

Autumn No.5

Autumn Lectures 2016 for the Angel Foundation, by Peter Milward

No.5, Saturday November 26, at Parlor No.5, on *Henry VIII*

Finally, not play of Shakespeare's alone, but collaborative with John Fletcher in spite of assertion by two editors of First Folio, liars!

placing "histories" as genre between "comedies" and "tragedies"

asserting all as authentically by Shakespeare

but beginning with *King John*, ending with *Henry VIII*, both collaborative

as proved by Tom Merriam in two Renaissance monographs

aim, Protestant propaganda, in parts contributed by G Peele, J Fletcher

with pride of place given to false genre of "histories" in middle of Folio

Climax of three "romances", or "tragi-comedies", leading up to historical romance

as mentioned before, with *Per.* beginning with scandal of king wedded to daughter

Antiochus m. daughter = Henry VIII m. Anne Boleyn (N Sander on *Angl Schism*)
with *Cym.* King of Britain, rejecting tribute to Rome owing to second queen

Imogen by first queen = Princess Mary, Posthumus = Reginald Pole/ Pope

with *WT.* Sicilia = Trinacria, England, Leontes rejecting Polixenes = Pope

Hermione = Katharine, appealing to Pope, Perdita = Princess Mary

Play of H8 beginning with foreboding Prologue; "I come no more to make you laugh.

Things now/ That bear a weighty and a serious brow,/ Sad, high, and working,
full of state and woe,/ Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow/ We now present."

Downfall of Duke of Buckingham, Queen Katharine, Cardinal Wolsey,

owing to displeasure, frowning of faceless King Henry, despite long speeches

Cf. frowning of Cymbeline on Imogen and Posthumus at beginning of *Cym.*

but Dr Johnson, "The genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Catharine."

Yet outcome seemingly happy in Act V with Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn,

and christening of Princess Elizabeth by Archbishop Cranmer (by John Fletcher)

Shakespeare's contribution serving to undermine that of Fletcher

in original meeting with Anne Boleyn at York Place, "The fairest hand I ever touched!

O beauty!/ Till now I never knew thee." (echoing words of St Augustine on God)

in comment of Suffolk to Chamberlain, C. "It seems the marriage with his brother's

wife has crept too near his conscience." S. "No, his conscience has crept too near
another lady."

in scene between Anne and old lady, A. "By my troth and maidenhood, I would not be

a queen." Lady. "with all this spice of your hypocrisy."

Contrasting scene of Katharine's trial not for adultery, as with Hermione in WT,
but for validity of marriage, when Henry protests he regards her as "paragon",
whereas Katharine distrusts cardinals as judges, appeals to Pope
Followed by downfall of Wolsey for failure to arrange divorce for Henry
praises Thomas More as successor, "a learned man"
urges Cromwell, "I charge thee, fling away ambition/ By that sin fell the angels."
laments, "Had I but served my God with half the zeal/ I served my king, he would
not in mine age/ have left me naked to mine enemies."
Katharine's usher recalls Wolsey's end, "His overthrow heaped happiness upon him./
For then, and not till then, he felt himself/ And found the blessedness of being little."
she falls asleep, in dream hears "celestial harmony", sees vision of angels
bearing garlands over her, as over a martyr (cf. vision of Diana by Pericles)
Originally, play entitled *All Is True*, but at first performance in 1613 Globe burnt down
flawed by serious omissions, as not "the whole truth and nothing but the truth"
omitting "the king's great matter" with the religious reformation after the divorce
the title of "Supreme Head of C of E, and suppression of monasteries,
the execution of Anne Boleyn on the charge of multiple adultery in the same year
as the death of Katharine (poisoned by Anne?)
while much made of accusations against Cranmer of heresy after 1540
when defended by Henry – based on Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (by Fletcher)
On the whole, play consists in a series of pageants with little characterization
unlike the customary style of Shakespeare
as if play as a whole put together by Fletcher with scenes supplied by Shakespeare
In Act V, mostly by Fletcher, culminating in christening of Princess Elizabeth
with Cranmer's prophecy of time when "God shall be truly known"
but one scene detracting from optimism, with exclamation of Porter,
"Bless me, what a fry of fornication is at door! On my Christian conscience,
this one christening will beget a thousand!".