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Author

Michael Bennett

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Henry IV, the Royal Succession and the Crisis of 1406

Michael Bennett

The reign of Henry IV is unique in the history of medieval England in one largely unregarded respect. From his accession until his death the first Lancastrian king was understudied by a single heir apparent. In 1399 Henry of Monmouth, then approaching the age of discretion, was acknowledged as heir to the throne and given the title of prince of Wales.¹ In 1404 the earl of Northumberland publicly swore an oath to be a faithful and loyal liege 'to our said lord the king and to his eldest son my lord the prince, and to the heirs of his body, and to my lords his brothers and their issue in succession and in line of inheritance to the crown, in accordance with the laws of England'.² The period from 1406 until the king's death is especially remarkable in that the English crown was subject to the earliest known statutes regulating the succession. The two statutes of June and December 1406, whose terms were well-publicized, laid down an order of succession including four named lives.³ The prince of Wales, a member of the council from November 1406, attained his majority in September 1407, and succeeded to the crown on his father's death in 1413. Rather remarkably, no other adult son succeeded a royal father between the accessions of Edward I in 1272 and Charles I in 1625.

It has been observed that from around 1406 the Lancastrian regime was more broadly accepted. The Ricardian cause 'ceased to articulate a widespread discontent and became instead a vehicle for the irreconcilable grievances of a small but active rump of dissidents'.⁴ Still, the second half of Henry's reign was not untroubled by succession problems, albeit of a different sort. The crucial issues related to the nature of the polity and the transfer of power from father to son. Over the years there has been a great deal of scholarly

¹ Though Henry of Monmouth may have been born as late as August 1387, the balance of scholarly opinion is that he was born on 16 September 1386: C. Allmand, *Henry V* (London, 1992), pp. 7–8.

² *Rot. Parl.*, III, 524.

³ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 574–6, 582.

⁴ S. Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV', *Past and Present* 166 (2000), 31–65 (p. 64).

interest in the political crisis of 1406 and the experiments in conciliar rule that it set in train. Surprisingly little notice has been given, however, to the two acts for the descent of the crown that accompanied it. For the first time the royal succession was made the subject of statute. Even more remarkably, in settling the crown in the male line, the act of June 1406 laid down an order of succession at odds with custom and common law. The decision in December to rescind this act and to re-establish the rights of the heir general, regardless of sex, underlines its novelty and its political importance. The address to the succession involved an address to a future beyond Henry IV. From 1406 onwards a major problem was to manage the transition from a king who, sometimes lacking the capacity or will to rule, would not let go, and a prince who was impatient to succeed.

This paper will consider the issue of the succession in the reign of Henry IV, and examine the significance of the acts for the descent of the crown. It will necessarily set them in the context of a broader discussion of Lancastrian kingship. It will be argued that the statutory address to the succession, along with the constitutional measures that made royal authority subject to an increasing degree of conciliar and parliamentary oversight, made the Lancastrian monarchy less personal and partisan, and more public, corporate and even national. Henry's increasingly poor health was an important factor in the politics of the second half of his reign. He had a serious health scare in June 1405 and his legs were so swollen he was unable to ride in April 1406. He suffered life-threatening strokes in spring 1408 and early 1409.⁵ It has been argued that he was physically incapacitated through 1406, and that the continual council was instituted in May to assist his kingship.⁶ In this paper it is assumed that notwithstanding Parliament's broad support for the Lancastrian monarchy there were real concerns about governance, and a readiness to exploit the king's weakness for political ends. At the same time the paper contends that the king's incapacity was as much political and moral as medical, and that the critical issue in 1406 was not the king's poor health but longstanding problems of legitimacy and governance newly compounded by the censure arising from his role in the death of Archbishop Scrope in June 1405. Needless to say, in the minds of contemporaries, and in all likelihood in the mind of the king himself, the moral and the medical were inextricably linked. Henry's ill health was widely associated in contemporary chronicles with the usurpation of 1399 and the martyrdom of 1405.

In seeking to understand the politics of 1406, it is not unreasonable to go back to 1376. It is true that there were surprisingly few people whose participation in public life stretched back to the Good Parliament. Yet it would be

⁵ P. McNiven, 'The Problem of Henry IV's Health, 1405–1413', *EHR* 100 (1985), 747–72 (p. 772).

⁶ D. Biggs, 'The Politics of Health: Henry IV and the Long Parliament of 1406', in *Henry IV*, ed. Dodd and Biggs, pp. 185–205.

wrong to dismiss the possibility that the events of this time were not called to mind. The author of *Mum and the Sothsegger*, for example, is witness to the survival of a notion that it was the responsibility of parliament to call ministers to account and criticise practices inimical to the common weal.⁷ The parallels between events in 1376 and 1406 would likewise suggest that thirty years was by no means a long time in Lancastrian politics. In Edward III's last years there had been a similar interplay between parliamentary demands for the reform of government and anxiety over the succession. Especially significant for an understanding of the succession acts of 1406 is the revelation that in 1376 Edward III entailed the crown on his grandson Richard and his male heirs, with remainder to John of Gaunt and his male heirs.⁸ It is not known whether Edward obtained, or even sought parliamentary confirmation of the entail. If so, it would represent a direct precedent for the first act of 1406. Even if the measure were stillborn, it cannot have been wholly forgotten in Lancastrian circles. In addition to its implications for the house of Lancaster, it embodied a broadly shared prejudice in favour of descent in the male line, a prejudice shared by Richard II.⁹

The politics of the reign of Richard II bear even more obviously on the politics of the early fifteenth century. It needs to be borne in mind that in the thirty years before 1406 the personal exercise of power by the king was more the exception than the rule. On the accession of the ten-year-old Richard, a broadly based regency council had been established. The young king's first attempts to assert himself had led to the humiliation of the continuous council of 1386–7 and the baronial junto of 1388–9. Even after his formal declaration of his majority in 1389, Richard remained dependent on the support and counsel of the duke of Lancaster. It was only from around 1392–3 that Richard began to rule as well as reign, and from 1397 he ruled in a highhanded and arbitrary, even tyrannical, manner.¹⁰ Henry of Bolingbroke's rebellion owed much of its success to the military capacity of the Lancastrian machine.¹¹ The revolution itself, however, depended on a broad coalition of interests and concerns that can be regarded as constitutionalist.¹² There was broad

⁷ *Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. M. Day and R. Steele, EETS 199 (1936), lines 1118–33.

⁸ M. J. Bennett, 'Edward III's Entail and the Succession to the Crown, 1376–1471', *EHR* 93 (1998), 580–609.

⁹ Richard granted the right to bear the arms of St Edward the Confessor to his uncles and cousins in the male line but not to Roger Mortimer. In an alleged conversation about the succession around 1398 he focused on the relative merits of his cousins Henry of Bolingbroke and the duke of Aumale: *Chronicles of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1905), p. 52; Bennett, *Richard II*, p. 139.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–5 and ch. 6.

¹¹ See now D. Biggs, *Three Armies in Britain. The Irish Campaign of Richard II and the Usurpation of Henry IV, 1397–99* (Leiden, 2006).

¹² M. J. Bennett, 'Henry of Bolingbroke and the Revolution of 1399', in *Henry IV*, ed. Dodd and Biggs, pp. 9–34, esp. pp. 19–25.

acceptance of Henry's role as Steward of England in restraining the king and reforming the kingdom. During the rising he in effect became the governor of the realm, summoning parliament, for example, in the king's name. Still, there was an obvious need for an arrangement that offered longer-term security for the rebels. One possibility was for Richard to nominate Henry as his heir and cede him the *regimen* of the kingdom. In the event the rebels went for broke, deposing Richard and raising Henry to the throne.

The crisis of personal monarchy was by no means a uniquely English phenomenon, and developments in France and Scotland need to be seen as points of reference for England. Edward III's entail of the crown in 1376 may have been prompted by Charles V's *ordonnances* on the succession in 1374. Though they were primarily concerned with arrangements for royal minorities, they made explicit the order of succession.¹³ Richard II felt some affinity with Charles VI of France, who likewise succeeded as a child and found it hard to shake off the tutelage of his uncles. A first psychotic episode in 1392 led to longer periods of mental illness during which royal authority was vested in a series of regents and councils.¹⁴ Richard, who attributed the sad state of the French king and kingdom to the machinations of the duke of Orleans, found the situation across the Channel abhorrent.¹⁵ Scotland, too, provided food for thought. In 1373 Robert II, the first of the Stewarts, entailed the crown on his eldest son and his male heirs, and then his three brothers in turn and their male heirs.¹⁶ The settlement, ratified by the Scots Parliament, seems to be the prototype of Edward III's entail. It would assuredly have been noted by John of Gaunt.¹⁷ Though it might not have acknowledged it, the house of Lancaster had much in common with the house of Stewart. They held the stewardship of their respective kingdoms, giving them some claim to represent their respective communities. Robert II, who had served a long political apprenticeship as guardian of the realm during David II's imprisonment in England, continue to rule as *primus inter pares*, exploiting and expanding his dynastic power-base and his network of magnate allies. In 1384 he was compelled to cede power to his eldest son, John earl of Carrick, who ruled as guardian of Scotland. Apparently injured in a riding accident,

¹³ F. Autrand, 'La succession à la couronne de France et les ordonnances de 1374', in *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté à la fin du moyen âge. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Université du Maine les 25 et 26 mars 1994*, ed. J. Blanchard (Paris, 1995).

¹⁴ R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue. Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392–1420* (New York, 1986).

¹⁵ 'Mémoires de Pierre Salmon', third supplement in *Collection des chroniques nationales françaises écrite en langue vulgaire du treizième au seizième siècle, avec notes d'éclaircissements*, vol. xv, ed. J. A. Buchon (Paris, 1826), pp. 11–13; Bennett, *Richard II*, p. 115.

¹⁶ B. Webster, *Medieval Scotland: The Making of an Identity* (1997), pp. 96–7; S. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III* (East Linton, 1996), pp. 58–9.

¹⁷ There had been consideration of Gaunt as a candidate for the succession to the Scottish throne in the 1360s: Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*, pp. 42–3.

the second Stewart king, who took the name of Robert III, reigned rather than ruled. The duke of Albany, his brother, governed as lieutenant of the kingdom. The king's eldest son, the duke of Rothesay, briefly took power in 1399, but was overthrown in a coup in 1401. Albany regained control after the prince's assassination in 1401. In their modest regal style, and in their separation of the dignity from the office, the Stewarts provided a model of kingship that was a possible outcome of the revolution of 1399.

On his accession to the throne Henry IV declared his resolve to enjoy his regality as fully as his predecessors. Yet he had begun his political career as one of the lords who had destroyed the court party in 1387–8, and ultimately led the rebellion against Richard's tyranny. His professions of readiness to take counsel, reduce taxation, and rule for the common good promised a new style of kingship. His approach was collegial, and he accepted debate and criticism in parliament in a manner unthinkable in his predecessor.¹⁸ The circumstances of his accession, however, brought problems. Perhaps inevitably he found it hard to meet the range of expectations generated by the overthrow of Richard II. The chroniclers of the revolution of 1399, so uniformly hostile to the old king, show increasing signs of reserve with respect to the new dispensation. Though he rewarded them well, Henry was unable to satisfy the Percys who rose in rebellion against him in 1403. Henry found his political base narrowing rather than broadening. The members of his household and retinue likewise expected reward for their loyalty, and, more importantly perhaps, security for the future. They pressed Henry to keep his nerve, destroy opponents, and asset-strip the church. Inevitably they provoked the sort of hostility in the nation at large that Richard II's retinue had provoked.¹⁹

Above all, Henry was hamstrung by the weakness of his title. In 1399 he claimed the throne by hereditary right, presumably as Richard's nearest male heir. In making reference to his descent from Henry III, he presumably sought to highlight his doubly royal lineage rather than press into service the myth that Edmund 'Crouchback', earl of Lancaster, and not Edward I,

¹⁸ It needs to be borne in mind that the parliaments were made up of men generally loyally to the regime. A. J. Pollard, 'The Lancastrian Constitutional Experiment Revisited: Henry IV, Sir John Tiptoft and the Parliament of 1406', *Parliamentary History* 14 (1995), 103–19; G. Dodd, 'Conflict or Consensus: Henry IV and Parliament, 1399–1406', in *Social Attitudes and Political Structures in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. T. Thornton (Stroud, 2001), pp. 118–49.

¹⁹ Philip Repton, Henry's confessor, spoke out against the licence that Henry allowed his retainers: *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp. 136–43. Archbishop Arundel likewise appealed to the king on a number of occasions to reprimand the anticlerical members of his household. For example, John Capgrave, *The Chronicle of England*, ed. F. C. Hingeston, Rolls Series (London, 1858), pp. 287–8.

was Henry III's eldest son.²⁰ The Lancastrian title in 1399 was literally, and metaphorically, a committee confection. It combined the fiction of Richard's abdication, Henry's own challenge for the crown, and the acceptance of his title by the estates of the realm. From Henry's point of view what may have mattered most was that his claim had been vindicated by his success in arms.²¹ According to Adam of Usk, Henry sought to base his title on conquest. Though the Chief Justice counselled against this provocative course, Henry did not entirely give up the idea.²² He certainly won acceptance for his claim by right of conquest to the kingdom of Man following the execution of William Scrope, king of Man.²³ Henry undoubtedly saw his success in arms in providential rather than merely chivalric terms.²⁴ God had been the judge of his cause, and had found in his favour. God had approved his hereditary title, as had the estates of the realm. In this conception the legal technicalities of the matter were of lesser importance.

As Henry IV struggled to establish his regime, he can be forgiven if sometimes he began to doubt that God was on his side. Even sympathetic chroniclers record assaults on his title, and relate his arguing, in a wholly undignified manner, with friars who challenged his title. Dr William Frisby told him to his face that if Richard were alive he was the rightful king, and if he were dead then Henry, as a regicide, would forfeit whatever title he had.²⁵ A remarkable letter written by Philip Repton, his confessor, admonishing him for his rule in 1401 achieved some circulation.²⁶ The blithe confidence, born of a conviction that through the people God had raised him to the throne, gradually

²⁰ This myth would have given Henry the appearance of a better title to the throne than Richard himself. There is some evidence that it was actively promoted in Lancastrian circles in the late 1390s. *Hardyng*, pp. 353–4; *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. 8 (1987), pp. 20–1. It should be noted that Richard II seems to have regarded Henry's bloodline positively: *Chronicles of London*, ed. Kingsford, p. 52; Bennett, *Richard II*, p. 139.

²¹ Contemporaries described it as a conquest. Adam Usk wrote that Henry 'within fifty days conquered both king and kingdom': *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp. 60–1. See the similar comments of Thomas Walsingham in 'Annales', p. 250.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 282.

²³ The title by right of conquest is recorded in Henry's grant of the kingdom to the earl of Northumberland in 1399: *Monumenta de Insula Manniae or a Collection of National Documents relating to the Isle of Man*, ed. J. R. Oliver, Manx Society IV, VII and IX (Douglas, Isle of Man, 1860–2). See M. J. Bennett, 'English Rule Confirmed. The Isle of Man, 1389–1406', in *The New History of the Isle of Man. Vol. 3. The Medieval Period 1066–1405*, ed. S. Duffy (Liverpool, forthcoming).

²⁴ Walsingham marvelled at how rapidly Henry pacified and unified the realm, and saw it as 'a clear miracle of God'; 'Annales', p. 250. In general, see M. J. Bennett, 'Prophecy, Providence and the Revolution of 1399', in *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom. Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. N. Morgan (Donington, 2004), pp. 1–18, esp. pp. 16–18.

²⁵ *Eulogium Historiarum*, III, 389–94.

²⁶ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp. 136–43.

gave way to a grim resignation. Richard II's own reservations about Henry's suitability as king, that he would oppress the church, seemed to be realised in his apparent toleration of anticlericalism and impiety among the knights in his entourage. Of course, it helped that he continued to be successful in war. His success at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 must have seemed a final vindication of his title. At meetings in September and December 1403 the magnates publicly reiterated oaths of loyalty and obedience to Henry IV and, after his death, Prince Henry.²⁷ In February 1404 the Lords and Commons in Parliament confirmed their allegiance to the king, the prince of Wales and the heirs of his body. The recently pardoned earl of Northumberland's oath 'on the cross of Canterbury to be a faithful and loyal liege' to the king, the prince, his brothers and their issue 'in line of inheritance to the crown, in accordance with the laws of England', was specifically recorded.²⁸

Nonetheless Henry IV continued to face opposition. The northern rising of 1405 lethally combined mundane grievances and an assault on the Lancastrian title.²⁹ The defeat of the rising and the execution of Archbishop Scrope of York for his complicity in it marked a watershed in his reign. To put to death a senior and respected prelate was an awesome undertaking. Archbishop Arundel of Canterbury rode north to beg the king to show mercy. Henry's resolve was reportedly steeled by his retainers threatening to desert him unless the death sentence was exacted. In the end the act cost him dear, not least in peace of mind. He was struck down by illness, allegedly on the day of the execution.³⁰ For the rest of his life his capacity and confidence were undermined by his increasingly poor health. His regular expressions of intent in later years to lead armies against his foes perhaps reflect a deep-seated need to test and vindicate himself anew.³¹ The manner in which his illness was reported by chroniclers leaves little doubt that his sickness was seen as a reflection on the moral legitimacy of his rule.

The defeat of the rising of 1405 should have set the seal on the Lancastrian

²⁷ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 574. The record only refers to councils held at Worcester and Westminster, but since the context makes plain that they took place before the parliament of 1404, they would seem to refer to the meetings in September and December 1403: Kirby, *Henry IV*, pp. 159, 161.

²⁸ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 524.

²⁹ For general discussion, see P. McNiven, 'The Betrayal of Archbishop Scrope', *BJRL* 54 (1971), 173–213; S. Walker, 'The Yorkshire Risings of 1405: Texts and Contexts', in *Henry IV*, ed. Dodd and Biggs, pp. 161–84.

³⁰ *Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. J. Raine, 3 vols. (Rolls Series, 1886–94), II, 308–9. There is documentary evidence to support the later but highly circumstantial reports that he was struck down by illness on the day of the execution: McNiven, 'Problem of Henry IV's Health', pp. 747–8. In the following month he was anxious to reassure people his health was improving and to suppress rumours: J. W. McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope', *Speculum* 45 (1970), 608–23 (p. 612).

³¹ McNiven, 'Problem of Henry IV's Health', pp. 761–2.

regime. Henry's role in Archbishop Scrope's death, however, fatally undermined his kingship. The king moved rapidly to present to Pope Innocent VII his account of the proceedings. He reputedly sent him the archbishop's coat of mail as evidence of his involvement in armed rebellion. The pope was not impressed, and issued a bull excommunicating all who had counselled or agreed to the archbishop's death, a form of words that manifestly brought Henry under the ban of the church.³² Henry was fortunate that in the circumstances of the Schism the pope was in no position to take a firm line with a monarch on whose support he depended. He was fortunate, too, that Archbishop Arundel took it on himself, in the interests of public order, not to publish the bull.³³ Over the winter of 1405–6, however, few people can have imagined that they had heard the last of Archbishop Scrope, or that Henry was fully reconciled with the church and blessed by God. The popular verdict on the affair, at least in the north of England, can be gauged from the reports of miracles and the growth of a cult at Scrope's tomb in York.³⁴ Archbishop Arundel wrote to the canons at York late in 1405 asking them to prevent people from flocking to the tomb, at least until the reports of miracles could be properly authenticated.³⁵

Parliament assembled on 1 March 1406 in a truculent mood. It is likely that concerns about the king's relations with the church, even anxieties that excommunication could lead to a general interdict, added to the customary frustrations with regard to the government of the realm. The chancellor who opened parliament on the king's behalf represented in his own person the sad state of affairs. Thomas Langley was the king's candidate as archbishop of York. He had been elected, with indecent haste, by the cathedral chapter after Scrope's execution. The pope refused to confirm the election, and it was all too clear that the see of York would be vacant for some time.³⁶ The death of Bishop Walden of London in January 1406 raised the prospect of another stand-off between the crown and the curia and another protracted vacancy.³⁷ One stroke of good fortune at this time was the capture of Prince James, the

³² It was reported in England that Innocent VII was greatly distressed by Archbishop Scrope's death: Raine, *Historians of York*, II, 310. It is unclear whether the coat of mail was sent to Innocent or his successor: *Incerti scriptoris chronicon Angliae de regnis trium regum Lancastrensiū, Henrici IV, Henrici V, et Henrici VI*, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1848), pp. 47–8; *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*, ed. J. S. Davies, Camden Society, Original Series, lxiv (1856), pp. 33–4.

³³ *Eulogium Historiarum*, III, 408.

³⁴ For the rapid development of the cult, see McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda', pp. 611–17.

³⁵ R. G. Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope: Henry IV, the Papacy and the English Episcopate, 1405–8', *BJRL*, 59 (1976–7), 40–74 (p. 41 n.).

³⁶ TNA, SC 10/43/2012; Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope', p. 53.

³⁷ The see was vacant from August 1404 until June 1405 when Henry, perhaps as a concession after Scrope's execution, accepted the papal translation of Roger Walden to London: Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope', pp. 48–50.

eldest son of Robert III of Scotland. He was sailing to France to be educated at the French court. Henry grimly observed that he could teach him French quite as well. James succeeded as king on his father's death in April 1406 but remained in captivity in England until 1424. The duke of Albany continued to rule in Scotland.³⁸

The chronology of the negotiations between the king and the pope is a little hard to track. Even more obscure is the process by which Henry, under the direction of his confessors, set himself right with God. There is much to commend the old view that Henry himself was mightily troubled by his conscience.³⁹ By spring 1406, pressure was almost certainly mounting on the king and his kingship. The holy season of Lent and Easter, the first since Scrope's execution, would have represented a crucial stage on the road to reconciliation. Adding to the stress at this time, reports of miracles at Scrope's tomb were circulating ever more widely. In April Henry wrote personally to the chapter at York instructing it not to publicise them and to divert pilgrims to other shrines.⁴⁰ Around this time, too, Northumberland and his allies circulated new manifestoes claiming that Scrope had been killed because he had counselled Henry to do penance for the death of Richard II and calling for the crown to be restored to the right line.⁴¹

The parliament of 1406 that began in confusion and acrimony broke early for Easter. Henry moved to Windsor to participate in the Garter festivities. On 28 April he wrote to the council that he would have to postpone his return to Westminster. He had been suddenly afflicted in the leg, and his physicians had declared him unfit to ride.⁴² On the resumption of proceedings at the beginning of May, parliament returned to concerns relating to the king's household and the government of the realm. The Speaker reminded Henry that they 'had been promised good governance, and that the archbishop had said that the king would be advised by the wisest counsellors, who would oversee the whole government of the realm'. The king agreed to cede his authority to a council of magnates, including Archbishop Arundel, and to accept rules for the conduct of administration. He conceded that he could not attend to business as much as he would wish and was happy to be relieved of the work.⁴³ The archbishop and his colleagues showed themselves reluctant to assume the burden, and took the opportunity to point out that

³⁸ Kirby, *Henry IV*, p. 195.

³⁹ *LKLG*, pp. 103–4.

⁴⁰ Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope', p. 41 n.

⁴¹ *Historians of the Church of York*, ed. Raine, II, 304–5; Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, ed. J. E. T. Rogers (Oxford, 1881), pp. 229–31. For dating, see Walker, 'The Yorkshire Risings of 1405', p. 173.

⁴² *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399–1422)*, ed. J. L. Kirby (London, 1978), nos. 588 and 1589.

⁴³ A. J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399–1509* (London, 2000), p. 56.

they could not well serve the king and kingdom without a vote of supply.⁴⁴ They recognised well enough the seriousness of the responsibilities they were being called on to assume. They were being asked to assume, in some measure, a form of regency. They were also involved in discussion relating to a new settlement of the crown.

It has been argued that Henry's ill health and indeed fears for his life best account for the crisis of 1406.⁴⁵ Parliament was largely comprised of men with a strong record of service to the house of Lancaster. If the king were incapacitated, it might help explain their seeking to put the crown in commission. It was a way of saving the Lancastrian regime and, through the confirmation of the succession, securing its future. The problem is that it is by no means clear that Henry was ill for any length of time in 1406. He was briefly incapacitated at Windsor in May. Nonetheless it is reasonable to assume that on his return to the capital he participated in the important business in council and parliament. In so far as he distanced himself somewhat from proceedings, he had good reason to do so, given the lack of responsiveness from parliament to his needs. Overall, the temper of the lords and knights seems more curmudgeonly than sympathetic. Conversely, if Henry were seriously ill, he was a poor patient. The point may have been that Henry was incapacitated by more than physical ailments. He was – or was presumably assumed to be – under sentence of excommunication. England's two largest cities lacked bishops, and there was perhaps concern about a general interdict. His authority in the English church was being undermined. Even close friends like Thomas Langley seem to have been making their own deals with Rome.⁴⁶ There was perhaps never any prospect that Henry would feel obliged to replicate the public penance of Henry II after the death of Thomas Becket. Still, there was the need for some resolution of the matter, including perhaps some public act of reconciliation. The approach of Whitsuntide, the time for the final absolution of the sins of the past year, and indeed the approach of the anniversary of Scrope's death on 8 June doubtless heightened expectations.

The first succession act needs to be considered against this background. According to the parliament roll, Sir John Tiptoft, the Speaker of the Commons, introduced the issue of the succession in a petition to the king on 7 June. The petition recalled the earlier settlements and oaths. It observed that evil-minded people had nonetheless 'through false information, done their best to cause the hearts of your faithful lieges to be swayed, as a result of which numerous commotions and riots have occurred amongst your people ... to the great joy of your enemies'. It asked the king to ordain a statute for the succession and to have it 'openly published and made known to all realms'

⁴⁴ Kirby, *Henry IV*, pp. 197–8.

⁴⁵ Pollard, *Late Medieval England*, pp. 55–6; Biggs, 'The Politics of Health', *passim*.

⁴⁶ Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope', p. 60.

under the Great Seal and with the seals of all the lords and the Speaker of the House of Commons.⁴⁷ The resulting statute, however, was no mere clarification of the existing arrangements. The king ordained that 'the heredity or inheritance of our crown ... shall reside with us and our male heirs issuing from our body', and laid down an order of succession beginning with the prince of Wales and his male heirs, and his other three sons and their male heirs. The settlement in the male line was at variance with what was assumed to be the custom of the realm in relation to the descent of the crown.⁴⁸ Even as recently as 1402 Henry IV's ministers had informed the Danish government that 'it was the English custom for the crown, in default of males, to descend to females'.⁴⁹ The anomalous nature of the settlement is underlined by its replacement in December by a new act according to which the descent of the crown was vested in Henry, the prince and their heirs, regardless of sex.⁵⁰

The new settlement may simply have been the product of tensions within the house of Lancaster. Like the entail of 1376, it reflected a family compact in the interests of dynastic solidarity. There was some need to take into account the interests of the wider royal family as well as the heir apparent. Henry's daughters and sisters were already married or betrothed.⁵¹ His younger sons still lacked proper provision. In the new settlement the king publicly confirmed the prince of Wales as his heir, but the prince in turn conceded to his brothers the succession in preference to any female of his line. It was because of the adverse impact on the prince's position, presumably, that it was specifically recorded that he was 'wholly contented with and fully agreed to this ordinance'. From the parliamentary petition it appears that the prince's standing was a matter of some concern. In lavishing praise on him, it affirmed that there was no one of any rank who showed more honour, reverence and obedience to his father than the prince did, and that although he sometimes made errors, he always acted with the best of intentions, and was ever ready to be overruled by council.⁵² It is hard to escape the conclusion that the prince had blotted his copy-book, and that his place in the line of succession had been in doubt.

A professed aim of the act was the clarification of the succession in response

⁴⁷ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 574.

⁴⁸ The English commitment to the common law rules of inheritance in relation to women is evident in Edward I's settlement in 1290: *Foedera*, II, 497; Bennett, 'Edward III's Entail and the Succession to the Crown', p. 591.

⁴⁹ *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth*, ed. F. C. Hingeston, 2 vols. (Rolls Series, 1860), I, 120.

⁵⁰ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 582.

⁵¹ Sir John Cornwall, Henry's brother-in-law, was urgently summoned in late April to appear before the council 'on certain pressing matters intimately concerning the state of the king and the kingdom': TNA, E 403/587, m. 1. The messengers were paid on 20 April 1406.

⁵² *Rot. Parl.*, III, 582.

to 'false information' that had created uncertainty and division. The context would suggest that the allegations related to recent developments, not to the old issue of the legitimacy of the Lancastrian title. There was almost certainly some speculation in the spring of 1405 that the king would step down, permanently or temporarily. In negotiating for peace and a marriage between the prince and a French princess in March, Bishop Beaufort reportedly informed the French representatives that the king was planning to resign the crown on the occasion of his son's marriage.⁵³ In so far as the king was contemplating such a course, he may have resented the alacrity with which the prince and his allies sought to anticipate it. Possibly there were rumours that the king would vest the succession to the crown on Thomas, his second and allegedly favourite son. According to feudal tradition, the eldest son had no right to expect more from his father than the patrimony. There may have been some reflection on the precedent of William the Conqueror who settled the duchy of Normandy on his eldest son and allowed the kingdom of England to pass to his second son.⁵⁴ Significantly enough, the duchy of Lancaster was specifically excluded from the tail male in June 1406, and remained vested in Prince Henry and his issue.⁵⁵

Needless to say, an entail of the crown in the male line had its appeal. It is instructive that Robert II of Scotland in 1373 claimed that such a settlement would help avoid 'uncertainty of succession' and 'the misfortunes and calamities which in most places and kingdoms happen ... from the succession of female heirs'.⁵⁶ It is tempting to regard the act as the fulfilment of a longstanding Lancastrian ambition. In 1376 John of Gaunt reputedly sought parliamentary support for a law 'on the pattern of the French that no woman be heir to the kingdom'.⁵⁷ The house of Lancaster would have been the main beneficiary of Edward III's entail of the crown on Richard Bordeaux and his male heirs. For supporters of the Lancastrian regime a clear adoption of the principle of succession in the male line gave the best security for the future. The entail itself provided a clear framework for the transfer of power between the generations. An entail in the male line provided a firmer underpinning for the Lancastrian monarchy, especially in the next generation. One crucial point was that it made Prince Henry, after his father, the lawful heir

⁵³ Enguerran de Monstrelet, *Chronique*, ed. L. Doüet-d'Arcq (Paris, 1857), I, 126; G. L. Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort. A Study of Lancastrian Ascendancy and Decline* (Oxford, 1998), p. 40. Bishop Beaufort was involved in negotiations in Calais in the period 26 March to 22 May 1406, TNA, E 403/589, m. 7.

⁵⁴ According to one chronicle, King William, conscious that he had no right to the kingdom of England other than by conquest, declared that he could not leave it otherwise than to God. He did nonetheless express the hope that God would allow his second son to obtain it. D. C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (London, 1964), pp. 360–1.

⁵⁵ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 576.

⁵⁶ Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*, p. 58.

⁵⁷ *Chronicon Angliae, 1328–1388*, ed. E. Maunde Thompson (Rolls Series, 1857), pp. 92–3.

of Richard II. The prince himself was sentimental with respect to the former king who showed him great favour. According to an early tradition, Richard had prophesied a glorious future for the youth, and may have adopted him as his heir.⁵⁸ The prince reciprocated Richard's affection, and honoured his memory.⁵⁹ Politically he presented himself as Richard's heir, building bridges with former Ricardians like the duke of York and rebuilding the Ricardian connecton in Cheshire and Wales. The act of June 1406 laid down an order of succession that at least appeared to offer the prospect of the restoration of the crown to the right line.

In the event the first succession act did not hold. In annulling it, the act of December 1406 merely declared that in excluding females it had been too restrictive.⁶⁰ The only chronicler to include any detail on the acts does no more than summarise the parliament roll.⁶¹ It seems likely that the circumstances that made the settlement appear sensible changed over the succeeding months. In so far as it was designed to facilitate an early transition of power from the king to the prince it became less fit for purpose. If the king ever contemplated abdication, he clearly resolved to soldier on, even if he only reigned rather than ruled. He lingered in London through June, and in the following month embarked on a leisurely progress through East Anglia. One aim was to accompany his daughter Philippa as far as King's Lynn, whence she was sailing to Scandinavia for her marriage to King Eric.⁶² The royal party included Queen Joan, two of the princes and various other notables. The tour, though, had some of the flavour of a pilgrimage. He went out of his way to visit Walsingham.⁶³ By chance a detailed record of his time at Bardney abbey is extant. On arrival he dismounted and went down on his knees to kiss the holy cross and be blessed by the abbot. Inside the church he reverently kissed other relics, and heard two masses in the richly adorned Lady Chapel. The next day he spent time in the library perusing the collection.⁶⁴ He may indeed have been seeking a cure for his earlier illness.⁶⁵ He was much more obviously a penitent.

In relation to ecclesiastical censure, Henry remained in a limbo. Prior to the summer recess he sought support from the peerage for his view that

⁵⁸ *Thomae de Elmham, Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1727), p. 5.

⁵⁹ He organized Richard's reburial of Richard at Westminster in 1413, prompting the observation that he showed more love for his adopted father than his real father. *The St Albans Chronicle 1406–1420*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Oxford, 1937), p. 77.

⁶⁰ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 582.

⁶¹ *Chronicon Angliae de regnis trium regum Lancastrensium*, pp. 49–52.

⁶² For details see Biggs, 'Henry IV and the Long Parliament', pp. 197–8 and 205 (itinerary).

⁶³ Philippa rested at Thetford while Henry and his queen made a detour through Norwich to Walsingham: Wyle, *Henry IV*, II, 448.

⁶⁴ John Leland, *Antiquarii de rebus Britannicis collectanea*, 6 vols. (London, 1770), VI, 300–1.

⁶⁵ Cf. Biggs, 'Henry IV and the Long Parliament', pp. 197–8.

Archbishop Scrope and the Earl Marshal had been guilty of treason. The lords pointedly declined to commit themselves on the issue.⁶⁶ Fortunately the king had greater leverage at the Roman curia. There was a growing consensus in Christendom that the rival popes should resign to facilitate a healing of the schism. Henry's envoys to Rome proceeded by way of Paris and Avignon. Prior to their arrival in Italy, Innocent VII died, and the Roman cardinals had elected Gregory XII. The new pope was again expected to resign in the interests of union. Henry's emissaries remained with Gregory until spring 1408.⁶⁷ During this time progress was made in filling key positions in the English church. In all likelihood, too, Gregory was brought round to a more favourable view of Henry's role in Archbishop Scrope's death and Henry's subsequent remorse and penance. In April 1408 he finally issued a bull authorising the bishops of Durham and Lincoln to absolve Henry. Even then, it was not published in England until December.⁶⁸

The summer recess of 1406 did not bring any resolution to the political impasse in England. Parliament resumed business on 18 October, but there was little progress for the best part of the month. Far from making financial provision, the Commons petitioned the king for the Lords to be asked to investigate and declare the causes of 'bad governance'.⁶⁹ A breakthrough occurred only at the eleventh hour. A few days before Christmas the Commons granted a subsidy in return not only for the right to audit the accounts and for the acceptance of some thirty-one articles that made provision for the government of the realm until the end of the next parliament. The king was to be guided in all matters by the Council, whose powers and responsibilities were also limited and laid down. Two other measures were enacted. One was an ambitious measure against Lollards and their anticlerical fellow-travellers. It required all peers and office-holders to take the initiative in arresting and examining all who lobbied against the church, the sacraments and church property.⁷⁰ The other was the revision of the succession act of June 1406. It claimed that the earlier restriction to the male line had been made in error, and reinstated the descent of the crown to the four princes and their issue, regardless of sex.⁷¹

In this final session of parliament the increasing political profile of the prince of Wales is all too evident. For some time he had been establishing his reputation as a military commander in Wales. In November he first appeared

⁶⁶ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 606.

⁶⁷ Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope', p. 72.

⁶⁸ *The Register of Bishop Philip Repingdon 1405–1419. Vol. 1. Memoranda 1405–11*, ed. M. Archer (Lincoln Record Society, 1963), pp. 135–40.

⁶⁹ J. H. Ramsay, *Lancaster and York. A Century of English History (A.D. 1399–1485)* (Oxford, 1892), I, 101.

⁷⁰ P. Heath, *Church and Realm 1272–1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crises* (London, 1988), pp. 253–4.

⁷¹ *Rot. Parl.*, III, 582.

as a member of council. In the following month he led the lords in pressing for the act against the Lollards. His well-publicised role suggests that he was seeking to add 'political and theological leadership to the generalship he had already displayed on the battlefield'.⁷² It seems likely, too, that the revision to the act of succession reflected his growing ascendancy. The negotiations for his marriage over the summer may have made him more conscious of the disadvantages from his point of view of the male tail. There may have been a broader acknowledgment that the June act was at variance with the laws and customs of the realm. It must be supposed that this was the view of Archbishop Arundel, who was now emerging as the dominant figure in the government. His role in another conservative measure on the succession has likewise been generally assumed. In February 1407 the Beauforts successfully petitioned for a ratification of Richard II's act legitimising them. The ratification was duly made, but a restriction was introduced barring them from the succession.⁷³ For Arundel and presumably for many other magnates, the crown was not in the gift of the king, still less the heirloom of a tainted branch of the royal family.

The role of Archbishop Arundel in the broader political settlement of 1406 was absolutely pivotal. During the first half of the reign he had provided ballast for the Lancastrian regime, but had not been directly involved in government. The king's execution of his fellow archbishop, notwithstanding his protestations and the king's assurances, must have inclined him to wash his hands entirely of the Lancastrian monarchy. Immediately after the episode Arundel himself fell ill, and doubtless found the whole situation personally distressing and the fall-out in terms of papal bulls of censure and reports of miracles at York hard to manage. During 1406 it must have been evident that without his active support the king could not survive politically. In June, for example, the Commons was especially keen to ascertain that Arundel was willing to serve on the Council.⁷⁴ Many people probably regarded his role as essential for the stability of the regime and the unity of the realm. Arundel himself appreciated the need for order, but a major consideration for him was the defence of the church. On a number of occasions he had used his influence with Henry to counter moves in the royal household and parliament against the liberties and property of the church.⁷⁵ He must have been very concerned that an excommunicated and increasingly isolated king would be driven, in despair, to even greater dependence on his anticlerical retainers. The measures of December 1406, especially the measures against heretics and opponents of the church, almost certainly reflect his influence.

⁷² Heath, *Church and Realm 1272–1461*, p. 253.

⁷³ Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort*, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, p. 91.

⁷⁵ For example, in Arundel's response to Sir John Cheyne in 1404: Capgrave, *Chronicle of England*, pp. 287–8.

Archbishop Arundel apparently accepted the chancellorship with great reluctance in January 1407, and only after the king's personal entreaties. According to Thomas Walsingham, the decision to do so was injurious to his reputation.⁷⁶ Given the extent to which Arundel was able to use the office to advance the interests of the church, the chronicler's statement can be explained only by reference to the compromise of principle involved in Arundel's decision to support a king under censure for the death of his archiepiscopal colleague. His government was certainly able to bring a measure of stability. In the parliament that met at Gloucester in autumn 1407 he was able to keep a firm lid on debate as well as push forward with his measures against Lollardy. The defeat of the earl of Northumberland by county levies under the command of the sheriff of Yorkshire at Bramham Moor in 1408 is remarkable testimony to the robustness of the regime. During this time he was able to restore Henry to the grace of the church. In June 1407 Henry headed northwards to York. The itinerary, including visits to Beverley and Bridlington, has the appearance of 'a pilgrimage, an attempt to atone for the murder of the archbishop.'⁷⁷ Arundel's opening sermon to the parliament in October, on the text 'honour the king', perhaps signalled the king's reconciliation with the church. On 12 April 1408 the pope finally issued a bull absolving the men responsible for the archbishop's death.⁷⁸ Henry was never so completely dependent on Arundel's moral support and spiritual counsel as during the winter of 1408–9. He suffered what seems to have been a stroke. Convalescing at Greenwich he made his will on 22 January 1409. Describing himself as 'a sinful wretch', he left his body to be buried at Canterbury at his colleague's discretion.⁷⁹ In choosing Canterbury rather than Westminster or Windsor, he submitted himself to the protection of Thomas Becket himself.

The crisis of 1406 produced a rather more corporate version of Lancastrian kingship. The initiatives that made the exercise of royal authority subject to conciliar restraint, and insisted that the council be named in and accountable to parliament, have long been recognised as important in terms of the development of more limited and less personal monarchy. The acts of succession need to be seen in relation to them. Earlier kings had sought to lay down orders of succession, and to bind their leading subjects to support the arrangement. Edward III may have intended his entail to be ratified by parliament, and Richard II may have addressed the succession in parliament. In 1399 and 1404 the lords in parliament swore fealty to the king and his sons. Still, the acts of 1406 represent the first recorded statutes regulating the descent of the crown. Though the initiative may have come from the king and the royal family, they had the effect of affirming a broader interest in the crown, both

⁷⁶ *St Albans Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Kirby, *Henry IV*, p. 213.

⁷⁸ *The Register of Bishop Philip Repingdon*, ed. Archer, pp. 135–40.

⁷⁹ BL, Harley MS 293, fol. 92r.

in terms of the persons named as heirs and in terms of the broader political nation involved in the statute-making. Henry's kingship was reconstituted, at least temporarily, as both family firm and public company.

The corporate character of Lancastrian kingship even took symbolic form. Late in 1406 or early in 1407 a new seal was struck. Exquisitely designed, it showed Henry IV seated in the middle of a perpendicular screen under the protection of the Virgin and flanked by St Michael, St George, St Edward and St Edmund. Supporting the king, however, are the shields with the arms of Prince Henry as prince of Wales, duke of Cornwall and earl of Chester.⁸⁰ An interest in enhancing the dignity of Prince Henry and in incorporating the son into his father's kingship is evident in new titles and styles. An indenture of September 1407, for example, recorded that Rees ap Gruffydd and his cohorts made an agreement with the 'most serene Prince Henry by the grace of God eldest son of the king of England and prince of Wales' to serve either King Henry or Prince Henry if they come to Wales.⁸¹ Needless to say, behind this show of unity, there appears to have been a growing rift. Prince Henry's alienation from the king and his chief minister is suggested by two incidents at the Gloucester parliament. Still occupied in the siege of Aberystwyth, Henry arrived at the end of October and took up residence in Llanthony priory. His wardrobe accounts record a visit to him by Archbishop Arundel, the duke of York and others as emissaries of 'the greater part' of the lords spiritual and temporal.⁸² In his only recorded contribution to proceedings, the prince flamboyantly went down on his knees to declare his loyalty to his father and to praise the faithful service of the much maligned duke of York.⁸³

Originally instituted for a period of twelve months, Arundel's ministry continued in effect until the end of 1409. Its key task was to maintain order and stability during the inevitable transfer of power between generations. The king resolutely maintained his grip on the crown. His health continued to deteriorate, but bouts of debilitating illness were interspersed with periods of activity and assertion. He grimly acknowledged the unpopularity of his rule. He issued a general pardon to his subjects so that they 'may bear more cheerful hearts towards us and our heirs, more truly to remain in faith and love.'⁸⁴ The prince, however, proved impatient for power, and perhaps only a man of Archbishop Arundel's age and stature could have held the king's corner against the increasing body of support for the heir apparent. Over the

⁸⁰ J. Cherry, 'Some Lancastrian Seals', in *The Lancastrian Court. Proceedings of the Harlaxton 2001 Symposium*, ed. J. Stratford (Donington, 2003), pp. 19–28 (p. 20).

⁸¹ *St Albans Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, pp. 22–7 (p. 23).

⁸² Wylie, *Henry IV*, IV, p. 229.

⁸³ Kirby, *Henry IV*, p. 217.

⁸⁴ E. Powell, *Kingship, Law, and Society. Criminal Justice in the Reign of Henry V* (Oxford, 1985), p. 125.

winter of 1409–10 the prince and his allies secured Arundel's resignation. Through 1410 and 1411 they ruled the kingdom in the king's name. Thomas Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, composed and dedicated to the prince in 1411, is compelling testimony to the sort of self-image that Prince Henry was cultivating.⁸⁵ It was presumably at this time that Bishop Beaufort called on the king to abdicate. Prince Henry withdrew from the capital to rally support, but found himself dangerously exposed. Desperately mobilising public opinion on his behalf, Prince Henry issued a manifesto from Coventry in May 1412. He claimed that evil-minded people conspiring to alter the succession were spreading the report that he sought his father's crown. The prince vigorously asserted his loyalty. Gathering a large company, he rode to London with great fanfare, but on arrival he sought an audience with his father, fell to his knees and, somewhat histrionically, presented his father with a dagger to kill him if he so desired.⁸⁶

The stories about Henry IV on his deathbed in spring 1413 are hard to resist. He reputedly rallied briefly to find that his crown had been taken by the prince of Wales, and asked the prince by what right he had the crown since he himself had none.⁸⁷ On his confessor's urging him to repent for the usurpation and his role in the death of Archbishop Scrope, he reportedly replied that he had papal absolution for Scrope's death but that his sons would never allow him to make restitution of the kingdom.⁸⁸ Obviously such stories cannot be taken literally as records of events. They appear in later chronicles, and cannot have been based on more than hearsay. Nonetheless they almost certainly reflect stories in circulation at the time of the king's death, if not at the time of his earlier seizures. It is possible, for example, that some elements had their genesis in the aftermath of 1405 when speculation about the state of the king's health and soul, and about the possibility of his abdication and of the succession of his son, presumably began. Other stories about Henry IV's death suggest that many people believed that the king had not done full satisfaction for his sins. It was reported that he intended to go as a pilgrim to Jerusalem, but instead found that his destiny was die in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey.⁸⁹ There is the tale that his plan to be buried near the shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury was thwarted, through the intervention of the martyred archbishop of York, by bargemen throwing his corpse in the river.

In this sense the period between 1406 and 1413 can be seen as a protracted

⁸⁵ D. Pearsall, 'Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation', *Speculum* 69 (1994), 386–410.

⁸⁶ *St Albans Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, pp. 65–7 (p. 66); LKLG, p. 110; P. McNiven, 'Prince Henry and the English Political Crisis of 1412', *History* 65 (1980), 1–16.

⁸⁷ Monstrelet, *Chronique*, II, 338.

⁸⁸ Capgrave, *Chronicle of England*, pp. 302–3.

⁸⁹ *Eulogium Historiarum*, III, 421.

succession crisis. The address to the succession in parliament in 1406 for the first time established a clear reversionary interest. The incorporation of the crown as a family firm rebuilt political consensus among the men who had brought about the revolution of 1399. At the same time it confirmed the right to succeed of a prince who, through his association with Richard II, offered the prospect of national renewal and reconciliation. Politically the period is very much of a piece. The polity confronted a singular problem as to whether, in the words of Peter McNiven, 'to treat Henry as basically competent, even though afflicted by occasional bouts of severe illness, or as a chronic invalid with spells of passable health'.⁹⁰ The great challenge, however, was to chart a course between a still formidable king and an increasingly ambitious king in the making. The sources for the second half of Henry IV's reign are poor and it is difficult to obtain a clear view of the personalities and politics. What is striking is the degree to which patterns evident at the end of the reign appear to be foreshadowed in 1406. There are the first signs of the recurrent illness, evidence of some rupture in the relationship between king and prince, reports that the king was contemplating abdication, and concerns that the prince's position in the line of succession might be under threat. The event that marks the new epoch is the execution of Archbishop Scrope. For several years at least it undermined, far more lethally than illness, the king's political capacity and moral leadership. The succession acts of 1406 served to broaden the basis of Lancastrian monarchy, but in so doing they mapped out a future beyond Henry IV.

⁹⁰ McNiven, 'Problem of Henry IV's Health', p. 772.