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## BOOKS REVIEWED :

Mr. Baring Gould's *The Evangelical Revival*; Life of Sister Mary of St. Philip; Cardinal Mercier's *Own Story*; Mrs. Asquith's *Autobiography*; Fr. McKenna's *Iomarbhagh na bhFileadh*; Dr. Kidd's *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church*; Sir Edward Sullivan's *Book of Kells*; Dr. Hyland's *A Century of Persecution*; Sir Bertram Windle's *Vitalism and Scholasticism*; A. S. Turberville's *Heresy and the Inquisition*; Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs*; Dr. Lawlor's *Life of St. Malachy*; Dr. Newport White's *St. Patrick's Writings and Life*; Lucy Menzies' *St. Columba of Iona*; Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Columcille*; Dean Raven's *Christian Socialism*; Oliver Brett's *Defence of Liberty*; Dr. Kidd's *Initiative in Evolution*; Chesterton's *The New Jerusalem*; *Helps for Students of History*.

# THE LOLLARD BIBLE

THERE was no translation of the Bible into English previous to Wycliffe's day! proof—no trace of such translations can be found in wills or catalogues, and indeed the attitude of the Church towards the Bible in the vernacular was such that even apart from the lack of traces of such English Bibles we should antecedently not have expected to discover them. Such, in brief, is Miss Deanesly's thesis in *The Lollard Bible* (Camb. Univ. Press). Readers of Cardinal Gasquet's *Early English Bible*, 1897, will remember that he threw a bombshell into the world of Biblical critics by maintaining that the converse proposition was the truer, viz., that the so-called "Wycliffite" Bibles are in reality nothing else than pre-Reformation—or rather pre-Wycliffite—Bibles mistakenly supposed to be the actual production of Wycliffe or his followers. Miss Deanesly tells us quite frankly that her object is to destroy this theory, her task is a polemical one. It is even more than that. For this volume is the first of a series which is to appear under the ægis of Mr. G. C. Coulton as the *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought*. In his *General Preface* to this volume Mr. Coulton lays down that the historian, whatever be his subject, is as definitely bound as the chemist "to proclaim certainties as certain, falsehoods as false, and uncertainties as dubious." "Those are the words," he adds, "not of a modern scientist, but of the Seventeenth Century monk, Jean Mabillon." Thus Miss Deanesly's volume is in every sense a challenge to the critics. They are invited to look for inaccuracies.

Miss Deanesly claims, then, to have proved that there existed no pre-Wycliffite translation of the Bible into English save of practically negligible portions. Has she proved her case?

First of all: what is the evidence for the existence of an English Bible previous to Wycliffe's days? Readers of Miss Deanesly's pages will be apt to conclude that there is practically none; but then all will depend on the

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way in which she marshals her evidence and how she uses it. To begin with, then, we have a statement by Caxton in 1482 in his *Proemium* to a translation of the *Polychronicon* made by Trevisa, vicar of Berkeley, in 1387, that this same Trevisa "at the request of one Sir Thomas Berkeley translated the Bible out of Latin into English." Now, is it sufficient to offset this very positive statement by pointing out that Caxton has misdated Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* by thirty years,\* by suggesting further that Caxton was not in a position to distinguish between a Catholic and a Wycliffite Bible and that he merely made a guess "like Sir Thomas More"? This might be legitimate treatment if this piece of evidence stood alone. But when we find that Wanley discovered a letter (from the future James II?) thanking Lord Berkeley for "a very precious book" of Trevisa's which had been preserved at Berkeley Castle for "neare 400 year" we can hardly regard such treatment of Caxton's words as satisfactory. Nor is our dissatisfaction removed by the note appended, p. 302.

It is possible that Caxton's unconscious change of the dating of the *Polychronicon*, from 1387 back to 1357, may have made him the readier to believe that Trevisa had made his Bible earlier than "the days of the late master John Wycliffe." It is not unreasonable to suppose that Caxton, following Lyndwood like More, believed that there were mediæval English versions anterior to Wycliffe.

Again, though here we quote from notes only, Forshall and Madden devote pp. 39-64 to a careful enumeration of 170 MSS. of translations of the English Bible in whole or in part anterior to Wycliffe. Now Miss Deanesly on no evidence at all attributes all these to the days of Wycliffe (pp. 304-340). We say "on no evidence at all," for her evidence simply amounts to this: that they must be Wycliffite Bibles because there were no others! As a sample of her treatment of the facts let us take the case of Syon Abbey, founded by Henry V in 1415. Here were Brigittine monks and nuns and they were scholars.

\* Du Pin, II, 531, gives 1397 as the date.

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We possess the *Myroure of our Ladye*, written for the nuns by—so it is thought—Dr. Thomas Gascoyne, Chancellor of Oxford University. Twice over the author refers to the decree of 1408 anent translations of the Bible. He explains that he has obtained a licence from the Bishop for the sisters to use such translations, but adds: “Of Psalms I have drawn (viz. into English) but a few, for ye may have them of Richard Hampole’s drawing, and out of English Bibles, if ye have license thereto.” Now Miss Deanesly does not say so in so many words, but she leaves us with the impression that these “English Bibles” were Wycliffite productions. For she maintains throughout that in those days men were not in a position to distinguish between a Wycliffite and an orthodox Bible since the former, too, were orthodox, e.g., pp. 334 and 372. It is in this way that she explains away Bl. Thomas More’s evidence (see below). Yet when it suits her she maintains that the Wycliffite Bibles actually were heretical (p. 7 note, and cp. pp. 230-239, 256 note, 279 note, 370, 372). But further than this: the above-mentioned Dr. Gascoyne has left us his will (cf. *Acta Curiae Cancellarii* in *Munimenta Academica*, II, p. 671), and herein we read that he left to Syon Abbey “all my books that are written on paper, and all my notebooks on paper; and I especially will and desire that my writing, namely, my work written with my own hand and entitled: *Liber seu scriptum de veritatibus ex sacra scriptura collectis et ex scriptis Sanctorum et doctorum* should be copied out on vellum or parchment at the expense of the said monastery and that the said monastery should keep both, viz., my work written by me and the copy made by themselves.” It is legitimate to argue that he himself had a Bible—though there is no mention of one in his will—and also that he was interested in the Biblical knowledge of the monks and nuns. But did he present them with an English Bible or even a New Testament? They certainly had the New Testament in English and equally certainly it was not in the Wycliffite text as we know it. Mr. Lea Wilson, who came into possession of the MS.

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and had it reprinted in 1848, thought it represented an early version subsequently revised by Wycliffe himself or his disciples. Why he should have found it necessary to associate it with Wycliffe at all passes comprehension.

Then, thirdly, there is the statement made by Wycliffe's disciple Purvey in his controversy with the Dominican Palmer to the effect that—as Miss Deanesly gives it—“A London man had an English Bible ‘of northern speech and it seemed two hundred years old.’” Now on what possible grounds can Miss Deanesly add: “a reference, no doubt, to some late Saxon manuscript of the Gospels?” A sample, this, of the “pure guesswork” she is so fond of attributing to More and Caxton, etc. Forshall and Madden, too, are guilty of precisely the same unworthy argumentation, for their comment on this passage, p. 33, is, “If any dependence can be placed on the presumed age, this must have been some Anglo-Saxon version, perhaps Aelfric's *Heptateuch*.” Now Foxe quoted the same passage in his first edition of his *Book of Martyrs*, as Forshall and Madden note; why was it removed so that it does not appear in the later editions? And as we have mentioned Foxe, it is worth while noting that when Parker published *The Gospels of the fower Euangelistes translated in the olde Saxons tyme out of Latin, etc.*, in 1571, Foxe wrote the dedicatory Epistle to Queen Elizabeth in which he says:

Now from the ancient Saxons, to drawe more nerer to later yeares, from King Alfrede to Queene Anne (wife to King Richard II), if histories be well examined we shall find both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wickliffe was borne as since, the whole body of Scriptures by sondry men translated into thys our countrey tounge.

This is a somewhat awkward testimony to get rid of!

Then what about Chaucer's intimate knowledge of the Bible? Are we to presume that he always quotes it from the Latin translated by himself? It certainly does not look like it. Yet note Miss Deanesly's comment: “Chaucer, again, shows great familiarity with the Old and

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New Testaments and the Apocrypha, and with persons and passages in them. His interest, however, is that of the scholar, not the devout monk; and he is familiar with the Bible as he was with the *Storial Mirror* of Vincent of Beauvais, and the other great reference books of the age," p. 224. The point is that Chaucer knew his Bible and apparently in English. Whence did he get it?

Once more: about A.D. 1536 Leland noted: "*In Bibliotheca Praedicatorum, Londinis, Trivet super Psalterium,*" and added: "*Inter celebres Veteris Testamenti translationes.*" \* Trivet, fl. c. 1330, was a well-known Biblical scholar, and Leland is generally considered a reliable authority. Was this, too, a Wycliffite Bible which Leland was not in a position to distinguish from an orthodox one? But the existence of such a translation as Leland refers to throws light on what must otherwise remain a mystery, viz., the existence of an English *Concordance* previous to the Reformation. We are not referring, of course, to the famous *Concordantiae Anglicanae* which appeared about A.D. 1250 and which were due to such famous Biblical scholars as the Dominicans John of Darlington, Richard Stavensby and Hugh of Croydon, all of whom had apparently worked in Paris under Cardinal Hugo of Vienne in the production of the first *Concordances*. These latter, as well as the *Concordantiae Anglicanae*, were on the Latin Vulgate Bible. But the English *Concordances* we refer to are much later and on the English Bible, though previous to the Reformation.†

Again, in 1911 the British Museum authorities held a Bible Exhibition; the official *Guide* tells us that Exhibit No. 21 is the *Gospels in English* produced early in the Eleventh Century; it also informs us that the *Apocalypse* appeared in the course of the Fourteenth Century.

More positive evidence, however, than any of the foregoing is that furnished us by Sir Thomas More in his *Dialogue* written in 1528. Amongst other things More

\* Quoted by Father Raymund Palmer, "Black Friars of London," in *Merry England*, Aug., 1889, p. 279.

† Manganot in Vigouroux, *Dict. de la Bible, s.v. Concordances*, Vol. II, p. 904 (2).

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deals with the vexed question of the legality of translating the Bible into the vernacular. This compels him to discuss the precise meaning of Archbishop Arundel's decree of 1408 on the subject, which ran as follows :

We enact and ordain that no one henceforth do by his own authority translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English tongue or any other by way of book or treatise. Nor let any such book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wicklif aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under pain of the greater excommunication, till that translation have been approved by the diocesan of the place, or if occasion shall require, by a provincial council.\*

More points out that this clearly did not prohibit translations as such, but only bad ones. This was the plain meaning of the text and it was—as he well knew—the sense attached to it by the canonist Lyndwood who, commenting on the words “lately composed,” “*noviter compositus*,” says: “From the fact that it says ‘lately composed’ it is clear that it is not forbidden to read books or treatises previously translated from Scripture into English or any other tongue.” † We may remark in passing that Miss Deanesly does not quote this comment of Lyndwood's, though she refers to it.

As to the existence of such translations previous to Wycliffe's day—and on this the whole controversy turns—More insists :

Myself have seen, and can shew you, Bibles fair and old written in English, which have been known and seen by the bishop of the diocese, and left in laymen's hands, and women's, to such as he knew for good and catholic folk. But of truth all such as are found in the hands of heretics, they use to take away.

Miss Deanesly's comment on this is that “More had no doubt seen English Biblical translations in noblemen's

\* For the actual text see Wilkins, *Concilia*, III, 317. The translation is that given by Johnson in his *Collection of Ecclesiastical Laws, Canons, etc.*, Part II, p. 466.

† Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, p. 285, given by Johnson, *l.c.*; Lyndwood, it may be noted, was Bishop of St. David's, and therefore spoke with full knowledge of episcopal feeling on the subject.

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libraries, or perhaps those of nunneries." Indeed, she constantly refers to More's having "seen them in the houses of the great," though there is no hint of this in the *Dialogue*. Further, she questions whether he ever had known them to be "licensed": "Whether More inferred from the constitutions of 1408, that the Bibles he had seen had been licensed by the bishop for individual use, or whether he actually knew this to have been the case, is doubtful." Why? No reason is alleged. It is simply convenient to be able to discount More's authority!

But More goes much further than this. He points out that the decree of 1408

neither forbiddeth the translations to be read that were already well done of old before Wycliffe's days, nor damneth his because it was new, but because it was naught.

And again :

Wycliffe, whereas the whole Bible was long before his days by virtuous and well learned men translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people with devotion and soberness well and reverently read, took upon of a malicious purpose to translate it of new.

Further still : commenting on the actual wording of the decree he says :

When the clergy therein agreed that the English Bibles should remain, which were translated afore Wycliffe's days, they consequently did agree that to have the Bible in English was no hurt.

Thus three times over More insists that the Bible was translated into English before Wycliffe's days. How is this piece of evidence treated by Miss Deanesly? Simply by saying that More merely guessed that such Bibles existed because the decree of 1408 implied it! That the Bibles he says he had seen were "in all probability . . . unreadable manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon gospels"! Perhaps the fairest comment on this is to quote the words of the *Preface* already given: "proclaim certainties as certain, falsehoods as false, and uncertainties as dubious."

Miss Deanesly appeals amongst other things to the

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witness of wills, of which she has examined 7,578 previous to A.D. 1526. In these only two French Bibles and twenty Vulgates figure; English Bibles are conspicuous by their absence, for only three copies are mentioned. But surely she must be well aware that the witness of wills on this point is peculiarly deceptive? Let us take twenty-one wills dating between A.D. 1445 and 1465. They are given *in extenso* in the *Munimenta Academica*, Vol. II, published in the *State Papers*, 1868. The testators comprise two Canonists, four "Chaplains," three laymen, two Fellows of Colleges, one woman, four Rectors or Vicars, three Masters in Arts, one Doctor in Theology, one Archdeacon—the same person figuring, of course, more than once; one of the Masters, for instance, is also Fellow of Lincoln. Now, if anybody should have left books in their wills it is the people in the above categories. Yet we find that out of these twenty-one no less than nine left no books at all! Does this prove they had none? Not in the least. For in three of these nine instances we have a subsequent inventory of their books. Thus the Vicar of Cookfyld, by name Caldey, died in 1451. He left no books, but in the inventory of his belongings we find that he had St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo* and *De Potentia*; he also had a *Commentary on the Prophets*, another on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, a glossed *Psalter* and a glossed copy of *St. Matthew*. It is true that no Bible figures among these books, but would Miss Deanesly be justified in arguing that therefore he had no Bibles or was dependent on copies in libraries? It is hard to see how Caldey could have read his *Commentary on the Prophets* without the text—and a readily accessible text. Take another instance: Thomas Bray, Master of Arts and Chaplain, bequeathed his official robe as a Regent—and twelve arrows! Are we to believe that a Regent had no books? A propos, too, of the term "Regent," how does Miss Deanesly know that a Regent means "officially lecturing" (p. 289)? The distinction between "Regent Masters" and "non-Regent Masters" is by no means clear; in the *Libri Cancelarii et Procuratorum*

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it is quite clear that both the Masters Regent and non-Regent govern the University, but it is by no means clear that the latter are not officially lecturing. This, however, by the way. To return to the question of the evidence furnished by wills. If Miss Deanesly will turn to the *Reliquary* for October, 1887, she will find there some forty abstracts of wills made in favour of the Friars Preachers at Thetford, or at least in Norfolk. Now, in not one of these—which cover the period between A.D. 1347 and 1553—is a single book mentioned. Arguing on the same lines as she has done in her book, she should conclude that the Friars Preachers were not book lovers—a conclusion which she knows to be false. Once more, it is surely logical to apply her mode of arguing to the certain pre-Wycliffite fragments of Bibles as well as to Bibles in general. Yet how often do the former figure in wills? In all Miss Deanesly's 7,578 wills there only appear twelve *Psalters*! Now, Rolle's *Psalter* and Hampole's were common books. Are we to imagine that only these few were devised during the period covered by these wills?

Mr. Coulton in his *Prefatory Note* says that errors in the volumes of the series in which this is the first will be promptly corrected. This may be a heavier task than he anticipated. Despite Miss Deanesly's laborious work and her evident equipment for her investigation of a very knotty problem, she now and again surprises us by betraying unexpected ignorance. Why, for instance, does she go out of her way, apparently, to say that Cardinal Hugo of Vienne compiled his Concordances "with the help of a committee of fifty" (p. 174)? The tradition always has been that he had five hundred helpers, not fifty; this is given, e.g., by Sixtus Senensis in his *Bib. Sancta*, V, 464. Then, again, while no one can blame her for not having read the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, she should not say that "in the cathedral theology schools . . . the subject was . . . the *Sentences* . . . and instruction on the elements of the faith" (p. 191), as though the *Sentences* and catechetical instruction were practically convertible terms! Nor should she go on to say that "the friars

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lectured . . . on the *Sentences* . . . with an eye to *pastoral* theology" (p. 192)! On p. 167 there is a note on the Hebrew tenses which is, to say the least of it, misleading. Once more, what can she mean when she says, p. 176, that "Of the Latin Gospel harmonies, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian was the earliest"? The note makes matters worse: "The *Diat.* was used in a Latin translation." Apropos, too, of Trevisa's supposed translation of the Bible into English, referred to above, Miss Deanesly says that Bale and Pits follow Caxton, who asserts that Trevisa made this translation, and that Bale even goes "as far as giving the *incipit* of his translation: but that *incipit* coincides exactly with the dedicatory letter at the beginning of the *Polychronicon*"; she gives these two *incipits* in the note, p. 302, "*transtulit totum Bibliorum opus, sive Utrumque Dei testamentum. Lib. 2 (incipit) Ego, Johannis Trevisa, sacerdos.* The dedicatory epistle begins: I, John Trevisa, your priest and bedesman"; so that the two *incipits* are clearly not *identical*. There are other trivial mistakes; thus, on p. 384, "Malon" should be "Malou"; and on p. 371 she speaks of "the preface to the English Bible of 1609"; unless she is referring to the Douay Old Testament—which did appear in that year—this should be 1611. On p. 277 we are told that Purvey "compared his scholastic equipment not unfavourably with that of S. Thomas Aquinas." While prepared to believe a good deal about Purvey, one can hardly accept this, still less when we read his actual words: "I have many sharp doctors which he had not." When we speak of a man's "scholastic equipment" we do not generally refer to his library! The gem, however, of these "little oversights" occurs on pp. 180-181. Miss Deanesly complains that mediaeval writers, through quoting the Bible from memory, are often guilty of "surprising misquotations" which "are not merely verbal inaccuracies . . . One chronicler stated that 'Joseph took all the land of Egypt, except that of the priests.'" One is tempted to ask whether the "Lollard" Bible differed from the Hebrew and Vulgate text of Gen. xlvii. 22!

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A further instance of inaccuracy occurs on p. 283, where Roger Dymok is spoken of as a "monk"; as a matter of fact he was an exceedingly well-known Dominican who took his degree as Doctor of Theology at Oxford, was Prior of Boston in 1390, and afterwards, 1395, Regent of Studies at London. The "long Latin answer" to the Lollard *Twelve Conclusions* was addressed by Dymok to Richard II and the MS. is preserved in Trinity Hall library at Cambridge. It bears that king's arms and also his portrait on the first page, and was once the property of Anthony Roper, grandson of Bl. Thomas More.

These points may seem finicking. But they are symptomatic. We feel as we read her most interesting pages that they are almost too interesting. For while pretending to give a wide view of the question, and while apparently full of detailed knowledge, one rises from the book with the feeling that the authoress has never really grasped the position occupied by the Bible in the Middle Ages. At the same time Miss Deanesly has the mind of an historian, and consequently we fancy she will acknowledge the force of some words spoken at a meeting of the *Egypt Exploration Society* at the beginning of the current year, 1920 :

In writing history, where it is necessary to select and arrange the material, and from a multitude of small details to deduce the general sequence of events, nothing is easier than to lose touch with reality, to schematize the development too much, and to make statements more sweeping than the facts justify. The best safeguard against this fault is to steep oneself in the life of the time and, by the study of such more personal documents as have survived, to learn in what way contemporaries reacted to the events of their day. . . . Even in the end history must inevitably give a foreshortened and too highly coloured view of its subject matter.

But the real truth is—though it always sounds an invidious thing to say it : scholars outside the Catholic Church cannot rightly handle history. This is more especially true when it is a question of pre-Reformation history. For then they are dealing with an age when men

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were saturated with the principles if not with the practice of the faith, when their language was coloured by the doctrines they had imbibed with their mothers' milk, and when the Latin of the Vulgate Bible was extraordinarily familiar to all who could read or write—and to many who could do neither. Moreover, Catholic practices were so engrained that reference to them colours every document, and this not so much by explicit statement as by allusions which take for granted that readers will understand precisely what is meant. To show how easy it is for non-Catholic writers to trip when dealing with such documents, let us take two typical examples. In the *Munimenta Academica*, referred to above and published by the Rev. Henry Anstey in 1868, we are given a selection of *Documents illustrative of Academical Life and Studies at Oxford*. The editor gives us the Latin originals with a synopsis in English in the margin. Under the year 1300, p. 78, we find a memorandum headed "The Order of Monks in Processions"; it runs as follows: "*Ordinatum fuit . . . quod albi monachi debeant procedere in processionibus quibuscunque post praedicatores et ante nigros monachos.*" This is the marginal translation: "In processions the preaching friars shall walk first, the white friars next, and after them the black friars." Could there be a more hopeless piece of confusion? One pities the Master of Ceremonies who had to marshal that procession! The next instance is even worse. Another memorandum lays down, p. 449, that since the relics of St. Frideswyde repose at Oxford and ought therefore to be especially honoured by the University, there shall be a yearly procession in the middle of the Lent term to implore the Saint's patronage, and the memorandum concludes with these words: "*Et quod missa ibidem solemniter habeatur de virgine supradicta.*" Will it be believed that the marginal translation runs: "Every Lent term there shall be a solemn procession to the church of St. Frideswyde, and mass for the repose of her soul"?

Now we are not saying that anything quite so egregious as this occurs in Miss Deanesly's pages, but still at every

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turn one is compelled to feel that she has not grasped the Middle Ages simply because she does not understand the Catholic Church.

HUGH POPE, O.P.