

Colley Cibber's Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*: A Lutheran View of Divine Providence

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1. Introduction

Colley Cibber's *Richard III* is one of the most successful adaptations of Shakespeare's plays ever written, having held the stage for nearly two hundred years (from about 1699-1887)¹. Even though Shakespeare's version has now been restored, some of Cibber's most famous lines are still included in performances of *Richard III* today.² Cibber's adaptation responds to the theme of divine providence and predestination in Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare presented the story of Richard III in a way that was both politically and religiously correct for his time. By the time Cibber was writing, though, this presentation was no longer compatible with contemporary politics and religion, and Cibber's audience would not have been completely comfortable with the way topics such as kingship, divine providence, and predestination were treated in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Some people, such as Lutherans, (with whom I will argue that Cibber was sympathetic) would have been particularly troubled by these aspects of Shakespeare's play. Cibber adapted *Richard III* to reflect contemporary politics and religion, as well as his own beliefs. In particular, his goal was to alter the play so that it no longer contradicted contemporary Lutheran beliefs about divine providence and predestination. In looking at how Cibber accomplished this, I will focus primarily on his treatment of two main themes: 1) prophecy and foreshadowing, and 2) conscience, sin, and guilt. I will show how Cibber's *Richard III* supports a drastically different view of divine providence and predestination than Shakespeare's.

1. Entry on Cibber's *Richard III* from *The London Stage*: "The date of the premiere is not known, but the Dedication is dated February 1699 / 1700, the play was entered in the *Term Catalogues* in February 1699 / 1700, and advertised in the *Flying Post*, 16 March 1699 / 1700. The latest likely date for the first production is January 1700, but the play may have appeared in late December as a rival to LIF's production of *I Henry IV* early in January 1700." Van Lennep, 521. For the date of the revival of Shakespeare's version, see Koon 37.

2. For instance, Lawrence Olivier's 1955 film *Richard III*. Some of the most famous of these lines are: "Off with his head. So much for Buckingham." (Cibber 45) and "Conscience avant; Richard's himself again." (Cibber 52)

2. Cibber and Lutheranism

We know very little about Colley Cibber's religion. What we do know pertains mostly to his childhood and adolescence. It is difficult, therefore, to get a clear picture of Cibber's religious beliefs as an adult. However, we can make some plausible inferences based on his religious experiences as a child. Cibber's father – Caius Gabriel Cibber – was Lutheran, and his mother – Jane Colley – was Anglican. He was baptized at St. Giles-in-the-Fields; an Anglican church.³ When he finished school his father, intending for Cibber to become a member of the clergy, sent him to Winchester College. However, the College did not accept him, and so he eventually turned to the theater. Cibber himself was apparently glad to have escaped the life of a clergyman. He says in his *Apology* that “the moment I was inform'd that I was one of the unsuccessful Candidates, I blest myself to think what a happy Reprieve I had got” (35). His brother Lewis was admitted into Winchester College (after Caius Gabriel Cibber donated a statue of William of Wykeham, the school's founder), and was later ordained by the Bishop of London. However, Lewis had no more genuine interest in the church than his brother Colley had. He had a reputation for being incredibly impious, loose, and immoral.⁴ Apparently both Colley and Lewis were raised in the Anglican Church, but neither had a particularly strong interest in it.

Cibber's father Caius Gabriel Cibber definitely had a Lutheran upbringing. His family was Protestant – members of the Lutheran Church in Denmark. Caius was singled out at an early age for his talent as a sculptor. He studied in Italy, and then made his way to England, where he remained for the rest of his life.⁵ We know that Caius was raised Lutheran, but it is unclear whether or not he remained so in his later life. In her biography of Colley Cibber, Koon states that “Caius Gabriel's moderate Lutheranism had easily converted to Anglicanism” (Koon 9). However, Koon overlooks the fact that there is compelling evidence to the contrary. Lutheranism was very uncommon in England during this time. One of the few places it was found was among immigrants and foreigners in London. In 1694, Caius Gabriel was elected an Elder of the Danish Community, and took on the task of designing and building a Lutheran church in Wellclose Square in London. It was built for the use of the Danish and Norwegian communities living in London, so that they could practice their Lutheran faith. Caius Gabriel was also responsible for the sculptural decoration on both the interior and exterior of the building. Apparently, he “took nothing for his trouble,” even though he frequently faced financial hardship (qtd. in Faber 64).⁶ This seems a fairly clear indication that he never totally abandoned the religion of his country of origin. Converting to Anglicanism (or seeming to) would have made a lot of practical sense. It would have increased Caius's employment options, and made him more socially accepted in his new country. The same considerations could have motivated his decision to raise his children in the Anglican Church. Another factor was surely his wife's influence. Her family was Anglican, and it stands to reason that she and her family would want her children to be raised in that faith as well. Given Caius's involvement with the Danish Lutheran Church in his later years, it seems reasonable to assume that he never fully

3. Koon, p.6-8

4. See Cibber's *Apology* and Barker, p. 4-7

5. Faber, 3-5, 8

6. For Cibber's work on the Lutheran Church in Wellclose Square, see Faber, 61-70.

abandoned his Lutheranism, although he did give in to social pressures enough to convert and raise his children as Anglican. Therefore, it is likely that Colley Cibber grew up with a much more Lutheran perspective than was typical in England at the time. Some of these Lutheran ideas were likely as ingrained in him as the teachings of the Anglican Church, since they were simply part of the worldview he grew up with.

Of course, there were matters on which Lutheranism and Anglicanism did not see eye-to-eye. It is some of these differences that we see Cibber responding to in his *Richard III*. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Cibber had a religious motivation in adapting Shakespeare. In 1736 he wrote *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *King John*. His purpose in adapting that play was to make it more anti-Catholic, or as Cibber himself put it, "to paint the intoxicated Tyranny of Rome in its proper Colours" (*King John* Dedication). Anti-Catholic bias was of course a trait that both Lutherans and Anglicans shared, so Cibber was quite open about his goal in adapting the play. It is reasonable to think, therefore, that Cibber could also have had a religious motivation for adapting *Richard III*.

3. Divine Providence and Predestination

One of the differences of opinion between Anglicanism and Lutheranism has to do with their views on divine providence and predestination. These are very important themes in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and Cibber's adaptation reflects beliefs which conflict with Shakespeare's. In England in the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries, people generally held a providential view of causation. There were two types of causes for any given event: primary causes (the will of God / divine providence) and secondary causes (the actions of humans and/or nature).⁷ In a providential view of causation, the emphasis is placed on God's providence. Anglican preachers constantly encouraged their congregations to interpret recent events as acts of providence and divine justice. For instance, they pointed to the Restoration of Charles II to the throne as an act of divine providence. Tragedies such as plague and the Fire of London were held up as examples of divine justice. God was punishing the people of England for their sinful ways, and especially for the execution of Charles I, who had, by this way of thinking, been God's chosen representative⁸. The Anglican clergy urged Christians to "'turn ... over the diaries of our lives' for the evidence of divine care, so 'that from every event, whether national or personal, we may still infer the obligation and necessity of turning from our sins'" (qtd. in Spurr 31). Tied in with beliefs about divine providence is the concept of free will. Christians held varying beliefs about the importance of free will in determining human actions. Some considered free will to be a significant factor in shaping how humans act, while others – most notably Calvinists⁹ – denied the concept of free will entirely. They believed that everything was

7. See Dean, 3-4.

8. See Spurr.

9. I use Calvinism as an example, since Anglicanism was based in Calvinist teachings, although it modified them to fit its own purposes. For example, Calvin taught that humans should be wary of looking for providence in history, while Anglicans were encouraged to do so (VanderMolen 33-35).

predetermined, and that God controlled absolutely everything.¹⁰ There is no room for free will in this system of belief – humans are like actors following a script, with no ability to deviate from it. Every thought, every word, every movement has been predetermined. Not all Christians had such a severe view of providence, however – there were variations. Ultimately, all of this boils down to a disagreement over how and to what extent God interacts with his creation.

Lutherans disagreed with much of the attitude toward providence held by the Reformed church (which included Anglicans), and were deeply disturbed by some of its implications. In particular, they pointed out that those who held these beliefs about divine providence must at best think that God approves of evil, and at worst, that God himself is actually the cause of all evil. Lutherans were vehemently opposed to this idea. They considered it to be an awful form of blasphemy – “abhorrent to all minds and ears” – and asserted that God “does not will or approve of sin; nor does He force our wills to commit sin” (Chemnitz 1:190).¹¹ Lutherans therefore rejected determinism. They did believe that God has complete control over his creation, and that nothing can happen unless God allows it to happen. However, God in no way approves of or causes sin and evil, even though he allows them to occur. He allows these things to occur because he has given his creatures free will. Sin is brought about by human beings and the devil, and not by God. Of course, free will and determinism cannot easily coexist. Some Christians, such as Calvinists, argue that since God already knows everything that will happen in the future, then the future is already predetermined. Whatever happens had to have happened, since God foreknew it, and God cannot be wrong. Therefore, they say, humans can have no free will, and no power to change their future. The arguments for and against this interpretation are far too complex to go into in any depth, but suffice it to say that Lutherans held that the fact of God’s foreknowledge does not oppose the existence of free will. To simplify: God knows what is going to happen in the future, but he also knows that it will happen as a result of free will – therefore, we do in fact have free will.¹² As a result of all of this, Lutherans held secondary causes to be of much greater importance than did many other Christians. It was often difficult or impossible to sort out what was caused directly by God’s providence, and what came about primarily through human or natural causes. Therefore, unlike Anglicans and many other Christians, primarily the Reformed, who were encouraged to look for God’s hand at work in the world around them and in their own lives, Lutherans were adamant that people “neither can nor ought investigate the hidden secrets of the foreknowledge of God” (Chemnitz 1:214). The only exception to this was the Bible. Lutherans believed that God’s providence was often revealed through his Word in the Bible. Other than that, however, humans should not look around them for divine providence, since it is beyond human understanding. This does not mean that they did not believe in divine providence, they just believed that we should not try to determine what is providence and what is not. Cibber refers to this belief in his *Apology*: “To ask, why Providence afterwards took more care of me, than I did of myself, might be making too bold an Enquiry into its secret Will and Pleasure” (36). Humans “must not inquire concerning the predestination of the hidden God but be content with those things which have been revealed through the calling

10. “according to Calvin, God acts in each occurrence in nature; nothing is left to chance and nothing is left to the will of other forces or beings” (VanderMolen 30). See also _____, 121-125 and *Institutes* I, 16, 2 and I, 16, 3 and I, 18, 2.

11. Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) was an important Lutheran theologian. He was instrumental in the development of the Lutheran faith. His *Loci Theologici* was a significant source of Lutheran doctrine.

12. For a discussion of the arguments about foreknowledge and free will, see Chemnitz, 119-122.

and ministry of the Word” (Chemnitz 1:220). Lutherans would not try to interpret specific events, either in their own lives or in the larger world (such as the Fire of London or the death of Richard III), as acts of providence. They would likely have seen those who did as rather foolish, since they were trying to understand something which humans simply cannot comprehend.

In adapting *Richard III* Cibber removed the theme of divine providence from the play. Divine providence is a very important theme in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Again and again we are shown that events in the play are predetermined, and that the characters are merely acting out God’s will. As a Lutheran, Cibber would not approve of attributing these events to God’s providence. We cannot, and should not try, to discern an underlying theme of divine providence in Richard III’s life and death. This is quite a drastic change from Shakespeare’s play. I will examine two ways in which Cibber makes this change. First, I will look at his treatment of prophecy and foreshadowing, focusing in particular on the character of Margaret. Next, I will discuss his rejection of the divine right of kings. In examining Cibber’s treatment of these subjects, we can see that the changes he made to Shakespeare’s play were intended to remove the themes of predestination and divine providence from *Richard III*, and to place the focus firmly on the secondary / human causes of events.

One of the major changes Cibber made to the play was to remove the character of Margaret entirely. Doing so fundamentally alters the role of divine providence in *Richard III*. An important way in which Shakespeare conveys the theme of divine providence in his *Richard III* is through prophecy and foreshadowing, which he does to a great extent through the character of Margaret. In Act 1, scene 3 Margaret curses several of the other characters. (In cases where curses come true, I consider them to be a type of prophecy.)¹³ Although they scorn her words at the time, she assures them that later they will look back at this and say, “Poor Margaret was a prophetess” (Shakespeare 1.3.299).¹⁴

This is exactly what happens; later in the play the characters refer back to this scene when Margaret’s curses are fulfilled. There are a significant number of these instances: In Act 3 there are the speeches at the executions of Rivers, Vaughan, and Gray, and at the execution of Lord Hastings, in Act 4 there is Queen Elizabeth’s speech, and in Act 5 is Buckingham’s speech at his execution, and Richard’s dream.¹⁵ In nearly all of these scenes, the characters acknowledge the fulfillment of Margaret’s curses. This clearly points to

13 .For a reading of Margaret as a prophetess, see Pearlman, 58-59

14. All references to Shakespeare’s *Richard III* are from *The Norton Shakespeare* unless otherwise noted.

15. Act 3.3.14, 16-18: Gray: “Now Margaret’s curse is fall’n upon our heads.”
Rivers: “Then cursed she Hastings; then cursed she Buckingham; / Then cursed she Richard. O remember, God, / To hear her prayer for them as now for us.”

Act 3.4.92-93 Hastings: “O Margaret, Margaret! Now thy heavy curse / Is lighted on poor Hastings’ wretched head.”

Act 4.1.45-46 Queen Elizabeth: “And make me die the thrall of Margaret’s curses: / ‘Nor mother, wife, nor counted England’s Queen’.”

In Act 5.1.25-27 Buckingham: “Thus Margaret’s curse falls heavy on my neck. / ‘When he’, quoth she, ‘shall split thy heart with sorrow, / Remember Margaret was a prophetess’.”

the fact that all of the events in the play have been predetermined, and are thus inevitable. In removing the character of Margaret, Cibber also of course removed the speeches referring to her prophecies, and in fact got rid of the scenes with the executions of Rivers, Vaughan, Gray, Hastings, and Buckingham entirely. Without the character of Margaret, the events of the play are no longer tied together with a common thread of prophecy and predestination.

If we look at other instances of prophecy and foreshadowing in Shakespeare and Cibber's plays, it quickly becomes clear that Cibber was intentionally trying to get rid of the theme of divine providence. He did not just want to get rid of the character of Margaret, who was not essential to the plot – her removal was just one part of his overall goal in adapting *Richard III*. Another character that Cibber cut out of the play is Clarence. By doing so, he also got rid of the 'G' prophecy and Clarence's dream.¹⁶ Besides being a nice bit of poetry, Clarence's dream is also prophetic. It anticipates his impending murder on Richard's orders, and the punishment that he presumably will face in hell. In Act 3, Lord Stanley also has a prophetic dream; he "dreamt the boar had razed off his helm" (Shakespeare 3.2.8). Lord Hastings refuses to take this dream seriously, and is decapitated shortly afterward. Cibber excised this dream as well. The other prophetic dream in the play is Richard's dream in Act 5 – which in Shakespeare's version is definitely prophesying Richard's death in battle the next day. Cibber retained this scene, but rewrote it so that it is no longer meant to be seen as prophetic. Cibber also cut out the prophecy Lord Hastings makes in Act 3 as he is being led away to be executed.¹⁷ Also, in Act 4 of Shakespeare's play Richard recalls that "Henry the Sixth / Did prophesy that Richmond should be king" and that "A bard of Ireland told me once / I should not live long after I saw 'Richmond'" (Shakespeare 4.2.98-99, 108-109). Cibber's play does not include any reference to either of these prophecies. One instance of prophecy which Cibber does retain in his *Richard III* is Lady Anne's curse, "If ever he have Wife, let her be made / More miserable by the Life of him, / Than I am now by *Edward's* death and thine" (12).¹⁸ This curse later comes true in both versions of the play, so I consider it to be prophetic. In Shakespeare's play, Lady Anne refers back to this moment, and laments that she had unknowingly cursed herself.¹⁹ In Cibber's play, however, neither Lady Anne nor anyone else ever directly refers to her curse after it comes true. Clearly, Cibber did not want to emphasize the prophetic aspect here. There are other, smaller instances of prophecy and foreshadowing which Cibber leaves out of his play, but they are too numerous to list here. I think that the examples I have given here provide sufficient evidence that Cibber's goal was to reduce the role of prophecy and foreshadowing in *Richard III* to such an extent that it would no longer point to an underlying theme of divine providence.

In Act 5.5 Richard does not directly refer to Margaret's prophecy, but the ghost scene should be seen as the fulfillment of her curse: "No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, / Unless it be while some tormenting dream / Affrights thee." (1.3.222-224)

16. Shakespeare 1.4.1-63

17. Shakespeare 3.4.103-105

18. All quotations from Cibber's *Richard III* are from the 1699 edition unless otherwise noted.

19. Shakespeare 4.1.70-80

Another way in which Cibber undermines the theme of divine providence in *Richard III* is by rejecting the divine right of kings. At the time Cibber was writing, this was still a fairly widespread belief, one that was encouraged by both the government and the clergy. They held that a king's authority came directly from God. Now, just because a king was a bad ruler, it did not necessarily follow that he lacked God's approval. God could and did set bad kings on the throne in order to punish the people of a particular country for their collective sins and impiety. As I mentioned before, Anglican clergy taught that plague and the Fire of London were similarly sent by God to punish the population of England as a whole.²⁰ Lutherans rejected this teaching, since it meant that God caused and approved of sin and evil. However, this is not generally the way the English thought of Richard III. They thought of him as a usurper and a tyrant, who had no legitimate claim to the throne. He was defeated by Richmond, God's chosen representative, through an act of divine providence. Richard was killed and sent to hell to face divine punishment, and Richmond became the rightful King of England, and ruled with divine approval. We can see this attitude in the chronicles of the period.²¹ In portraying Richmond as the divinely appointed King and Richard as an evil tyrant who must face divine justice, Shakespeare was following his sources and popular opinion. In Holinshed, this providential interpretation of events is obvious. Lutherans would have rejected this interpretation of events on the basis that we cannot know God's will. We should not attempt to determine which people God does or does not support. Cibber definitely rejected the divine appointment of kings. We can see this in his *Richard III* and also in his *Apology*. In Chapter 3 of the *Apology*, Cibber discusses some of his political views. He talks about the people's "*ancient Right and Claim*" to liberty, and praises a past Queen of England for realizing and observing the "rule" that "*the Love of her People was the surest Support of her Throne*" (40). It was not God or providence that was the "surest support of her throne" but the people of England. In this way, Cibber rejected the concept that a monarch rules solely because it is God's will that they do so. He placed the focus on secondary causes, namely the actions of the people, which also implies that he believed that people have free will. I will show how Cibber has adapted *Richard III* to support his views on divine providence and kingship, which were shaped by his Lutheran beliefs.

There are two passages in Cibber's play that most clearly reflect his rejection of the divine appointment of kings. First, there is the scene near the end of Act 5 in which Richmond is crowned as King Henry VII of England. The scene takes place on the battlefield, in the aftermath of the Battle of Bosworth Field. Richmond has killed Richard, and Lord Stanley finds the crown and brings it to him. Shakespeare's version of this speech contains a subtle assumption of providence:

STANLEY Courageous Richmond, well hast thou acquit thee.

Lo, here this long usurped royalty
 From the dead temples of this bloody wretch
 Have I plucked off, to grace thy brows withal.
 Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it.

[*He sets the crown on Henry's head*]

KING HENRY VII Great God of heaven, say 'Amen' to all. (5.8.3-7)

20. Spurr

21. See Holinshed's account of Richard III in his *Chronicles*. This attitude is clear from the way he talks about Richard III and Richmond.

Cibber's version, on the other hand, contains additional material which subverts a providential interpretation of Richmond's success:

Ld. Stan. Victorious Richmond well hast thou acquitted thee:
— And see, the just reward that Heaven has sent thee.
Among the Glorious spoils of *Bosworth* Field,
We've found the Crown, which now in right is thine:
'Tis doubly thine by Conquest, and by Choice.
Long Live *Henry* the Seventh, King of *England*. (*Shouts here.*
Richm. Next to Just Heaven, my Noble Countrymen,
I owe my thanks to you, whose love I'm proud of,
And Ruling well shall speak my Gratitude. (56)

The use of the word 'choice' in Lord Stanley's speech is very significant. A reader (or hearer) may assume that this refers to Richmond being God's 'choice'. It would seem to reinforce the idea that kings are divinely appointed. I would argue, though, that Cibber actually mean something very different by 'choice'. I think that he is referring to the choice of the people. To support this interpretation, we must look at Cibber's sources for *Richard III*. Like Shakespeare, Cibber consulted Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*. He also used material from John Speed's *History of Great Britaine*.²² The crowning of King Henry VII after the battle is described in both books. Here is the passage from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which both Shakespeare and Cibber had read:

Then the people reioised, and clapped their hands, crieng vp to heauen; King Henrie, king Henrie.

When the lord Stanleie saw the good will and gladnesse of the people, he tooke the crowne of king Richard which was found amongst the spoile in the field, and set it on the earles head; as though he had beene elected king by the voice of the people, as in ancient times past in diuerse realms it hath beene accustomed" (760)

Holinshed only says that it was "as though" King Henry was elected by the people, not that he actually was. This comment is almost totally obscured in Holinshed's account of Richard III by his frequent assertions that the Lancasters' victory was the will of God. The approval of the people was only a mildly interesting side note. That is not the case in Speed's account, though. For Speed, the approval of the people was central:

Which his doings was so acceptable to the whole Army, as with great applause they all cryed *King Henry, King Henry*, whose forwardnesse to him-ward, when the Lord *Stanley* perceived, hee tooke K. *Richards* Crowne, found among the spoile of the field, and set it vpon the Earle of *Richmunds* head, thereby confirming the election of the people, at which instant beganne the raigne of this new King. (725)

When Lord Stanley crowned Richmond, he was "confirming the election of the people," and it was this that "beganne the raigne of this new King." Speed points to the choice of the people as the crucial factor. It was this, and not divine providence, that turned Richmond into King Henry VII. That is what Cibber meant by the word 'choice.' When Stanley tells Richmond that the crown is "doubly thine by Conquest, and by Choice" he means that Richmond has earned the

22. See Albert E. Kalson's article "The Chronicles in Cibber's *Richard III*."

right to the throne militarily, but that his claim is further legitimated by the support of the people of England. It is not God's choice that is emphasized here, but human choice.

Richmond's response to Lord Stanley's speech also prioritizes the support of the people over divine providence. First though, let us consider Richmond's comment that he owes his thanks to his countrymen, "Next to Just Heaven." This comment, as well as Lord Stanley's line in which he calls the crown "the just reward that Heaven has sent thee," do not mean that Cibber actually endorses the view of the divine right of kings. Cibber is simply following a convention here. In both Shakespeare's *Richard III* and in the Chronicle accounts of Richard III, Richmond is portrayed as a very religious man. This is what Cibber's audience would have expected the character of Richmond to be like. This piousness is reflected in other lines spoken by Richmond as well, showing that Cibber wanted to follow this typical characterization of him. Also, it was expected that characters would thank God for victory after a battle. Again, Cibber was writing to satisfy the conventions, in order to keep his audience happy. It is not this pandering to convention that is interesting here, though. Instead, we should focus on Cibber's break with Shakespeare and the Chronicles. The rest of King Henry's response does not come from Shakespeare, and it echoes what Cibber wrote in his *Apology* years later. He says, "my Noble Countrymen, / I owe my thanks to you, whose love I'm proud of." We know from Cibber's *Apology* that he considered the love of the people to be "the surest support of [the] throne" (40). Once again, Cibber has deliberately added a reference to secondary causes where Shakespeare had none. After thanking his countrymen, King Henry says "And Ruling well shall speak my Gratitude." This is also consistent with Cibber's beliefs about how a monarch should act. In his discussion of the subject in his *Apology* he again praises a past Queen of England by saying that, "At the same time that she profess'd to *desire* the People's Love, she took care that her Actions shou'd *deserve* it" (40). This, Cibber claims in *Richard III*, is what made Henry VII a good King. It is not because he was chosen by God and ruled with the backing of divine authority. Rather, it is because he worked to deserve the love and support of the people of England.

King Henry's speech at the conclusion of the play clearly illustrates Cibber's rejection of the divine appointment of kings, and of the theme of providence in general. The way in which Cibber's version of this speech differs from Shakespeare's is very significant. Speaking of his marriage to Elizabeth, which will unite the houses of York and Lancaster, Richmond says, "Smile, heaven, upon this fair conjunction, / That long have frowned upon their enmity" (Shakespeare 5.8.20-21). Then he goes on to say:

O now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs — God, if his will be so —
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace (5.8.29-33)

Then he prays, "Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord," (Shakespeare 5.8.35). and concludes the play with the words, "God say 'Amen' (Shakespeare 5.8.41). This neatly captures the providential tone of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and wraps it up with a summary of the central message of the play: that Richmond, Elizabeth, and their heirs have a God-given right to the throne of England. Cibber shortened this speech, and got rid of all references to God and providence. This change is very telling. Cibber had to get rid of this summary of the

providential message of *Richard III*, because that message was not present in his own play. As we can see, by rejecting the notion of the divine right of kings, Cibber took away much of the force of a providential interpretation of the story of Richard III and his defeat by Henry VII. To interpret these historical events as acts of providence would have gone against his Lutheran beliefs, so he did his best to remove that interpretation from the play.

4. Conscience, Sin, and Election

I will now examine the Lutheran understanding of conscience, sin, and election, and how they relate to divine providence and predestination, in order to understand their significance in Cibber's *Richard III*. 'Election' refers to the belief that there is a group of people – the 'elect' – who are destined for salvation, and that everyone else – the reprobate – are destined for eternal damnation. The Calvinists are a good example of an extreme version of this view.²³ As mentioned before, Calvinists believe that everything is predetermined, and that humans have no free will and no power to change their futures. A person's life has been planned out in advance, and whether they end up in Heaven or Hell is beyond their control. There is absolutely nothing a person can do to change their fate. Lutherans did not accept this teaching, mostly on the basis of their strong belief in the existence of free will. They had some concept of the "elect", but it was very different from what we see among Christians such as the Calvinists and the Anglicans. Lutherans strongly opposed this view of election, since they claimed that it led people to despair, which is not at all what God intended for his people. If you are fated for Heaven or Hell and there is nothing you can do to change that, why try to do good at all? It removes any responsibility for sin from humans and places it squarely on God. This was of course not acceptable to Lutherans, since it would mean that God was the cause of sin, an idea which Lutherans completely rejected.²⁴ Referring to the teaching that some people were predestined for damnation, Melancthon²⁵ warns that, "Nor must we permit the ... ravings which argue that there is a certain number of men ... who cannot be converted" (Chemnitz 1:223). This means that God's Word is not limited to a few predetermined "elect", but is available to everyone. Furthermore, we can see that when Lutherans do talk about the "elect", they are referring to something very different from the deterministic view of election held by the Calvinists and other Christians. In the Lutheran view, to be one of the "elect" is not a predetermined status that is set in stone. Melancthon uses the example of Adam and Eve to illustrate this point. He says that, "Adam and Eve were elect, and yet they actually lost the Holy Spirit in the Fall. They were turned away from God and rendered guilty of eternal wrath" (Chemnitz 310). After giving this and other examples, Melancthon warns that, "we must not become complacent, but rather acknowledge that the elect and regenerate can also fall in a terrible way" (Chemnitz 1:310). A person could not be secure in the knowledge that they were one of the "elect". Everyone had to do good and live according to God's will, or they could at any time become one of the damned. Unlike those such as the Calvinists, Lutherans looked to free will and human responsibility as significant factors in determining whether a person would ultimately be sent to Heaven or Hell.

23. *Institutes* I, 16, 3 and III, 23.

24. For discussions of election, see Chemnitz and Kolb.

25. Melancthon was an important early Lutheran theologian. Chemnitz includes some of Melancthon's writings in his *Loci Theologici*.

The Lutheran concept of election was also tied in with the way they thought about and explained sin. From a Calvinist point of view, a person could not help but commit a sin, if it was predetermined that they would do so. Lutherans also believed that sin was inevitable, because of the basic flaw in human nature brought about by original sin, but they did not believe that any *particular* sin was inevitable. A person can always choose not to sin, since they possess free will. There are two forces which drive humans to sin: “the weakness with which we are born and the devil” (Chemnitz 1:222). Lutherans believed that our free will allowed us to resist these forces and to do good, just as we could misuse our free will and choose to sin. However, the only way that a person could entirely resist the temptation to sin was with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was available to anyone, not just a predetermined group of the elect, but it would only come to those who asked for its help. In order to preserve free will, the Holy Spirit had to be invited into a person’s life.²⁶ For Lutherans, the responsibility for sin rested very heavily on humans. People did not commit sins because of some predetermined plan; they made their own choices.

Shakespeare’s *Richard III* definitely reflects the doctrine of election. Richard III is clearly not one of the elect, while Richmond clearly is. This theme is closely intertwined with the theme of divinely appointed kingship – Richmond is God’s chosen king, while Richard is destined for damnation and eternal punishment. Shakespeare promotes this interpretation in several ways throughout his play. First of all, he presents the fact of Richard’s deformity as evidence of his damnation. During this time many people believed that a person’s outward appearance reflected their inner qualities. They took Richard’s twisted and deformed appearance as evidence of his fundamentally evil and devilish nature.²⁷ This was a common attitude toward Richard III, encouraged by Richard’s enemies. It was used as a way of legitimizing the claim of Henry VII and his heirs to the throne of England. Shakespeare also used curses to influence the audience’s opinion of Richard. He is cursed by multiple characters in the play, most notably by Margaret. Typically, the curses mention Richard’s deformity and his connection to evil and the devil. For instance, as Margaret curses Richard she refers to him as, “Thou that wast sealed in thy nativity / The slave of nature and the son of hell” (Shakespeare 1.3.226-227). Clearly, Shakespeare is presenting Richard as one of the reprobate. Prophecy and foreshadowing, which I have already discussed, also work to portray Richard as someone who is fated for divine punishment, by showing that his damnation is predetermined. Another significant passage is the ghost scene in Act 5. Shakespeare’s ghosts send a very clear message of divine punishment. Richmond, on the other hand, is depicted as God’s soldier. In Shakespeare’s treatment of the characters of Richard and Richmond, we can plainly see a doctrine of the predestination of humans as either one of the elect or one of the reprobate.

Cibber got rid of the theme of election in his *Richard III*, thereby denying that Richmond’s goodness and Richard’s evil were due to predestination. True, his Richard is deformed, and that deformity is still said to reflect his evil nature. However, as in the case of Richmond’s godliness, this is just a matter of characterization and fulfillment of audience expectations. Where Shakespeare focuses on Richard’s evil nature and his impending punishment, Cibber emphasizes the choices Richard makes and his responsibility and feelings of guilt for his sins. Cibber makes

26. See Chemnitz’s discussion of sin, taken from Melanchthon, 221-226.

27. Pearlman, 50.

his Richard responsible for his own fate, and not just a puppet of divine providence. I will examine the three main ways in which Cibber accomplishes this. First, Cibber emphasizes Richard's feelings of guilt for his sins. This leads into my second point: Cibber's ghost scene is not an example of divine providence like Shakespeare's is. Instead, it illustrates the psychological effects of a guilty conscience. Finally, I will consider Richmond's speech at the death of Richard. Cibber's Richard was not destined for Hell since before his birth; he was responsible for his own damnation because of the sins he freely chose to commit.

Cibber's *Richard III* contains numerous references to Richard's conscience and to conscience in general. Richard himself speaks extensively of conscience in two soliloquies and in other shorter passages. The earlier one of these soliloquies occurs immediately after Richard has sent Buckingham to convince the Mayor and people of London to support his cause, and as he prepares to give the order that the princes should be locked up in the Tower. Richard scoffs at the idea of allowing conscience to get in the way of his success.

Now, by St. *Paul*, the work goes bravely on —
How many frightful stops wou'd Conscience make
In some soft heads to undertake like me:
— Come; this Conscience is a convenient Scarecrow,
It Guards the fruit which Priests and Wisemen tast,

Who never set it up to fright themselves:
They know 'tis rags, and gather in the face on't,
While half-starv'd shallow Daws thro Fear are honest.
Why were Laws made, but that we're Rogues by Nature?
Conscience! 'tis our Coin, we live by parting with it,
And he thrives best that has the most to spare:
The protesting Lover buys hope with it,
And the deluded Virgin short liv'd pleasure.
Old gray beards cram their Avarice with it,
Your Lank-jaw'd hungry Judge will dine upon't,
And hang the Guiltless rather than eat his Mutton cold.
The Crown'd Head quits it for Despotick sway,
The stubborn People for unaw'd Rebellion:
There's not a Slave but has his share of Villain;
Why then shall after Ages think my deeds
Inhumane? Since my worst are but Ambition:
Ev'n all Mankind to some lov'd Ills incline,
Great Men chuse Greater Sins – Ambition's mine. (24-25)

Richard's attitude toward conscience in this soliloquy is very scornful. He attributes the success of his plans to his lack of conscience, and mocks those who are hindered by it. Richard says that men are "Rogues by Nature" and that we are able to sin without qualms when we disregard our consciences. This echoes some of the Lutheran beliefs mentioned earlier. Humans are fundamentally flawed, and so we sin, despite our knowledge that what we are doing is wrong and our ability to do otherwise if we wish. At the end of the soliloquy, Richard says that, "Ev'n all Mankind to some lov's Ills incline, / Great Men chuse Greater Sins – Ambition's mine." In these

lines, he acknowledges the inevitability of sin (as do Lutherans), but also grants that humans have free will (as do Lutherans) by saying that men “chuse” their sins. Later, once the Lord Mayor of London and the citizens agree to crown Richard as their King, he gloats over his victory and says: “Conscience, lie still — More lives must yet be drain’d, / Crowns got with Blood must be with Blood maintain’d” (31). Richard is still ignoring his conscience at this point. He obviously cannot ignore it completely, however, since he keeps referring to it, and since he is perfectly well aware that what he is doing is wrong.

The other soliloquy that deals explicitly with conscience is in Act 4, as the murder of the princes is taking place. However, this soliloquy does not appear in the first edition of 1699. Sometime between 1699 and 1718 (when the second edition was published) Cibber removed the scene in Act 4 which shows the murder of the princes, and replaced it with this soliloquy by Richard, which gives us a nice snapshot of Richard’s psychological state:

Wou’d it were done:
There is a busy Something here,
That foolish Custom has made terrible,
To the intent of evil Deeds;
And Nature too, as if she knew
Me Womanish, and Weak, tugs at
My Heart-Strings with complaining Cries,
To talk me from my Purpose —
And then the thought of what
Men’s Tongues will say, of what their Hearts must think;
To have no Creature love me living, nor
My Memory when dead.
Shall future Ages, when these Children’s Tale
Is told, drop Tears in pity of their hapless Fate,
And read with Detestation the Misdeeds of *Richard*,
The crook-back’d Tyrant, cruel, barbarous,
And bloody — will they not say too,
That to possess the Crown, nor Laws Divine
Nor Humane stopt my way? — Why, let’em say it;
They can’t but say I had the Crown;
I was not Fool as well as Villain.
Hark! the Murder’s doing; Princes farewell,
To me there’s Musick in your Passing-Bell. (*Richard III* 1721, 120-121)

The “busy Something” Richard is speaking of is his conscience. This soliloquy starts out on a very different note than the first one did. Richard is actually suffering from pangs of conscience at the thought of the prince’s murder. He feels guilty, and worries about what people will say of him when they look back on this deed. However, this attack of conscience does not last long — by the end of the speech he has regained his former attitude of contempt for conscience. Another point of interest is Richard’s remark that “to possess the Crown, nor Laws Divine / Nor Humane stopt my way”. Put this way, divine laws are something that humans are free to either follow or break as they choose. This is not a deterministic view, but one which assumes that humans possess free will.

Cibber based his presentation of Richard's guilt for the murder of the princes on passages from Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Shakespeare pretty much ignored this information, but Cibber was able to make good use of it. Holinshed tells us that after the murder of the princes, Richard was:

in much paine & trouble outward, much feare, anguish and sorow within. For I haue heard by credible report of such as were secret with his chamberleine, that after this abhominable deed doone, he neuer had a quiet mind. [Than the which there can be no greater torment. For a giltie conscience inwardlie accusing and bearing witness against an offender, is such a plague and punishment, as hell it selfe (with all the feends therein) can not afford one of greater horror & affliction (735)

Holinshed actually refers to Richard's guilty conscience several times. Shakespeare all but ignored this aspect of the *Chronicles*, but it suited Cibber's purpose very well. He wanted to focus on Richard's guilt, in order to emphasize his responsibility for his sins. Cibber also drew on the theme of Richard's guilt that he found in Holinshed to fundamentally change the nature of the ghost scene. Shakespeare's inspiration for the ghost scene came from Holinshed's account of Richard III. Cibber also consulted the *Chronicles*, so he would have been familiar with this passage. Holinshed tells us of a dream Richard had on the night before the Battle of Bosworth Field:

The same went, that he had the same night a dreadfull and terrible dreame: for it séemed to him being asleepe, that he did see diuerse images like ter|rible diuels, which pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take anie quiet or rest. The which strange vi|sion not so suddenlie strake his heart with a sudden feare, but it stuffed his head and troubled his mind with manie busie and dreadfull imaginations. For incontinent after, his heart being almost damped, he prognosticated before the doubtfull chance of the bat|tell to come; not vsing the alacritie and mirth of mind and countenance as he was accustomed to doo before he came toward the battell. And least that it might be suspected that he was abashed for feare of his enimies, and for that cause looked so pitiouslie; he recited and declared to his familiar fréends in the morning his wonderfull vision and fearefull dreame.

But I thinke this was no dreame, but a punction and pricke of his sinfull conscience: for the conscience is so much more charged and agreeued, as the of|fense is greater & more heinous in degré. [So that king Richard, by this reckoning, must needs haue a woonderfull troubled mind, because the déeds that he had doone, as they were heinous and vnnaturall, so did they excite and stirre vp extraordinarie motions of trouble and vexations in his conscience.] Which sting of conscience, although it strike not alwaie; yet at the last daie of extreame life, it is woont to shew and represent to vs our faults and offenses, and the paines and punishments which hang ouer our heads for the committing of the same, to the intent that at that instant, we for our deserts being penitent and repentant, maie be compelled (lamenting and be|wailing our sinnes like forsakers of this world) io|cund to depart out of this mischeefe life. (755)

We can read this passage in a couple of different ways: as evidence of divine providence, or as an interesting insight into Richard's psychological state. Cibber and Shakespeare both used this passage in writing their ghost scenes, but they each chose a different interpretation. Shakespeare took the idea of supernatural devils and ran with it, turning them into the ghosts of Richard's

victims. He focused on divine providence in his ghost scene, and relegated Richard's conscience to the background. Cibber, on the other hand, latched on to the suggestion that Richard's dream was brought on by his guilty conscience. Once again, we see Shakespeare focusing on the primary / divine causes for events, and Cibber focusing on the secondary / human causes.

In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, there is the option of having both Richard and Richmond onstage during the ghost scene. Each ghost speaks to Richard first, and then immediately speaks to Richmond. Shakespeare's scene has eleven ghosts; far more than Cibber's. Shakespeare took the aspect of divine providence from Holinshed and expanded on it, adding the ghosts as messengers from God. Richmond's presence onstage is meant to show us that the ghosts are not merely Richard's imagination. Also, the ghosts repeatedly refer to themselves as angels, or at least associate themselves with angels. The ghost of Clarence tells Richmond "Good angels guard thy battle" (Shakespeare 5.5.92). The ghosts of the Princes tell him "Good angels guard thee from the boar's annoy" (Shakespeare 5.5.105), and the ghost of Buckingham says "God and good angels fight on Richmond's side" (Shakespeare 5.5.129). The repetition indicates that Shakespeare wanted to call attention to the ghosts' connection to God. The emphasis in Shakespeare's ghost scene is on despair and the imminence of divine punishment. Nearly all of the ghosts end their speeches to Richard with the words "despair and die" (Shakespeare 5.5.110).²⁸ Most of them also tell Richard to think on how he had wronged them, and several say: "Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow" (Shakespeare 5.5.71).²⁹ Richard is reminded of his sins, but only so that he will despair, knowing that he will soon face divine justice. The ghosts of his victims will weigh down his soul when he is judged. When the ghost of Buckingham tells Richard to "die in terror of thy guiltiness" (Shakespeare 5.5.124), he means that Richard should fear the consequences of that guilt, which await him after death. Richard is guilty before God, and he should despair in the knowledge that he will soon have to face his punishment. We can easily see the division between the elect and the damned here. Richmond has the support of the angels of Heaven, while Richard is tormented by revengeful ghosts who assure him of his imminent destruction. We can also see that this view of election caused exactly the problem that the Lutherans claimed it did. Richard is driven to despair by the knowledge that he is powerless to change his fate. From the moment of his birth, his deformity marked him as one of the damned. Shakespeare mentions guilt a lot in this scene. However, the point is not that Richard *feels* guilty, but that he *is* guilty in an absolute sense. This is about Richard's status as one of the damned, not about his psychological state.

Cibber's ghost scene is significantly different from Shakespeare's. It is much shorter and includes only four ghosts, and Richard is the only one onstage when they appear. By removing Richmond from the scene, Cibber increases the likelihood that the ghosts are all in Richard's head, and not agents of a higher power. Cibber chose to interpret the passage from Holinshed as a look at Richard's psychological state, and rejected the suggestion of divine providence. He focused on Holinshed's belief that the dream was caused by Richard's guilty conscience: "But I thinke this was no dreame, but a punction and pricke of his sinfull conscience" (Holinshed 755). The speeches Cibber assigned to the ghosts focus on how Richard will be tormented by his conscience. The ghost of King Henry VI tells Richard, "Now shall thy own devouring

28. Also lines 74, 80, 81, 89, 94, 97, 103, 117, and 126.

29. Also lines 85 and 93.

conscience gnaw / Thy heart, and terribly revenge my murder” (51). As the ghosts are leaving, he says, “Now Richard wake in all the Hells of Guilt . . . To guilty minds / A terrible example” (51). This is clearly referring to guilt in the psychological sense: Richard’s conscience will gnaw his heart, and he will be an example to others whose minds are troubled by guilt.

In both Cibber and Shakespeare’s ghost scenes, Richard wakes from his dream tormented by his conscience. In Shakespeare’s version, the focus is still on judgement. We know that Richard will die the next day – that has been predetermined. We also know that he is destined for Hell, where he has been sentenced with no hope of forgiveness. Richard’s description of his conscience includes the assumption that he has been judged by a higher power, and found guilty.

My conscience has a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high’st degree!
Murder, stern murder, in the dir’st degree!
All several sins, all used in each degree,

Throng to the bar, crying all, ‘Guilty, guilty!’
I shall despair. (Shakespeare 5.5.147-154)

He will despair, because there is no chance that he will be pardoned. Shakespeare has made it abundantly clear throughout the play that Richard is damned. Richard’s speech in Cibber’s play is much shorter than the one in Shakespeare’s. It lends itself to a completely different interpretation.

Give me another Horse: Bind up my wounds!
Have mercy, Heaven. Ha! — soft! —’Twas but a dream:
But then so terrible, it shakes my Soul.
Cold drops of sweat hang on my trembling Flesh,
My blood grows chilly, and I freze with horror.
O Tyrant Conscience! how dost thou afflict me!
When I look back, ’tis terrible Retreating:
I cannot bear the thought, nor dare repent:
I am but Man, and Fate, do thou dispose me. (52)

Since Cibber rejects the idea that Richard is doomed to Hell simply because he is one of the predetermined reprobate, he must show that Richard himself is responsible for his own damnation. Richard has committed terrible sins, but he could still repent and seek God’s forgiveness. Melancthon says that: “those who fall must acknowledge the wrath of God and again be turned back to Him, so that we are not so terrified by the greatness of the fall that we do not come back to God. For “grace abounds over sin,” as we must say at this point, Rom.5:20 . . . to those who are repentant for their great and awful sins there is forgiveness” (Chemnitz 1:310). In Richard’s speech, we see that he does not “dare repent” out of fear at the greatness of his sins. His conscience is “terrible Retreating” and he “cannot bear the thought”, so once again he rejects the voice of his conscience. In doing so he also rejects the chance to repent and obtain

forgiveness for his sins. This can also inform our understanding of the Ghost of Henry VI's parting words to Richard during the ghost scene:

Now *Richard* wake in all the Hells of Guilt,
And let that wild despair which now does prey
Upon thy mangled thoughts, alarm the World.
Awake *Richard*, awake! To guilty minds
A terrible Example. (Cibber 51)

Richard is not held up as an awful example because of the horrible sins he has committed. Rather, he is a terrible example to others with "guilty minds" because he despairs and does not repent and seek forgiveness for his sins. For Cibber, Richard always had the ability to save himself from his fate, but his ambition and then his fear kept him from doing so.

We can see Cibber's denial of predetermination even more clearly in Richmond's eulogy for Richard. In Shakespeare, Richmond's acknowledgement of Richard's death is limited to: "The bloody dog is dead" (Shakespeare 5.8.2). Cibber's Richmond laments Richard's lost potential:

Farewel, *Richard*, and from thy dreadful end
May future Kings from Tyranny be warn'd;
Had thy aspiring Soul but stir'd in Vertue
With half the Spirit it had dar'd in Evil,
How might thy Fame have grac'd our English Annals:
But as thou art, how fair a Page thou'st blotted. (55)

This is a clear rejection of determinism. Richmond acknowledges that Richard could have chosen to do good rather than evil. Once again, Cibber tells us that the responsibility for Richard's sins rests squarely on his own shoulders. Richard is held up as an example here, as he was in the ghost scene. However, he is not meant to be an example of divine providence at work in the world. Instead, he is presented to future Kings as an example of why they should avoid tyranny. This assumes two things: First of all, that people have free will and therefore are capable of choosing how they will act. And second, that Richard's overthrow was the consequence of his own actions, and not the working out of some predetermined divine plan. Cibber has made it clear that we cannot regard Richard as inherently evil, and that his death and Richmond's victory should not be interpreted as acts of divine providence since, according to Cibber's Lutheran beliefs, we cannot know God's will.

By examining and comparing Cibber's and Shakespeare's versions of *Richard III* and looking at their use of sources, primarily Holinshed's *Chronicles*, we can see that Cibber rejects Shakespeare's scheme of divine providence, and instead creates a narrative which supports his Lutheran beliefs about providence and divine justice. Due to the influence of his father, Cibber was likely familiar with and sympathetic to Lutheranism, which was very uncommon in England at the time. Cibber did not broadcast his reasons for adapting *Richard III*, which indicates that his motivation was personal, rather than public or professional. This was about legitimizing his own beliefs as much as about creating a successful play. In his *Richard III* Cibber rejected the system of divine providence that is central to Shakespeare's play. He excised the character of Margaret, as well as other instances of foreshadowing – particularly curses and prophecies – since they implied predetermination. He also rejected the divine authority of kings, which could

only be explained by acts of divine providence. Furthermore, Cibber rejected the standard portrayal of Richard as one of the damned and Richmond as one of the elect, in order to deny the concept of predetermined election. Overall, Cibber's adaptation succeeds in removing the scheme of divine providence from *Richard III*. Cibber fundamentally changed Shakespeare's play in order to support a religious view that challenged, and sometimes directly contradicted, the mainstream Anglican Christianity. It is important that we be aware of this, particularly when we consider that Cibber's play was the version audiences saw and associated with Shakespeare for nearly two hundred years. We need to consider how the fundamental difference between Shakespeare and Cibber's plays affected audiences' reception of *Richard III*, and how it shaped their view of Shakespeare's drama as a whole.

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