

INTRODUCTION

Here at last is the long awaited *Tudor Story*, by the late Canon William Pakenham-Walsh, the third volume in our Churches' Fellowship series of publications. It is a remarkable document, and one which readers may find somewhat diffuse and over-spacious, but which in the main it has been quite impossible to shorten or abridge without damaging the feeling of the story, and obscuring something of the character of the writer, whose integrity, enthusiasm, simplicity (*sancta simplicitas*) romanticism and essential goodness, courtesy and holiness shine through every page.

Those of us who have been privileged to know him would all subscribe to the verdict passed by a Greater One than ourselves on Nathaniel 'Truly an Israelite in whom there is no guile', as being abundantly true of his character as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I say this because this volume can quite obviously be shot down by critics in many places. The Canon, in his earlier contacts with sensitives especially, broke almost every rule of a good 'sitter'—he gave away names and places, and dates even; he suggested answers to which the sensitive usually answered 'Yes', (not unnaturally the critical would say!) and by overhasty identification of signs or symbols often appears to have begged the very case which he thought he was genuinely trying to elucidate or prove. But no one who knew him would ever attribute to him anything other than the most complete integrity (some might call it *naïveté*) and if this story is not what it appears to be *prima facie*, then our verdict can only be that the Canon deceived no one but himself. It is clear that he believed implicitly in the objective reality of the story which unfolded itself over so many years and through so many different channels to him.

Yet when all is reckoned up—there are certain elements in this tale which do appear to have intruded spontaneously into the jig-saw pattern—the apparently inexplicable writing of the Lament of Anny Boleyn by Mrs Monson *before* she had ever heard of him or his Tudor interests; as well as the quite misunderstood message regarding ‘SEND’ which it took the Canon 12 months to unravel, and above the quite extraordinary chain of ‘coincidences’—whatever may be the metaphysical explanation of these—which led him on from step to step in his knightly pilgrimage as *champion* of this obviously highly wronged and maligned lady of a bygone age. Those who have made even a little progress in the path of spiritual understanding and believe that they have perceived some slight glimmering as to the ways in which Providence works, will perhaps be more impressed with this coincidental framework to the story than those who view it coldly and objectively, because they know how true are Newman’s words about ‘one step enough for me’, which was certainly the Canon’s way of approach to his subject, as he sought the guidance of his Master.

There are, it seems to me, only two possible verdicts on this story—one that it is basically and objectively true, and that the picture of the interweaving of the two worlds, and the whole exquisite story of the wise, wonderful, stern and yet infinitely just and loving workings of Our Heavenly Father, of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Spirit accomplishing in human souls ‘the purpose of His perfect will’ for the forgiveness and ultimate redemption of even the worst of sinners is both objectively and spiritually true: *or* that this *Tudor Story* is the extremely complicated and laboriously worked out projection through the minds of many sensitives and situations of the Creative subconscious inspiration of the Canon himself, writing through many hands, as it were, another and more powerful imaginative drama around the person of the Lady Anne towards whom he had conceived a truly touching and romantic attachment and devotion.

Mrs Gwen Vivian, his very old friend to whom we are deeply indebted for the revision and editing of this story, herself a convinced believer in the possibility of communication, and incidentally in the veracity of this story, has written a book entitled *Love*

Conquers Death. If the first requisite of good communication with the world of the spirit is the nexus of a genuine, sincere and selfless love – a factor which can hardly enter into scientific laboratory experiments and statistical reckonings or evaluations of E.S.P. – then we can both understand how it is that genuine contact with the unseen world is so rare, and if genuine often so banal, because such high love and devotion is so rare a quality in our workaday world, and also how difficult it is to *prove* that such contacts are genuine. For the ‘sancta simplicitas’ of such a selfless love does not take account of the ‘nicely calculated less or more’ of the scientific laboratory, and lays itself open to many of the slings and arrows of outraged critics against which it can only cry with Pascal ‘Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas’. (The heart has its reasons which reason cannot understand), or rise up with Browning and answer ‘I have felt’.

It is because the ‘feeling’ of this story to me is right, that I venture in spite of much critical raising of mine own eyebrows at the Canon’s lapses in scientific technique, to come down on the side of the authenticity of this story, on the evidence at present before me. If God is what I believe Him to be, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a perfectly just, infinitely patiently and wholly loving Father, and not the ogre of vindictive sadism, or the stern retributive judge more concerned for the satisfaction of His outraged majesty than with the achievement of redemptive love, which some theologians have pictured Him to be, then the process of the redemption of Henry, as well as the far less important but none the less just vindication of Anne herself seems to me to be just what ought to happen, and gives us a profound standard by which to evaluate the lives of many prominent men and women of history, *sub specie eternitatis*, giving much food for thought to historian and moralist alike.

I can only hope in faith and trust that God *is* like this. To me such divine justice tempered by love and mercy gives rise to feelings of profound penitence, humility, hope and Love. And if the mechanics of the writings are vulnerable, and could be completely shot down, and the story shown to be merely the product of the late Canon’s own creative and imaginative inspiration – then it is still of profound significance as an essay in

the moral theology of judgement, and as being the poetic vision of a noble and saintly man as to the ways in which God's providential ordering of the universe of spirits is at work. As such it might be considered a Protestant prose poem of such delicacy of spiritual vision and such profundity of moral insight as would make it worthy to be set alongside of the great Roman Catholic Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*, enshrining perhaps even more rational moral and spiritual values than the great Cardinal's poem of life, death, judgement and redemption.

Canon Pakenham-Walsh died in 1960 at the age of 92. He had prepared the MSS. for publication before his death and we have felt it wise to leave certain passages relating to this as he wrote them, because they are also a part of his character. Whether or not the communications received since his death are genuine or not (see Appendix) those of us who are Christians will feel certain that both these great figures of Catholic sympathies who when on earth knew in part, now know in entirety and see face to face, and each can say,

'And with the morn those angel faces shine
Which I have loved long since and lost a while'.

JOHN D. PEARCE-HIGGINS.

Putney Vicarage, 1963.