

## ВСТУПНЕ СЛОВО

Ця публікація – текст промови, що була виголошена всесвітньо відомим шекспірознавцем преподобним Полом Едмондсоном під час урочистого богослужіння 24 квітня 2023 р. у Церкві Святої Трійці, яке було присвячене вшануванню пам'яті Вільяма Шекспіра та його дружини Енн.

Доктор Пол Едмондсон – керівник досліджень Трасту місця народження Шекспіра (Head of Research for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), почесний науковий співробітник Шекспірівського інституту і запрошений професор із прав людини Бірмінгемського міського університету. Від перших днів повномасштабного вторгнення росії, він активно підтримує Збройні сили України та наш народ, стимулює розвиток українського шекспірознавства.

Шекспірознавчий доробок вченого налічує десятки фундаментальних праць, що присвячені як аналітиці окремих художніх творів (Twelfth Night: A Guide to the Text and Its Theatrical Life; in collaboration with Stanley Wells: Shakespeare's Sonnets), так і постаті митця (Shakespeare: Ideas in Profile; Destination Shakespeare; in collaboration with Stanley Wells: Shakespeare's Sonnets; Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy; The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography; and All the Sonnets of Shakespeare) та його комеморації (Finding Shakespeare's New Place: an archaeological biography (in collaboration with Kevin Colls and William Mitchell); New Places: Shakespeare and Civic Creativity (with Ewan Fernie); Shakespeare's Creative Legacies (with Peter Holbrook); A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival (with Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan) та ін.

Унікальність цієї промови Пола Едмондсона полягає в тому, що тут тонкий психологізм і інтуїція священника органічно взаємодіють з ерудитською дослідницькою шекспірознавчою.

Наталія ТОРКУТ

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# OUR EVER-RENEWING HOME OF LOVE: THE SHAKESPEARE SERMON, 23 APRIL 2023

*Every year on the Sunday nearest Shakespeare's birthdate, 23rd April, crowds gather in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon to give thanks for all that Shakespeare continues to give to the world. A 'Shakespeare Sermon' has been preached on this occasion for most years since 1879. In latter times it has been a tradition to alternate between a Shakespeare scholar and a cleric. Paul Edmondson first gave the Shakespeare sermon in 2005. He was invited to give it again (a rare honour) in 2023. The theme of the service was Anne Shakespeare, who died four hundred years ago.*

**Keywords:** Anne Shakespeare, Shakespeare Sermon, Homecoming, Zephaniah

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home"<sup>2</sup>.

We're gathered this morning from near and far to give thanks to God for the genius of William Shakespeare, for his life in this town, and for all that he has come to mean and continues to mean to many different cultures, ages, and life experiences.

We're gathered here today, mindful that this year marks two quatercentaries. It's the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of most of Shakespeare, in a volume now known as the First Folio, and, importantly for us this morning, it is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Shakespeare's wife, Anne, who outlived him by seven years, a widow in Shakespeare's large, family home, New Place. They had their own New Place pew in this church,

on the south side, close to the pulpit, which used to be just in front of that central arch [point it out].

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

Those words from the prophet Zephaniah look forward to a renewal of being, of becoming, a renewal of culture, a renewal of home, a homecoming after the exile and enslavement of the Jewish people. From our Christian perspective Zephaniah's words sing of the joy of Easter, of new life, liberation, and of the promise of life after death through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reassures us of God's love for us, and who calls us home. Anne Shakespeare's epitaph sets forth the hope of Easter, too. It is thought to have been written by her daughters, Susanna and Judith, and is a poem in Latin: "O Christ, come quickly, that my mother, even though shut in the tomb may rise again and seek the stars!" This was the faith of the Shakespeare family; Easter was their inheritance, and ours. We are going to hear those words sung in a moment, the world premiere of our Shakespeare Birthday

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<sup>2</sup> This sermon was based on the lectionary reading for the day: Zephaniah 3:14-21, and especially verses 17 and 20. The translation used is *The New Revised Standard Version*.

anthem, composed by Ariana Pethard of King Edward's Sixth School, "Shakespeare's School".

Anne Shakespeare, Shakespeare's wife, the mother of their three children, Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith, was the anchor in Shakespeare's life. By the age of thirty-three Shakespeare had been able to establish himself and his family in the largest house in the borough of Stratford-upon-Avon, New Place, virtually next door to the school he had attended and the guild hall from which the town was run. Anne Shakespeare was very much the mistress of New Place, and a prominent woman about the town. Although Shakespeare was often in London, he needed his mainstay, his wife. He wanted his family home, New Place – with between twenty and thirty rooms – a place of retreat, a writer's house, an escape from the plague outbreaks in London, and when the theatres were closed, a place in which to dream. Anne's quatercentenary is also being marked by a collection of poems which re-imagine her. *Anne-thology: Poems Re-presenting Anne Shakespeare* published by Broken Sleep Books [Anne-thology: Poems Re-presenting Anne Shakespeare 2023].

It includes sixty-seven new poems, one for each year of her life. Anne was financially able, oversaw and ran the household, made sure the children were being properly brought up while their father was away, and – importantly – gave Shakespeare her love. He commuted between Stratford-upon-Avon and London, a three-day journey on horseback. Anne was an important part of his homecoming.

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

Love is rather like homecoming, isn't it? Love calls us back to a place which feels familiar, a place that touches our inner-most self, a place of hope, a place of strength, a place from which we know we will be able to cope. For many years, Shakespeare has been part of my own sense of homecoming, one of the resources, along with my Christian faith, from which I can draw strength. I first came to Stratford-upon-Avon on a school-trip to see *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We were all thrilled with it. The following week, I brought my mother and my sister to Stratford-upon-Avon. We visited the Birthplace. It felt like a homecoming. Stratford-upon-Avon has now been the place I call home for 28 years.

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

Shakespeare, one of the greatest of love poets, sets forth many expressions of love – in his plays, yes – and most especially in many of his sonnets, which set forth love's endeavour through expressing love's power as well as love's pain. Each sonnet – because of the inevitability of its form – is like a mini-homecoming. We know it will end with a rhyming couplet. Famously we find the name of Shakespeare himself in some of the sonnets. Sonnet 134 ends with the phrase "for my name is Will". Sonnet 145 contains a reference to Anne Shakespeare's maiden-name, which transforms the phrase "I hate" – the focus of the poem – in to "hate away", or "Hathaway". Anne turns a sonnet of despondency and imagined rejection into a love poem. She calls Shakespeare home, back to a place of loving, an ever-familiar, and ever-new place.

Think of your own homes for a moment. Think of the many moods of love that run through an ordinary, working week, love's power and pain. Think of the laughter, the appreciation of food and of each other; think of the trying to make ends meet – financially, emotionally – think of the sulks, the daily rejections, the squabbles, the vying for

position. Think of the tears, think of what endures and survives the tears. The Shakespeares knew all of that, too, because to relate to each other whatever we face and however we are feeling is simply to be human. But to love and to go on loving, is to be open to the divine, open to God. One of the reasons why Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* [O'Farrell 2021] is so popular is because it presents an ordinary family story – albeit the Shakespeare family's – about the death of a child, Hamnet Shakespeare, who died aged eleven, and makes that story extraordinary with intimations of immortality.

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

In his portrayals of human feelings and emotions, Shakespeare can remind us of *our* immortality. It was my privilege to take part in a special on-line gathering back in February called Shakespeare Shelter. Around fifty Shakespeare scholars from around the world met in solidarity with Shakespearians in Ukraine. We listened to their experiences of war; we heard about how they draw strength and support from Shakespeare, from readings and performances – all of which expressed a yearning for peace and freedom. – and we made donations. We have two Shakespearians from Ukraine here this morning. Professors Natalya Torkut and Maya Harbuzyuk. We thank you and bless you. We pray for peace. Thank you for coming "home", to Stratford-upon-Avon, to toast the Immortal Memory of William Shakespeare, who is one of your ways of coping. And on St George's Day, who is your patron saint, too: *Slava Ukraini! Heroiam Slava!* "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!"

"The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

Love, as we have just acknowledged, is many-mooded, multi-faceted. Sonnet 116 that we heard a moment ago mentions a "marriage of true minds", Anne and William's perhaps. The sonnet says that love can look "on tempests and is never shaken" and that love does not alter over time. In fact, our earthly loves do change. The best of marriages, partnerships and relationships grow and evolve. They might become stronger, or they might become weaker, and fall apart. In contrast to Sonnet 116 we also heard the jokey and realistic Sonnet 138:

*When my love swears that she is made of truth  
I do believe her, though I know she lies. [All the Sonnets of Shakespeare 2020]*

This sonnet ends with the couple acknowledging that there are enabling fictions on both sides of the relationship, even at the point when they both climb into bed:

*Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flattered be. [All the Sonnets of Shakespeare 2020]*

Love expresses itself in many ways and each way declares to us that it is important for us to love as we can, not as we can't. Somehow I find it easy to imagine that that Anne wrote poetry about William, too.

We cannot know the quality of William and Anne Shakespeare's love. His bequeathing her the "second-best bed" was both a legal shorthand to ensure that she inherited and maintained her full rights as a widow, and an automatic souvenir of their love. The "second-best bed" was the marriage bed, the place of love-making and conception. So let us suppose that their relationship of

what Sonnet 116 calls "true minds"- and which is imagined as physically embodied in Sonnet 138 – could indeed admit impediments and imperfections, and that throughout their thirty-four-year marriage, Anne was part of what Shakespeare called home, and the part of him that called *him* home.

The Christian message is that God loves us however we are able to love, and that God's love for us – which will always be greater than we can understand – is always there for us, calling us home. Love, both divine, and imperfectly human, is where we find our homecoming.

Articulated by Shakespeare through some of the greatest poetry ever written, the love that surrounds us – both divine and human – is worth celebrating every day of our lives. That is why I am able to say that Shakespeare is part of my "second scripture" because his works form part of how I try to understand who I am and how I try to understand the world about me. But even Shakespeare's great expressions of love are only refractions of a much greater light. The Christian faith calls us to live out our life as though we are living out the greatest of all love poems, and one which feels like

home: "The Lord your God will renew you in his love [...] at that time I will bring you home".

Alleluia, and thank you – for Anne and William Shakespeare.

Amen.

Rev. Dr Paul Edmondson, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

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### НАШ ВІЧНО ОНОВЛЮВАНИЙ ДІМ ЛЮБОВІ: ШЕКСПІРІВСЬКА ПРОПОВІДЬ, 23 КВІТНЯ 2023 РОКУ

Щороку в неділю, найближчу до дня народження Шекспіра, 23 квітня, натовпи людей збираються в церкві Святої Трійці у Стратфорд-на-Ейвоні, щоб подякувати за все, що Шекспір продовжує дарувати світові. З цієї нагоди, починаючи з 1879 р., здебільшого виголошується "Шекспірівська проповідь". Останнім часом стало традицією чергувати проповідь між шекспірознавцем і священнослужителем. Пол Едмондсон уперше виголосив шекспірівську проповідь у 2005 р. Він був запрошений виголосити її знову (рідкісна честь) у 2023 р. Темою служби була Анна Шекспір, яка померла 400 років тому.

**Ключові слова:** Анна Шекспір, Шекспірівська проповідь, повернення додому, Зефанія.

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