INTerview with Mrs. Hester Pickman, 17 July 1979, Stockbridge

She is visiting with Mrs. William Ellery Sedgwick till this Thursday. Her granddaughter (b. 1947) was with her in the garden, painting. Granddaughter mother of 2 children; knew Mr. Pitman but a few years as a small child. (She first introduced her as her niece; granddaughter corrected her.)

Edward N.

Mrs./Pickman b. 1893, devout Catholic, attends mass daily even now. Mr. Pickman, historian at Harvard, spent his life examining medieval Catholicism, but agnostic, coming out of a Unitarian background. All six children raised Catholic, and all good Catholics. Their children some Catholics, some not or less so. She belongs to a definite minority of Catholics, old New England Catholics, associating with the Irish Catholics primarily in church. She is a Winthrop, descended from Governor Winthrop; he is descended from the second Governor, Dudley. But these are staunch Puritans; how did they become catholic? She was explaining it to me in terms of the presence of a large number of French Hugenots. She is herself named after some Hugenot Hester ----. (But the Hugenots were Protestant, weren't they??)

Edward N. Pickman, The Mind of Latin Christendom. book in the 30's(?) Augustine, Jerome (didn't name Thomas or Bonaventure; all early medieval). Then did a second book repeating this in wider scope, but couldn't remember its title.

We discussed miracles towards the end, where I demurred. "But the resurrection was the greatest miracle of all," I: "I find it easier to explain the resurrection than, say, the changing of the water into wine." Some further comments, I: "But Mr. Pickman didn't believe in miracles either." She agreed.

Maritain never visited them, but Gilson stayed with them when he returned to Harvard to give the Norton Lectures in 1930's.---sixx lectures before and after Christmas.

First met the Whiteheads at a dinner party during the winter of 1924-25. Found them most charming, and struck up an acquaintance immediately.

She emphasized that Evelyn Whitehead was very beautiful. (Why don't we ever see photographs of her??) Evelyn described herself as Yeoman Breton. Came from impoverished aristocracy. She even believes Evelyn was a governess for a while. She was lively, witty, very talkative, sometimes abrasive.

In her presence W. would be quiet for a long time. But if he did talk, he was most fascinating. Mrs. P. found Evelyn somewhat trying, as being so talkative. She wanted her to keep quiet so they could hear more from ANW. After ANW's death, Mrs. P. became very fond of Evelyn, because she had much to say in her own right; only compared to W. a problem.

Lucien Price: that dreadful man. She found him ostentuous, sitting at the master's feet. A cheapskate. Never invited him back. She didn't like his book. I quizzed her about the event, for I'm sure it's reported in Price. She thinks it was during the war, perhaps 1944. But she had no memory of ever associating any one chapter of the Dialogues with that dinner party.
INTERVIEW WITH MRS. PICKMAN, 17.7.79 - 2

LSF hyp: Those saying Price's Dialogues is a dreadful book not only knew W, but had met Price, and hence could see the hand of Price at work through the book, and *I* didn't like it. Price tends to record his own dialogue with W, not that which W had with others.

The Whitehead's had a little house in Milton. During the second world war their English money was impounded, so they had to give that place up and move to an apartment. Then for several years the Whiteheads were house guests of the Pickmans for six weeks in the summer. (Paul: I was under the impression your visits with the Pickmans were in the late 30's, but this would seem to indicate 1939-40 at the earliest (war didn't start till September 39, hence that season would have been out)). She remembers Weiss as Whitehead's favorite pupil, with a vigorous, remarkable wife.

Jessie was very bright. She was jealous of her father's success, for she felt every much as bright as he, but didn't achieve anything. A problem child. Had a severe mountain climbing accident, but survived.

Mrs. North Whitehead still alive, residing in Cambridge, on Garden St. (?) She was a lot younger than North, who was Mrs. Pickman's age. (Am I to guess mid-30's now?) Mrs. Moyes Gilmore, 178 Mt Vernon St, Cambridge. Her mother North's first wife. (Harriet) When W visited the Pickmans, he took pleasure in children and in the family life. When her daughter (b. 1932) was five or six, W would often take her for walks in the morning. Now among her daughter's fondest memories.

The Whiteheads talked to each other all the time. She could hear their voices muffled, talking until two in the morning. I quizzed her about W's insomnia, but apparently by that time it was largely past. Evelyn was proud of having cured Altie, by talking him out of it. I tried to understand how she could do this, but didn't get anywhere. Apparently she just persuaded him to go to sleep, staying up with him and calming him down.

About his close conversion to Catholicism: emphasized the Oxford movement with Newman as the chief convert from Anglicanism. Many making switch at that time.

--We conversed on the lawn; hence couldn't use tape-recorder. She started out by reading most of chapter one of the Lure of God, down a to page 7. She wanted to read it; I should have told her to skip 5-7, and read 8 on. She quizzed me about pan-subjectivity. When I said that consciousness is rare, she countered: aren't insects conscious? But only a few insects in front of us, and many blades of grass in the lawn. We talked till nearly noon (from 10:30). She dismissed me very graciously; welcomed the idea that I phone her from time to time. She hasn't been home yet to see the copy of the Weiss dialogue I had sent her. Her address: Dudley Road, Bedford, MA. 01730 (They live in Billerica, but Bedford is postal address).
Mrs. Hester Pickman
Dudley Road
Bedford, MA

Dear Mrs. Pickman:

Paul Weiss has urged me to get in touch with you. I am working on the development of Whitehead's philosophy from Science and the Modern World to Process and Reality. The manuscript so far is nearly complete up to the beginning of Part II. It's not biographical; I leave that task up to Victor Lowe of Johns Hopkins, but it always helps to know as much about the man in order to understand the texts.

Under separate cover I am sending to you the transcript of a dialogue I had with Prof. Weiss (one of my old teachers at Yale) on his Recollections of Whitehead. I'm sending it along to see if it might stimulate your own recollections, to see if you, together with your son and daughter, might have something additional to add.

I will be visiting my brother the week of July 14-21 in Stockbridge, coming by way of Boston. I'll be spending Saturday July 14 to Sunday noon with Prof. Jorge Nobo, 2 Leonard Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139, then by bus to Stockbridge. My return journey to Boston on the next Saturday, July 21 is open-ended. Only two things are definite: my brother is leaving Stockbridge and closing up the house Saturday noon and my plane back is Sunday mid-morning. Would it be possible to visit with you that Saturday afternoon, July 21?

Faithfully yours,

Lewis S. Ford
Editor, Process Studies