, p.86.

Indeed, by October 1507 it was noted by another Spanish ambassador Rodrigo Gonzalez de Puebla (d.1509) that the king had almost thrown off his council altogether. The ambassador claimed that the king had 'no confidential advisers' at all.[921] Francis Bacon echoed this later, writing that nobody was allowed near the king's 'power' or 'secrets'.[922] De Puebla's comment is curious, though. Henry VII had started his reign with close advisors, like Richard Fox (1447/8-1528), Thomas Lovell (d.1524), Reginald Bray (1440-1503) and John Morton (c.1420-1500). In 1497, Milanese reports described these as the 'four leading men at his court'.[923] It could, perhaps, be suggested that the lack of close advisors in 1507 stemmed from the fact that two of the most prominent, Bray and Morton, had died. Perhaps their deaths had opened a vacuum in Henry's confidences that he did not wish to fill. Fox and Lovell, though, were still alive, and still active in government. Judging by de Puebla's comments though, they were no longer so close to the king.[924] It is possible that de Puebla was mistaken. However, his report is backed up by de Ayala's comment that Henry wanted to be rid of the 'subjection' that was the royal council. It is therefore possible that Henry VII wanted nothing encroaching on his authority, and so shrugged off the advisors that had supported his reign from the beginning.

He would go to great lengths to ensure his authority as king was not compromised. He paid particular attention to the royal prerogative. This was the rights the king was entitled to, and included things like lands, wardships, marriages and offices. In 1508 Henry went so far as to create a new office to monitor the king's prerogatives, and this, in the eyes of W. C. Richardson, 'paved the way for the absolutism of the Tudors'.[925] In 1508 Sir Edward Belknap (d.1521) was given:

> power to enquire for, and seize for the king, all lands of persons convicted, attainted, outlawed, or waived for felony, murder or like offence, and also the king's widows who have married without licence and their lands; also power to deal with the revenues of the

[921] 'Spain: October 1507', in *CSPS, Volume 1, 1485-1509*, ed. G A Bergenroth (London, 1862), pp. 433-441. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol1/pp433-441 [accessed 1 February 2022]. No.552.

[922] Bacon, *History* in *Works,* vol 3, p.410.

[923] 'Milan: 1497', in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1912), pp. 310-341. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp310-341 [accessed 1 March 2022].

[924] Fox also had to pay £2,000 in 1504 for a general pardon after 'irregularities as custodian of episcopal lands in royal hands during vacancies'. C. S. L. Davies, 'Fox [Foxe], Richard '*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://www-oxforddnb-com.mmu.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10051?rskey=eFhbBr&result=1 (2010) [Accessed 1st March 2022]

[925] W. C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration 1485-1547*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), p.195. It 'paved the way for increased absolutism of the Tudors'. Kristin Bezio believed this 'absolutism 'was a 'fiction', but one which the Tudors maintained with use of royal progresses and pageants: 'discursive propaganda reinforcing the public claims made by the regime'. Bezio, *Staging Power*, p.25. Geoffrey Elton also believed the Tudor dynasty had a 'potential for absolutism', but claimed that it was 'always inherent in medieval kingship'. Elton, *Tudor Constitution*, p.13.

> above without accounting in the exchequer or other court, but only before two auditors to be assigned thereto by the king's letter missive under his signet… with power also to lease and dispose such lands… to seize and sell goods and chattels of persons…and to assess and levy fines touching marriage of widows… Also, the chancellor shall make powers, without further warrant, for such as Belknap shall nominate to act for him in the several counties, and the chancellor and justices shall deliver writs and make searches when required without fee; and Belknap is empowered to direct the sheriffs to assist the taking of inquisitions.[926]

Richardson noted that with this office, the royal prerogative was 'more strongly exercised' and 'more cleverly utilised' than ever before.[927] In the 'closing years of the reign no opportunity was neglected to wring money from the unfortunate subject who happened to violate established principles of feudal right'.[928] This has fuelled Henry VII's infamous reputation as a miser, since the monitoring of the prerogative was an immediate source of revenue. In 1483, Edward IV had taken less than £6,500 from his lands; by 1497 Henry VII made a profit of £12,000, rising to over £24,000 in 1504.[929] However, it is likely that the king's focus was not just on bringing in revenue. The king's treasure may have increased, but so did his authority. Richardson cited one example of a £10,000 fine issued to the earl Northumberland for the 'ravishment of Elizabeth Hastings, the king's ward'.[930] Northumberland never paid the sum, and secured a pardon after paying just three thousand pounds. If Henry had been motivated by greed alone, then he had let Northumberland off lightly. Even Richardson admits that the full ten thousand was probably never expected anyway.[931] The fine was as much about exerting the king's feudal and seigneurial rights as it was about making a significant profit, meaning he had a much greater degree of control. The prerogative office should therefore be considered more than an expression of Henry VII's avarice. It must also be considered an attempt at imposing the primacy of the king over his subjects and reinforcing crown authority.

Although Belknap monitored the prerogative and any offences against it from 1508 onwards, the office had essentially been working since 1486. In January of that year, a commission was set up to 'enquire of all lands in… Northampton, Leicester, Somerset…which…ought to have come to the king'.[932] This was followed by commissions in August 1487, June 1488, and July 1495.[933] Another

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926 *CPR: Henry VII, Vol. II, 1494-1509*, (London: Hereford Times Limited, 1916) p.591.
927 W. C. Richardson, 'The Surveyor of the King's Prerogative', *EHR*, 56(221) (1941) p.52.
928 Ibid, p.59.
929 Richardson, *Tudor Chamber*, p.13.
930 Exchequer Treasury of Receipt, Miscellaneous Books 214, p.44. Quoted in Richardson, 'Surveyor', *EHR*, p.59. 'Rauisshement of Elisabeth Hastyges the kinges warde'.
931 Ibid, p.60.
932 *CPR: Henry VII, Vol I, 1485-1494,* (London: Hereford Times Limited, 1914) p.71.
933 Ibid, p.213, p.236; *CPR, Henry VII, Vol II*, p.33.

in February 1495 charged Prince Arthur (or those under him, given that the prince was still a child) to investigate similar cases in North Wales.[934] The continuous instruction to impose the prerogative is more evidence of the king's desire to reinforce his authority. It could be argued that this was Henry establishing his control and clarifying what he actually owns, but the king's prerogatives had not been neglected under the Yorkists. This was not Henry VII attempting to recover anything lost under his predecessors.[935] Perhaps it stemmed from his status as a usurper: he needed to impose authority because his claim to the throne was weak. If this was the case, though, Henry VII was going about it the wrong way. The prerogative office proved controversial, and outlived Henry only by four years, being officially ended in 1513. The new Henry VIII recognised, in the words of Richardson, that the office 'alienat[ed] the love and loyalty of his subjects, [and] chose not to continue such objectionable practices'.[936] The chief motivation behind Henry VII's imposition of the royal prerogative then appears to have been a desire to enforce authority and rule more absolutely.

The desire for complete control feeds into the unusually high level of activity Henry displayed as king. Steven Gunn pointed out that Henry 'exercised close personal oversight of every aspect of governance, more so than most English kings before or since'.[937] He did not connect this to Henry's desire for more absolute rule, though. Nevertheless, Henry VII was personally involved in the running of government, speaking to a desire to control rather than delegate. Whereas Edward IV distributed responsibilities around his realm to those he trusted, Henry appears to have been less inclined to do so. Whilst he appointed Belknap to oversee the royal prerogative in 1508, this was in large part due to his failing health. Before 1503, it had been standard practice for the king to investigate matters concerning the prerogative personally.[938] It has been concluded that Henry only took such an active role because of his reluctance to trust his subjects. The Milanese ambassador Don Raymundo de Raymondi Soncino reported that Henry 'has no one he can trust, except his paid men at arms'.[939] He was, Soncino continued, 'most wise' but 'suspicious of everything'.[940] However, we have seen that Henry VII had more esquires of the body than Edward IV or Richard

[934] *CPR, Henry VII, Vol II,* p.29.
[935] There was a council in 1476 charged with visiting the north to 'oversee the lordships and manors in Edward's name', to investigate any 'neglected or infringed royal prerogative rights'. Alexander R. Brondarbit, *Power-Brokers and the Yorkist State 1461-1485*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020) p.58.
[936] Richardson, 'Surveyor', *EHR,* p.75. However, the 'basic principles were duly incorporated into the new scheme of Tudor revenue administration', just without the official office. Ibid, p.53.
[937] Gunn, 'Courtiers', *EHR*, p.24.
[938] Richardson, 'Surveyor', *EHR,* p.58.
[939] 'Milan: 1497', in *CSPM, 1385-1618*, ed. Allen B Hinds (London, 1912), pp. 310-341. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/milan/1385-1618/pp310-341 [accessed 11 January 2022]. No.553.
[940] Ibid.

III. This does not speak to extreme suspicion, rather a cautious and deliberate distance between king and subject. Nor does this supposed suspicion completely explain Henry's level of involvement within governance. It has been shown already that Henry had several close councillors he clearly trusted in the first two decades of his reign, and so a different explanation must be sought for his reluctance to delegate. Arguably Henry VII's involvement in governance stemmed from a desire to increase both his personal control and crown authority.

He certainly comes across as a monarch who oversees all aspects of rule and will suffer no infringement upon his rights as king. In 1504 de Puebla noted:

> it is the habit of this monarch to conduct all his affairs with much gravity and deliberation. And until his answer has been clearly given the terms to be made cannot be entered upon or spoken of.[941]

In July 1498, de Puebla had also commented that Henry 'spends all the time he is not in public, or in his Council, in writing the accounts of his expenses with his own hand'.[942] This was no doubt an exaggeration, as Steven Gunn has pointed out.[943] It 'discounted the king's hunting, hawking, tennis playing and… gambling'.[944] However, whilst it is an exaggeration that Henry spent any and all spare time poring over financial records, it should not be dismissed. De Pubela was clearly left with an impression of a king who was extraordinarily involved with the minutiae of governance. This does much to restore the authority of the monarchy, since it suggests that the power of government is held directly in the king's hands. Whilst it had suited Edward IV to delegate responsibility, it suited Henry VII to do the opposite.

As well as this, the king and those around him were, as Gunn noted, 'perpetually busy'.[945] The royal council met daily to discuss governance and lawsuits, and this did not pause when the king travelled. When he was on progress, the council continued to sit, dealing with over 200 suits a year by 1504.[946] His councillors travelled with him. This made 'his court a centre of government to a degree unusual in a monarchy with institutions as solidly developed as those of fifteenth century

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941 'Spain: October 1504', in *CSPS, Volume 1, 1485-1509*, ed. G A Bergenroth (London, 1862), pp. 331-337. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol1/pp331-337 [accessed 11 January 2022]. No.401.
942 'Spain: July 1498, 21-31', in *CSPS, Volume 1, 1485-1509*, ed. Bergenroth, no.210.
943 Gunn, 'Court of Henry VII', in *Court as a Stage*, eds. Gunn & Janse, p.136.
944 Ibid.
945 Ibid, p.137.
946 Ibid.

England'.[947] This gives us a sense of government being solely under the king's control. Even in 1492, whilst Henry was in France with a regency government in England, most grants were still authorised by the king himself.[948] We could expect the regency government to take care of business such as this whilst the king was away, and that Henry VII continued implies that government was not easily separated from the person of the king. This was not always the case previously, and it is illuminating to compare this to Henry VI's regency government. In 1453, with the king incapacitated, government continued for six months without him at its head. It was only the death of the chancellor, Archbishop John Kemp, in March 1454 that necessitated the duke of York's protectorate. Had Kemp not died, it is possible that government could have continued until Henry VI regained his senses. There is not this sense in the reign of Henry VII, even when he is overseas. His level of involvement and activity implied that the king was the head of government.

Thus Henry VII would seem to have been attempting a more authoritarian style of rule than his predecessors. Though this has in the past been put down to his inability to fully trust those around him, it is equally as likely that he was reluctant to relinquish any part of his royal authority. Whilst this may have been a result of his own character as Grummit suggested, it is also plausible that it was an attempt at restoring the divinity, strength, and authority of the monarchy. In this way, he was working not just to secure his own reign, but to secure the crown itself so it could pass successfully to his son.

Persistence of Commonwealth Ideology

Ideas about commonwealth and rule had weakened the monarchy over the course of the fifteenth century. Notions of commonwealth, populism and meritocracy had become more powerful than the king, and this did not disappear after 1485. At Katherine of Aragon's entry into London, for example, the princess was greeted by a Roman senator called Policy, who represented good government, keeping an 'eye' on the commonwealth.[949] Policy served as a reminder that the king still served the commonwealth. However, just as commonwealth ideology had changed over the course of the fifteenth century, it began to change once again under Tudor rule. Whilst it remained an important ideology and one that was still frequently referred to, ideas of commonwealth were no longer quite so pre-eminent as before. There appears to have been a reversion to more traditional

[947] Ibid.
[948] M. M. Condon, 'An Anachronism with Intent? Henry VII's Council Ordinance of 1491/2', in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages* ed. Ralph A. Griffiths & James Sherbourne, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986) p.235.
[949] *Receyt*, ed. Kipling, p.17. 'ihe'

ideas of commonwealth, where it was something for the king to look after rather than be held accountable to. In this way commonwealth ideology persisted into the sixteenth century, but in a different guise.

In the reigns of Henry VI and the Yorkist kings, as argued in chapter three, crimes against the commonwealth were viewed as seriously as treason. This seems to have disappeared under Henry VII, as seen in the sermon published by Bishop Alcock in 1497:

> You know right well brethren that credence is not to be given to no proclamation but to those which come by the king's high commandment and under his seal... Proclamations [have] been made in divers places of the cities and land, to the intent that they should be well understood. To the transgressors and breakers thereof, sometimes the penalty is treason, sometimes death, imprisonment and loss of their goods as the law assigns in that behalf.[950]

For Alcock, to forge a royal proclamation was treason. Tellingly, it was treason because the king's authority was God's authority: the king's wishes 'come from the king of all kings, almighty god'.[951] To subvert the authority of the king was to insult God, and for Alcock this was the crux of the issue. As was shown earlier, earlier in the fifteenth century, treason appears to have been linked to crimes that damaged the commonwealth. Royal soldiers had refused to fight rebels who claimed to work for the good of the common weal, and accusations against the dukes of Somerset rested largely on how they damaged the commonwealth. Even though there was no official treasons act that stated as such, crimes against the commonwealth seem to have been viewed as a treason of their own.[952] By 1497, though, there was no mention of commonwealth at all. As earlier chapters showed, accusations of treason generally mentioned in one way or another how the commonwealth had been put at risk or damaged. Therefore, we could reasonably expect Alcock to do the same. However, he only focused on the connection between the king and God, describing a crime against one as a crime against the other. It was an unforgivable crime - Alcock mentioned how:

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[950] Alcock and de Worde, *Sermo,* no pagination. 'Ye know ryght wel brethren that credence is not to be geven to no proclamac[i]on but to [th]e whyche comyth by the kynges hyghe co[m]maundement & undir his seale…Proclamac[i]ons ben made in dyvers places of [th]e cytees & londe to the entent they sholde be wel understande. To the transgressours & brekers therof somtyme the penaltye is treason, somtyme dethe, imprisonment & lose of theyr godes as the lawe assigneth in that behalf.'

[951] Ibid, no pagination. 'come from the kyng of all kynges almyghty god'

[952] The treason laws had been extended in 1398, but only mentioned the king. 'Everyone who encompasses or purposes the death of the king, or plots to depose him….or who raises the people and rides against the king to make war…shall be adjudged a traitor of high treason…'. It was also treason to attempt to repeal 'any of the judgements given against statutes or ordinances made in…parliament'. 'Extension of the law of treason, 1398', *English Historical Documents: Vol IV*, ed. A. R. Myers, https://www.englishhistoricaldocuments.com/document/view.html?id=1126 [Accessed 15th April 2022]

> though it be so that certain persons be excused for certain causes in the law politic, yet in the law of nature and the law of God they be not excused, having their wits and being of lawful age…[953]

Whilst those guilty of treason could be forgiven by law, they could not be forgiven in the eyes of God. Again, this served to reinforce the divinity of the king, since his authority - once tied to the commonwealth - was now tied only to God. It also allowed a return to more traditional ideology surrounding commonwealth and its position relative to the king. As Salisbury had stated in the twelfth century, the king was a guardian of the commonwealth and no more, and this is the case once again at the close of the fifteenth century.

The connection between commonwealth and treason had begun to diminish soon after Henry's accession to the throne. In 1487, Henry faced the first pretender to his throne, culminating in the Battle of Stoke Field. In parliament that November, an act of attainder was passed against one of the leaders of the rebellion, John, earl of Lincoln (c.1460-1487). The attainder referenced the commonwealth, but Lincoln's crimes against the king took precedence:

> on 16 June last, with banners displayed, he levied war against the person of his sovereign and natural liege lord, and gave him battle with great and powerful forces, traitorously and against all truth, knighthood, honour, allegiance, faith and loyalty, fully intending to have slain, murdered and cruelly destroyed our aforesaid liege lord… to the complete and greatest hazard of the noble and royal person of our said liege lord, and the destruction, dishonour and overthrow of the whole realm. For which malicious, great and heinous offence, committed not only against our said sovereign lord but also against the universal and common weal of this realm, heavy and grievous punishment is necessary.[954]

Though the commonwealth was still important enough to be mentioned, it was placed last. The connection between the death of the king and the 'overthrow of the whole realm' was not the focus of the attainder. Whilst treason and commonwealth were still connected, this attainder shows the connection weakening. By the time we get to Alcock in 1497, it was altogether removed in order to focus on the connection between king and God.

[953] Alcock and de Worde *Sermo*, no pagination. 'Thogh it be so y[a]t certen persones be excusiyd for certeyn causes in the law politike: yet in the lawe of nature & the lawe of god they be not excusid havyg ther wytts & beyng of lawful aege…'
[954]' Henry VII: November 1487', *PROME,* [accessed 11 January 2022].

This was a return to the more traditional hierarchy between God, king and commonwealth, and it did not stop there. In the same parliament that attainted Lincoln, for example, John Morton's sermon cited the commonwealth but did not grant it particular significance. Instead, it was linked specifically to both God and the king. In the sermon, Morton spoke of two categories of peace. The first an internal peace, with oneself and towards other men. The second, though:

> is political, which has as its object the common weal, for which three things are essential: first, the reverence and dread of God among king and people; second, the loving provision of the king; thirdly, the obedience and respect of subjects to the prince.[955]

The commonwealth resting in obedience to the king and reverence to God suggests that as an ideology, it was no longer being presented as a powerful political force of its own. Furthermore, Morton's sermon shows a return to traditional ideas about subject obedience. Chapter three showed that there was a shift from obedience to loyalty (in 1437, John Stafford encouraged loyalty rather than demanding obedience as Edmund Stafford had done in 1397). Under Tudor rule there was once again a focus on obedience, and this reflects the return to more traditional ideas about commonwealth.

This traditional hierarchy was also emphasised by Katherine of Aragon's entrance into London. At the first pageant, Saint Katherine told the princess that Policy was the ruler of a 'goodly castle' and 'without whose help all they that think to reign or long to prosper labour all in vain'.[956] Policy was therefore presented as an essential figure for good governance. When Katherine reached the second pageant, Policy told her 'that to the commonweal I have a singular eye'.[957] Because she was possessed of virtue and noblesse - 'two things to the commonweal necessary' - she 'seem right apt to have authority'.[958] In this we can see a lingering sense of meritocracy. Policy's speech showed how the commonwealth remained significant into the sixteenth century, but the placement of the speech within the pageants also reflected the return to traditional hierarchy. Policy's speech came after the speeches of Saint Ursula and Saint Katherine, where Katherine of Aragon was urged to remember Christ. It was then followed by Katherine's journey through the spheres of the sun and the moon before reaching the Throne of Heaven. Castle Policy was only the first step on her

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955 Ibid.

956 *Receyt*, ed. Kipling, p.14. 'goodly castell'; 'without whoes helpe all they that thinke to reyne or longe to prospere labour all in vayne'.

957 Ibid, p.17. 'To the comonweall I have a singuler ihe [eye] 'Other versions of the manuscript used 'joy 'instead of 'eye'.

958 Ibid. She 'seme right apte to have auctoryte'.

celestial journey, and so whilst Policy - and Noblesse and Virtue, also at Castle Policy - were all important, they were at the bottom of the hierarchy.

The fourth pageant displayed this clearly. Katherine was met by the angel Raphael, who asked:

> Who taught the prophets and the patriarchs the unity of God and trinity and person? Who informed them in the marvellous works of Christ's incarnation, but angel alone? Angel taught the providence that God in his throne hath over all creatures, as well low as high, which providence diverse philosophers deny.[959]

God had precedence over all creatures in Raphael's speech, and is the source of all knowledge. The primacy of God over everything else thus reflected the return to traditional hierarchy. Although the commonwealth was still significant enough to be mentioned and drawn on in the pageants, it was not the most significant part of Katherine's journey.

The author who recorded the pageants also reiterated this hierarchy when describing the 'company' assembled as Katherine rode into London. First was mentioned the 'spirituality' of England, 'the archbishop of York, with other bishops; the dean of York, with other prelates of the Church'.[960] Only after this did the author then mention the long list of lords temporal, at the head of which came Prince Henry, Duke of York. The king's son, therefore, not only came second to the prominent members of the clergy like the Archbishop of York, but also the lesser ones, like the Dean of York and the 'other prelates'. The least of the churchmen came before the king's own son. This was further emphasised by the pageant designer in the first display. At this, Saints Katherine and Ursula spoke to the princess, claiming that Christ must always be her 'first' 'spouse'.[961] Saint Katherine spoke:

> And as I hope you to Christ your first make so I have purveyed a second spouse true, but you for him the first shall not forsake; Love your first spouse chief, and after that your new.[962]

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[959] Ibid, pp.21-22. 'Who taught the prophetes and the patriarkes the unyte of God and trynyte or persone? Who enformed theim in the marvelous werkes of Cristis incarnation, but angell alone? Angell taught the providence that God in his trone hath over all creatures, as well lowe as highe, which provydence dyvers philosophers denye.'

[960] *Receyt*, ed. Kipling, p.12. 'tharchebushop of York, with othir bushoppes; the Deane of York, with othir prelates of the chirch'.

[961] Ibid, p.14.

[962] Ibid. 'And as I holpe you to Crist your first make so have I purveyed a secunde spouse trewe, but ye for him the first shal not forsake; Love your firste spouse chef, and aftir that your newe'.

Saint Ursula also called Arthur Katherine's second spouse. When the princess reached the final pageant, the figure of Honour - a 'godhood sitting full gloriously'- urged her to keep God in her 'special remembrance'.[963] The god then blessed Katherine, giving her the 'same blessing that gave my well beloved children of Israel':

> Blessed be the fruit of your belly, your sustenance and fruits shall increase and multiply, your rebellious enemies I shall put in your hand, increasing in honour both you and your land.[964]

This reinforces that God and Church come first. Only by keeping God in 'special remembrance' would Katherine be blessed with children and honour, both of which would serve the 'land'. Once more, the king and Church are at the top of the body politic. Although the commonwealth had a role in these pageants, it was ultimately not one of the utmost significance.

Katherine's pageant differed from those of queens before her. Previously, pageants did not mention the commonwealth and were fairly traditional, containing speeches by historical figures and saints relevant to the intended queen. Margaret of Anjou's 1456 entry to Coventry contained speeches by famous conquerers such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar.[965] It was ended by a display of Saint Margaret slaying a dragon.[966] This pageant treated Margaret as a king, and so is notable. However, it remained largely traditional. It was a conventional king's pageant, with the only difference being that it was delivered for a queen. That of Elizabeth Woodville into London in 1465 was also conventional. This pageant conformed to gender expectations, with the queen being met by Saint Elizabeth and Mary Cleophas, the twice-married sister of the Virgin Mary. The inclusion of the latter was a direct link to Elizabeth Woodville, who had been previously married. The citizens of London 'took the marital status of the king's bride on board and loyally celebrated it as a compliment'.[967] Thus previous pageants were, by and large, conventional despite being tailored for different queens and different circumstances. Katherine of Aragon's 1501 entry differed from these, though, because it was not a typical pageant. Not only did it reinforce the hierarchy between the commonwealth and the king, the pageant had Burgundian influence. Serving as inspiration for the pageant was Jean Molinet's *Le Trosne d'Honneur*: the elegy written in honour of Philip the

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[963] Ibid, pp.28-9. A 'godhod sittyng full gloryously'; 'speciall remembraunce'.
[964] Ibid, p.29. 'Blissed be the frute of your bely, your sustenuce and frutes shall encrease and multiplye, your rebellious enemyes I shall put in your hande, encreasyng in honour bothe you and your lande.'
[965] *The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor*'*s Register,* ed. Mary Dormer Harris, (London: Early English Text Society, 1907) p.287.
[966] Ibid, p.291.
[967] Anne F. Sutton & Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'The Entry of Queen Elizabeth Woodville over London Bridge, 24 May 1465 '*The Ricardian* 19 (2009) p.9.

Good, duke of Burgundy (1396-1467) for Charles the Bold (1433-1477).[968] Like Katherine in the pageant, Philip 'ascends the planetary spheres of the cosmos to reach the Throne of Heaven'.[969] As for the throne itself, the pageant 'carefully imitates Molinet's description of the Throne of Honour above the cosmos'.[970] As Hilary M. Carey believed, this was the 'most significant cultural performance of the king's reign'.[971]

The celestial journey Katherine embarked on during the pageant reflected the fact that 'astrology formed an integral part of the Renaissance worldview'.[972] The anonymous pageant designer, Carey said, 'decided that astronomy and astrology would provide a central frame of reference for both Princess Katherine… and Prince Arthur'.[973] Both were associated with stars and constellations (Katherine with Ursa Minor and Venus, and Arthur with Arcturus). At the third pageant, there was an 'artful cosmic mechanism' above the heads of the characters, which showed the twelve signs of the zodiac.[974] It was in the shape of a volvell, which was an astrological tool used for showing the waxing and waning of the moon.[975] This shows that the designer of the pageants had an understanding of both astrology and astronomy, and this was part of continental Renaissance culture.[976] However, as Sydney Anglo claimed in 1963, 'many of the devices and images employed during this entry have a double or even three-fold significance'.[977] The pageant may have been as much about Katherine's role as a devout and pious woman as it was about the cultural awareness of the Tudors, or the divinity of the throne Katherine was marrying into. It may have been designed equally to show Henry VII as a patron of arts and culture, to show Katherine of Aragon as a devout and pious wife, and to show the crown of England as powerful and divine. The role of the commonwealth within these pageants was certainly not accidental, and it was not something that

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[968] *Receyt* ed. Kipling, p. xvi.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Ibid.
[971] Hilary M. Carey, 'Henry VII's Book of Astrology and the Tudor Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 65(3) (2012) p.662.
[972] Ibid, p.662.
[973] Ibid, p.696.
[974] Sydney Anglo, 'The London Pageants for the Reception of Katherine or Aragon: November 1501', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute,* 26(1963), p.65.
[975] Ibid. 'The volvell was an astronomical instrument…very widely used. It was made of cut-out circles of vellum of varying size pierced at their centre and made to revolve freely with a knot as their common axis. The circumference of the circles were marked variously with the hours of the day, the days of the months, the months of the year, and the zodiacal signs, and the device could be regulated to show the sign in which the moon and sun reside, the waxing and waning of the moon, the ebb and flood of the tides and so on'.
[976] *A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance*, ed. Brendan Dooley, (Leiden: Brill, 2014) p.1, p.3. Astrology was 'part of the daily lives of people from one end of Europe to the other', with 'some of the first printed sheets in Europe...in one way or another related to astrology'. p.1. There was 'popular astrology', which 'flowed along with many other medieval traditions tied to the worlds of planting and curing', and there was 'learned astrology', which 'drew upon Ptolomy's *Trarabilos'* and other ancient works.
[977] Ibid, p.56.

had been included in other pageants for earlier queens.[978] The 1501 pageants therefore had multiple meanings, but significantly, show that the commonwealth had reverted to a more traditional role and position beneath the king.

Commonwealth in Literature and Performance

The more traditional role of the commonwealth in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries can be seen in literature and performance. Two sources are particularly revealing: Henry Medwall's (1462-1502) play *Fulgens and Lucres* (c.1497), and Edmund Dudley's (1462-1510) *The Tree of Commonwealth* (1509).

John Tiptoft's *Declamation of Noblesse* has already been explored in chapter three. It asked how nobility was bestowed and whether it was earned or inherited. Tiptoft drew a connection between nobility and protecting the commonwealth, with nobility something that could not necessarily be inherited. Actions in defence of the commonwealth were much more important and more worthy of worship. He had deviated from Buonaccorso's original in suggesting that work for the commonwealth deserved worship, and this may have been linked to ideas of kingship. Instead of worshiping nobility blindly, worship was to be earned through one's actions on behalf of the realm. Around 1497, under Henry VII, the dramatist Henry Medwall wrote the earliest secular play in English, one that drew on Tiptoft's translation of Buonaccorso.[979] However, though Medwall took Tiptoft as inspiration, he removed all mention of worship from his opening paragraph. Tiptoft had written how Fulgens' fame was 'spread to his great worship' but Medwall wrote only that there was a 'noble senator and as I remember Fulgens was his name, which had a daughter of noble fame'.[980] By removing this reference to worship, Medwall took away Tiptoft's focus on worshipping those who served the commonwealth, and reserved worship only for God. Medwall's play indeed had a larger focus on God than Tiptoft's: Fulgens' first words in Medwall's play were an acknowledgement of the primacy of God: '…And think that I am bound to yield and pay great praise and thanks to the high king of whom proceedith and groweth every good thing'.[981] From the

[978] There was no mention of the commonwealth in Margaret's Coventry pageant.
[979] Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, p.85.
[980] *Declamation of Noblesse* printed in full in Appendix 1, Rosamond Mitchell, *John Tiptoft (1427-1470)* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1938) p.215. 'sprede to his grete worship'; Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, (New York: George D. Smith, 1920) p.3. 'Nobil senatour and as I reme[m]ber Fulgens was his name whiche had a doughter of nobil fame'
[981] Ibid, p.8. 'And thynke that I am bound to yeld and pay grete prayse and thankes to the hye kynge of whom p[ro]cedith and growith euery gode thing…'

very beginning, Medwall's play reflected the focus on God that had declined in the reigns of the Yorkist kings, and pulled away from the focus on the commonwealth.

The largest difference between Medwall's play and Tiptoft's version, though, is in the decision of the title character Lucres. The decision of who she will marry rests on the question of nobility, and which of her two suitors is the more noble. Tiptoft left his Lucrece's decision open, with the reader never discovering who she decided upon. Medwall, however, had Lucres choose to marry Gayus Flamineus, the lower-born of the suitors. Initially this seems to be in keeping with the ideas Tiptoft put forward, that nobility depended on more than just status and high birth. However, her decision is not presented as one that should be agreed with. Lucres' father Fulgens noted early in the play that the nobleman Cornelius would be the better choice, since 'none in this city know better than I of what great birth or substance you be'.[982] Gayus too admitted that there is 'not with in all this city a man borne of a better blood' than Cornelius.[983] It was this, combined with Corenlius' wealth, that prompted a servant character referred to only as 'B' to note that his 'master be worthy to be a king' based on his birth and wealth.[984] Despite this, Lucres chose Gayus. The two servant characters - A and B - marvelled at her decision. Turning to the audience, A asked if this was how all women choose their husbands: 'Now say you good woman, is it your guise to choose all your husbands that wise?'.[985] B noted that this was 'the fear'. It was made clear that A and B did not agree with Lucres, and believed that the more noble in birth should have won her hand. The only reason Cornelius did not win Lucres was because his 'life is all dissolute and rotted in sin'.[986] B then closed the play by stating that it was more important for those of noble blood to be virtuous: 'sin is to be reproved more in them for the degree than in other persons such as be of poor kin and birth'.[987] This, he claimed, was 'the cause principal' of the play.[988] The play does not suggest that nobility was a concept separate from blood and ancestry. On the contrary, it suggested that it was imperative for those of noble blood to uphold virtue in order to prevent others from making the same decision as Lucres, and picking the lower-born man over the higher. Medwall's play thereby suggests that ideas of commonwealth and meritocracy were in decline by 1497.

Furthermore, earlier in the play it was categorically stated that Lucres' decision was not a definitive answer on what constitutes nobility. Lucres said:

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[982] Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, (New York: George D. Smith, 1920) p.11. 'Non in this cyte knowith better than I of what grete birth or sustaunce ye be'.
[983] Ibid, p.22.
[984] Ibid, p.24.
[985] Ibid, p.74. 'Now say ye gode woman is it your gyse to chose all your husbondis that wyse?'
[986] Ibid, p.72. 'lyffe is all dissolute and rotyde in syn'.
[987] Ibid, p.75. 'syn is to be reprouyd more in them for the degree than in other parsons such as be of pour kyn and birth'.
[988] Ibid.

That I should this question of noblesse define
It is a great matter which as seemeth me
Pertaineth to a philosopher or else a divine
Now be it since the choice of this matter is mine
I can be content under certain protestation
When that I have heard you to say mine opinion
Lo, this wise I mean and thus I do intend
That whatsoever sentence I give betwixt you two
After mine own fantasy it shall not extend
To any other person, I will that it be so
For why no man else hath therein a do
It may not be noted for a general precedent…[989]

Gayus echoed this, saying that the 'sentence shall touch no man but us twain'.[990] Thus although Lucres picked Gayus in the end, the message of the play was not that those who were lower born may be more noble in essence. In this way the play rejected the ideas about meritocracy that Tiptoft cultivated in his version. This reflected the presence of commonwealth ideology and meritocracy in the closing years of the fifteenth century. Although ideas of both commonwealth and meritocracy continued, they were far less prominent than before. Where they were present, such as in this play, it was not always in a positive light.

The Tree of Commonwealth is another source showing a return to traditional ideas of commonwealth, where the king and Church come first. This was written by Edmund Dudley during his imprisonment after the death of Henry VII in 1509. Although written in the early days of Henry VIII's reign - and thus beyond the scope of this thesis - Dudley's ideas did not develop overnight, and thus represent ideas circulating at the end of Henry VII's reign.[991] The *Tree* was an attempt at securing his release and winning the favour of the new king. As such Dudley must have believed

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[989] Ibid, p.60. 'That I sholde this question of nobles diffine / It is a grete matter whiche as semyth me / Pertayneth to a philosopher or ellis a deuyne / Now be it sith the choyse of this matter is myne / I can be content vnder certayne p[ro]testacyon / Whan that I haue harde you to say myne opinion / Lo this wyse I mene and thus I do intende /That what so euer sente[n]ce I gyue betwyxt you two /After myne owne fantasie it shall not extende / To ony other p[er]son I wyll that it be so /For why no man ellis hath theryn a do/ It may not be notyd for a generall precedent…'
[990] Ibid. 'The sentence shall touche no man but vs twayne'.
[991] Dudley's *Tree* contains ideas similar to Alcock's in his 1497 sermon at St Paul's, discussed on p.208. Alcock described how there was a hierarchy through which God's blessings filtered down through the king and the church to the people, and how laymen could not question the anointed. In a similar vein Dudley wrote about how the people have their place and should not try to change it, as discussed on p.242. The *Tree* also seems to be a precursor to Thomas Elyot's work discussed on p.203, where the people again occupied a place of obedience and subservience.

that the new king would appreciate the ideas within the text. Dudley pointed out at the start that his purpose was ‘first the remembrance of God and of the faith of his Holy Church…secondly of some conditions…necessary in every prince’ and only ‘thirdly of the Tree of common wealth, which toucheth people of every degree…’.[992] Although the commonwealth was still important enough in 1509 to be written about by Dudley, it was no longer more important than God, the Church, or the king.

Dudley’s entire point was that, although the king must protect and defend the commonwealth, ultimately the people were bound to obey their king. This furthers the point made earlier about the return to demands of subject obedience. This also explains why the *Tree* has been described as a treatise on the benefits of absolute monarchy; it did not give the commonwealth the precedence it had during the reigns of Henry VI and the Yorkist kings. Indeed, although A. J. Pollard did not specifically consider Dudley’s placement of the commonwealth beneath the king and God, he believed that the text reflected the shift ‘back towards the concept of *dominium regale*’.[993] Although, as Starkey pointed out, Dudley ‘could have influenced nobody’ because the *Tree* was not published until 1859, the contents should not be dismissed.[994] The fact that Dudley was writing to curry favour with the new king shows these were ideas he expected the king to share. Neither Pollard nor Starkey connected the *Tree* to any kind of Tudor restoration of divinity or authority. However, the treatise shows that Henry VII’s attempts to revert to more traditional ideas about government and commonwealth were at least in part successful. It reflects the traditional hierarchy, and ideas of autocracy and subject obedience. In this way, the ideas within *The Tree of Commonwealth* are much more akin to John of Salisbury than, for example, the ideas of John Russell or William Worcester.

The *Tree of Commonwealth* painted a picture of the king as an autocratic ruler. Dudley, early in the treatise, implored the king to remember that: ‘your request to any of your subjects is a straight commandment’.[995] At the same time, it was ‘most necessary that a [Christian] king have the love and the fear of God before his eyes, by whom all things do reign’.[996] This both reinforced the traditional hierarchy of the commonwealth as subject to the king, and the authoritarianism of the king himself: there is nothing above the king save God. This was furthered by Dudley’s instance

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[992] Edmund Dudley, *The Tree of Commonwealth* (Manchester: C. Simms & Company, 1859) p.1. 'Ffirste the remembrance of God and of the faithe of his holie churche…secondarilie of some condic[i]ons…necessarie in ev[er]y prince…’ and only ‘thirdlie, of the Tree of com[m]on wealth, w[hi]ch toucheth people of ev[er]y degree…’.
[993] A. J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399-1509* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2000) p.234.
[994] David Starkey, ‘England’ in *The Renaissance in National Context,* ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.152.
[995] Dudley, *Tree*, p.5. ‘yo[u]r request to any of yo[u]r subjects is a streight com[m]aundem[t]’.
[996] Ibid, p.6.

that the king's power is drawn only from God. Dudley described four roots that anchor the tree of commonwealth. The first was 'the root of justice, without the which this tree of commonwealth may not continue'.[997] Justice was therefore imperative, but it could come only from the 'sovereign lord's self, for the whole authority thereof is given to him by God'.[998] Thus, the authority given to the king by God is a principal foundation of the realm. As a result, the commonwealth is reliant upon the king and his divinity, a departure from the ideologies prevalent before Henry VII took the throne.

Dudley further stressed that the commonwealth was bound to the king and not the other way around. He wrote how:

> For as the subjects are bound to their prince... to love, dread, serve and obey him, or else to be punished by him, as straightly is the prince bound to God to maintain and support the commonwealth of his subjects. And all they abide and see the punishment of God, and God hath ordained their prince to protect them, and they to obey their prince.[999]

The commonwealth and the king were no longer on an equal footing. In the last decades of the fifteenth century, the commonwealth and the king were viewed almost as equals, evidenced by the shift in perceptions of treason. In 1471, Alcock had claimed the king was 'bound' to the needs of the commonwealth.[1000] By 1509, though the king was 'ordained' to protect the commonwealth, he was not bound to it in the same way the commonwealth was bound to him. In this way the king was a more autocratic ruler, bound to God alone.

This is linked to Dudley's descriptions of the commonwealth of England as a tree. The traditional hierarchy between God, king, and commonwealth underlines both the subservience of the subjects and their reliance upon the king. The root of the tree is love of God:

> The commonwealth of this realm… may be resembled to a fair and a great mighty tree, growing in a fair field or pasture... Even so all the subjects of that realm where this tree of commonwealth doth surely grow, be thereby holden and relieved from the highest degree to the lowest. But for a truth this tree will not long stand or grow upright in this realm or in any

[997] Ibid, p.10. 'The roote of justice, w[i]thout the w[i]ch this tree of com[m]on wealth maie not continue'
[998] Ibid, p.11. 'Sou[er]aigne lords self, for thole aucthoritie thereof is given to him by god…'
[999] Ibid, pp.8-9. 'For as the subiectes are bounde to theire prince…to loue, dreade, serue and obey him, or else to be punished by him, as straightlie is the prince bounde to god to maintaine and supporte…the com[m]on wealth of his subiectes. And all they abide and see the punishment of god, and god hath ordained theire Prince to protect them, and they to obey theire prince.'
[1000] *Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church,* ed. Sheppard, p.275. Mentioned in chapter one.

> other without… strong roots… The principal and chief root of this tree in every Christian realm must be the love of God, and the love of God is nothing else, but to know him and gladly to observe his laws and commandment as his true and faithful people.[1001]

However, this love of God can stem only from the king:

> You will say... the bishops and they of the spirituality have special charge of this root and not the prince. Yes, verily, the prince is the ground out of the which this root must chiefly grow, for that it is he that doth appoint and make the bishops. And if the prince in these rooms ordain virtuous men, this root will keep. And if he ordain thereto vicious men... it will wither and decay.[1002]

Thus even when the primary strength of the commonwealth came from God, it was linked inextricably to the king. The commonwealth was therefore reliant upon the king in a way that it had not been in the later decades of the fifteenth century.

Dudley presented the commonwealth as completely subservient to and reliant upon the king:

> And for the study, pain, diligence and labour that the Prince thus taketh for his subjects to keep them in quietness and surety, they must, from the highest degree to the lowest, owe unto him their true fidelity and allegiance, honour and reverence, and to be obedient to all his royal and lawful commandments… And to be ready and diligent to the uttermost of their powers with body and goods in the rescue of him and of his Realm, and to yield and pay unto him truly all rights, revenues and casualties, without fraud or coven: and this done, this root of concord is well fixed between the prince and his subjects.[1003]

[1001] Dudley, *Tree*, p.9. ‘The com[m]on wealth of this realme…maye be resembled to a faire and a greate mightie tree, growing in a faire feilde or pasture…Even so all the subiectes of that realme where this tree of com[m]on wealth doth surelie growe, be thereby holpen and relieved from the highest degree to the lowest. But for a troth this tree will not longe stande or growe vprighte in this realme or in any other w[i]thout…stronge rootes…The principall and chiefe roote of this tree in e[v]ery [christian] realme must be the love of god, and the love of god is nothing els, but to know him and gladlie to observue his lawes and com[m]aundm[ent] as his true and faithfull people.’

[1002] Ibid. 'Ye will say… the bisshops and they of the spiritualtie haue speciall chardge of this roote, and not the prince. Yes, verelie, the prince is the grounde out of the w[i]ch this roote must chieflie growe, for that it is he that doth appointe and make the bisshops. And if the prince in theise roomes ordaine vertuous men, this roote will keepe. And if he ordaine thereto vicious men... yt will wyther and decaie.’

[1003] Ibid, pp.16-17. ‘And for the studie, paine, diligence and labour that the Prince thus taketh for his subiects to kepe them in quietnes and suertie, they must, from the highest degree to the loweste, owe vnto him theire true fidellitiie & allegiaunce, honor and reverence, and to be obedient to all his royall and lawfull com[m]aundem[ts]... And to be redie and dilligente to the vttermost of their poweres w[i]th bodie and goodes in the reskewe of him and of his Realme, and to yelde and paie vnto him trulie all righs revenues and casualties, w[i]thout fraud or coven: and this done, this roote of concorde is well fixed between the prince & his subiects’.

Although the people and the commonwealth were important in ensuring the peace of the realm - concord was ‘rooted in the commonality’ - their role was primarily one of obedience. Dudley wrote how the commons should ‘not murmur nor grudge to live in labour and pain’.[1004] Contrast this with John Russell’s 1484 comparison of the commons and the sea. Russell stressed the vulnerability of the great lords to the ‘ebb and flow’ of the people.[1005] Dudley instead put the people in their rightful place and was careful to suggest that they not grow too far above their station:

> let not them presume above their own degree, nor let any of them presume or counterfeit the state of his better, nor let them in any wise exceed in their apparel or diet.[1006]

Therefore, whilst the commonwealth was afforded a place of importance in Dudley’s writing, it was vastly different to the position of the commonwealth in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

That said, it is possible to discern in the *Tree of Commonwealth* the mixing of old ideologies with the new, more humanist, ideologies that continued into the sixteenth century. There can be seen in Dudley’s text ideas about meritocracy and common responsibility that were carried over from the fifteenth century. The four roots that secure the tree of commonwealth can be seen as the responsibilities of all in society: the king is the root of justice, the knights, earls, barons and dukes are the root of chivalry, and the people are the root of peace. Dudley wrote how different fruits grow on each root, and can only be eaten by certain groups of people:

> Shall every man take or pull from this tree at his liberty of every of these fruits…? Nay, truly these fruits must be taken discretely, and as oftentimes as the personage requireth, or else they will do more harm than good.[1007]

Of the first fruit:

> which is honourable dignity, there may no manner of the subjects, spiritual or temporal, presume to take one piece of this fruit by his own power or authority, but must have it by

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[1004] Ibid. ‘Nit murmur nor grudge to liue in labor and paine’.
[1005] *Grants, Etc. from the Crown During the Reign of Edward V, from the Original Docket Book* ed. John Gough Nichols, (London: J. R. Nichols and Sons, 1854) p.xlii.
[1006] Ibid, p.19. ‘Let not them p[re]sume above their owne degree, nor let anie of them presume or counterfet the state of his better, nor let them in anie wise exceede in their apparell or dyet’.
[1007] Ibid, p.25. ‘Shall eu[er]y man take or pull from this tree at his lib[er]tie of eu[er]y of theis fruites...? Naie, trulie, theis fruits must be taken discreetlie, and as oftentimes as the p[er]sonage requireth, or els they will doe more harme then good.'

deliverance of his sovereign only. Therefore the whole sort of this fruit is ordained and showed for himself and where it please him to dispose it.[1008]

The second fruit, worldly prosperity, can be taken only by the dukes, earls, barons and knights that ensure chivalry; the third fruit, tranquility, is 'most necessary' for the commonality, and the fourth fruit, good example, is 'reserved' for the clergy.[1009] This links to the idea that everyone in a commonwealth shares responsibility. Presiding over all of this is an obedience to God and the king, who take precedence above all. This is a mixture of both humanist and traditional commonwealth ideology. Thus, Dudley's *Tree of Commonwealth* was representative of the changing ideologies after 1485.

In an attempt at bringing back the authority and divinity of the monarchy, the commonwealth needed to once again be subject to the authority of the king. However, such ideologies do not disappear overnight, and that of the commonwealth was so prominent that it was never going to disappear completely. Thus, the *Tree of Commonwealth*, and Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* (as well as Katherine of Aragon's pageants and other parliamentary sermons) show that commonwealth ideology continued past Henry VII's reign. However, these also illustrate that it had a more traditional role, being placed firmly behind both king and God.

Conclusion

John of Salisbury had described the state as a body, with the king as the head and the Church as the soul.[1010] During the reign of Henry VII, there was a return to this kind of thinking. Although ideas about meritocracy and commonwealth persisted, the monarchy in 1509 had almost completely returned to the more traditional hierarchy that kings in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century would have recognised. At Henry VII's funeral, when his 'body was put into the earth', there was a cry in a 'loud voice' of 'vive le roy Henry le hutiesme' [long live king Henry VIII].[1011] This was new; whilst cries of 'the king is dead' were common, it was the focus on the new monarch that was unusual. Cries of 'the king is dead, long live the king' had been first shouted at the funeral of Charles VIII in France in 1498, but never before in England.[1012] It was an acknowledgement that

[1008] Ibid. 'w[i]ch is honorable dignitie there maie noe manner of the subiects, sp[irit]uall or temporall, p[re]sume. to take one piece of this fruite by his owne powere or aucthoritie, but must haue it by deliu[er]aunce of his sou[er]aigne onlie. Therefore the whole sorte of this fruite is ordeyned and shewwed for himself and where it please him to dispose it.'
[1009] Ibid, pp.25-26.
[1010] Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Nederman, p.66. 'That which institutes and moulds the practice of religion in us and which transmits the worship of God…acquires the position of the soul.'
[1011] Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle Containing the History of England*, (London: J. Johnson etc. 1809) p.507.
[1012] Ralph E. Geisey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Genève: Librarie E Droz, 1960) p.140.

kingship was continuous; the king may have died, but the institution, the *dignitas,* had not. Henry VIII therefore inherited a monarchy that was much more secure, absolute, and divine than the one his father had gained almost twenty-five years earlier. The commonwealth, though important, was not the most prominent part of governance. The idea of commonwealth remained theoretically influential for sixteenth century humanists like Thomas More and Erasmus, but it was no longer so practically important to the king nor shaping the way he ruled. In this way, Henry VII was able to restore some of the divinity and strength that the crown had lost over the reigns of Henry VI and the Yorkist kings. By 1509, the monarch was once again the head of the body politic, and the king ruled a realm that more closely resembled France's *dominium regale* than it had before.

In the early sixteenth century, at some point between 1500 and 1518, Thomas More wrote in his *Epigrammata* that 'the consent of the people both gives and takes away royal power'.[1013] His contemporary Thomas Starkey also believed that conciliar rule was the way forward.[1014] These examples from the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII are beyond the scope of this thesis, but show that commonwealth ideology and ideas about conciliar rule did not end in the fifteenth century. These ideas shaped the politics of the sixteenth century too, with a court 'of the common weal' being proposed in 1534.[1015] The commonwealth was a prominent ideology in the 1540s and the reign of Edward VI (1537-1553), and this proves that as an ideology it was one that was continuously growing and changing. Most historians have assumed that this was an ideology rooted in the sixteenth century, but as this thesis has shown, it had its roots in the fifteenth century and was shaped by ideas from the continent. English fifteenth-century commonwealth ideology shared the civic humanist emphasis on liberty, unity, and well-being. This humanist influence affected English ideas of commonwealth from the 1430s onwards.

This changed late-medieval English kingship in practice and in theory. Whilst the king had, theoretically, been divinely appointed and the head of the body politic for centuries, this idea began to shift in the mid-fifteenth century. That John Russell believed the king was only the stomach of the body politic, rather than the head, was indicative of wider changes in how the king was being perceived. This was in no small part down to the changing understandings and political uses of commonwealth ideology. That this was a result of classical and humanist influence is demonstrated by William Worcester's admission that his understanding of commonwealth stemmed from reading Cicero, and John Russell's inclusion of Platonic ideas within his parliamentary sermons. Political players like Humphrey of Gloucester used humanist texts as their "guides", and so humanist thought and Italian influence shaped English ideas of commonwealth. This became a staple of mid- and late-fifteenth century English politics, with references to the commonwealth becoming frequent

[1013] Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p.114.

[1014] Thomas Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp.140-1. Starkey first argued the king should be elected, and then suggested a council of sixteen who had final authority.

[1015] W. C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration*, p.307. Who it was proposed by is unknown, but Elton believed it was a 'commonwealth man' and T. F. T Plucknett that it was a 'philosophical jurist as well as a practising lawyer'. Elton doubted that 'the mind that conceived it was that of a practising lawyer', but believed it belonged to 'the realm of philosophy'. G. R. Elton, *Reform & Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) p.141; T. F. T. Plucknett, 'Some Proposed Legislation of Henry VIII', *Royal Historical Society,* 19(1936), pp.119-144.

and popular. Men like Humphrey of Gloucester, Richard of York, and Richard III all used such terminology and ideology to support their own political causes, and from there such ideas were able to infiltrate governance and shape kingship. Given that documents like the *Epitaphium* and the letters of Warwick and Clarence were displayed publicly, these ideas also filtered through to the lower levels of society. The idea that the king served the commonwealth but was not beholden to it had held ground in earlier centuries, but in the fifteenth century this changed. The king used commonwealth ideology to win popular support, and the commonality used it (as the Wessex peasants did in 1462) to threaten the king with deposition when he did not do as they wished. The king was evidently viewed as a servant of the commonwealth, demonstrated by the many times his office was deemed secondary to the needs of the people. Ideas surrounding kingly duty and expectations of kingship changed, as was shown in chapter one by examining advice literature. The king was to wage war under specific circumstances and for specific purpose, and was to serve the people before serving God. This changed his role in theory, as ideas about divine kingship and the king's role in governance began to change.

His role changed practically, too. As Pollard showed, every king from the middle of the century onwards justified his actions in terms of commonwealth.[1016] This was in large part because the commonwealth was seen as the foundation of kingly power. When More, in the sixteenth century, stated that the consent of the people could give and take monarchical power, he was not stating anything particularly new. These ideas had been circulating since the middle of the previous century, and came to particular prominence in the reign of Edward IV. At this point, commoners and peasants felt they had a role of significance in Edward's accession to the throne, and reminded him in 1462 that he held his throne by their will. This was something both Lancastrian and Yorkist governments recognised. The *Somnium Vigilantis* acknowledged that York courting the commonality threatened Lancastrian kingship, and Richard III's coronation oath gave the people and their "chosen" laws a place of importance. The king relied far more on the support of his people than he had in earlier centuries, and this changed how kings acted and how their deeds were viewed.

It also contributed to a decline in divine kingship. Whilst divine kingship did not disappear - and certainly became much stronger in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - it was no longer the defining factor of kingship. In earlier centuries, contemporaries had noted that only God could create kings, and as a result, kings were holy themselves and capable of healing the sick.[1017] This

[1016] Pollard, *Wars of the Roses*, p.133.
[1017] Peter of Blois quoted in Bloch, *The Royal Touch,* p.22. 'Sanctus enim et Christus Domini est', translated in Bloch: 'For the king himself is holy; he is the anointed of the lord'.

was the case in the seventeenth century, when kings like James II also believed they could heal with their touch. However, in the fifteenth century, the idea of the king as divine himself appears to have (albeit temporarily) declined. At the same time, the twelfth-century notion that only God could appoint a king and bestow an heir had changed too: the Act of Accord discarded the king's legitimate heir and appointed another.[1018] Although this had precedent in both the Treaty of Troyes (1420) and the Treaty of Winchester (1153), it was the first time the heir had been appointed based not on his bloodline and inheritance, but on his merits and the will of parliament. Kingship became much more conciliar and elective, as it had been during the days of the Anglo-Saxon Witan, with a greater focus on commonwealth and meritocracy than on mysticism and divinity.

It is in this that we may see the early development of a kind of monarchical meritocracy. This may be viewed as precursor to the monarchical republic of the 1530s. Watts believed the 'monarchical republic' of the Tudors began no earlier than this, but its roots may be found in fifteenth-century ideas of meritocracy and kingship. Whilst under Tudor rule the idea of kingship resting on merit was reduced - as the differences between Tiptoft's and Medwall's translation of Buonaccorso's *Controversia de Nobilitate* illustrate - the idea did not disappear completely. Much as ideas of commonwealth changed, it may be asked whether the monarchical republic of the sixteenth century was a successor to fifteenth-century ideas of meritocracy, republicanism, commonwealth, and kingship. It certainly seems that the mid-fifteenth century had a focus on kingship being for the good of the commonwealth. It was conciliar and elective, based on suitability for the throne rather than just inheritance. Both the disinheritance of Edward of Lancaster in 1460, and the relative ease with which Richard III usurped the throne in 1483 suggest the displacement of the legitimate heir was possible when it was presented as serving the commonwealth.

Thus kingship changed over the fifteenth-century. This was, in part, due to civil war and the frequent usurpations and depositions. With the crown changing hands six times in twenty-five years, it is only to be expected that the institution of kingship itself would be changed, and in some ways undermined. However, ideas about commonwealth and the political power of the commonality were not a result of the civil wars but humanist influence. This changed kingship and governance alongside the events of the Wars of the Roses. Ideas of commonwealth and meritocracy created an environment where the king was expected to serve the commonwealth in an elective and conciliar manner, and when this combined with civil war and existing political unrest, it should not be surprising that such ideas affected politics and governance.

[1018] *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England Commonly Called Glanvill* ed. and trans. G. D. G. Hall, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p.71.

As this thesis has argued, ideas of commonwealth - inspired by Italian humanism - further exacerbated the political situation and weakness of the crown, rendering it more reliant upon the public and common opinion. Commonwealth ideology became a popular political tool for those serving the king and those opposing him, and as a result, such ideology became a staple of medieval English politics. With the advent of Tudor rule, Henry VII worked to claw back the divinity and authority the crown had lost, and in so doing, placed less emphasis on ideas of commonwealth. Commonwealth ideology, though remaining pivotal throughout the sixteenth century, was never again quite so pre-eminent over the king himself. Thus ideas of commonwealth, and how these shaped and influenced both medieval English politics and kingship, changed much in a short period. Overall, however, these changes were short-lived. The Tudor dynasty regained authority and divinity, and the role of the commonwealth reverted to a more traditional one. Understandings of commonwealth shifted once more in the sixteenth century, until it was once again a servant of the king, obedient and loyal, as Salisbury defined in the twelfth century.

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