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# THE ENGLISH

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# HISTORICAL REVIEW

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VOLUME XXXV

1920



LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
89 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
NEW YORK, BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA

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of the chancery warrants is available. On 23 June 23 Richard II a warrant for the issue of the Great Seal for letters patent to Hereford was made, a petition having been received from

nos cher et bien amez les maire et citeins de nostre citee de Hereford par la. quele ils nous sunt suppliez de lour graunter autiels fraunchises et libertees par paroles especiales come les citeins de nostre citee de Wircestre ou les burgeois de nostre ville de Gloucestre.<sup>1</sup>

EVA PENSON.

### Wycliffe's Canonry at Lincoln

WRITING of Wycliffe's Lincoln canonry, Mr. Salter says,

That one who had not obtained a prebend should be called 'canon' is strange, but it seems to have been a custom at the papal court, and there are several instances. But such a use is unknown in ordinary documents, and if Wyclif is described as 'canon of Lincoln' in the chancellor's letter of 14 January 1376, it can hardly be doubted that he had obtained a prebend at Lincoln by that time.<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me that in a document intended for use at the papal court, we cannot press the English use of *canonicus*; one might almost expect to find the Roman use. The description is not Wycliffe's but that of the notary. But for other reasons I have difficulty in believing that Wycliffe ever had possession even for a time. I first note that the date, 1375, assigned for the *De civili Dominio*, iii, is far too early: for (1) it is the fifth tractate of the *Summa Theologiae*; and book ii, the fourth tractate, as it alludes to the excommunication of the Florentines (p. 90), must all of it be some months later than March 1376;<sup>3</sup> and (2) the *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, the sixth, belongs as to all its earliest chapters to the first three months of 1377/8. The eleventh chapter, indeed, was published on 24 March 1377/8.<sup>4</sup> The passage accordingly in which Wycliffe alludes to the Lincoln prebend, and which comes about the middle of the long *De civili Dominio*, iii (p. 334), cannot be earlier than April or later than September 1377; I assign it to the long vacation.<sup>5</sup> But for our

<sup>1</sup> Chancery Warrant for Issue, no. 12977.

<sup>2</sup> *Ante*, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Hilary term 1376/7 is, in my opinion, the date of *De civili Dominio*, ii; at the beginning of this term the Florentines were very much in evidence in England. (Cf. *Eulogium Hist.* iii. 335, where the date given in the margin may mislead.)

<sup>4</sup> *Hodie in vigilia annunciationis, a.d. MCCCLXXVIII*, p. 258.

<sup>5</sup> I take it to be one of the 'lectures' which gave Wiham or Vyrinham, i. e. Binham, of St. Albans, ground to charge Wycliffe with the violation of his oath in determining at Oxford after the feast of St. Thomas (July 7. Cf. *Opera Minora*, p. 415), where Lewis's *Determinatio contra unum monachum* is given in its complete form. Lewis was, of course, wrong in dating this *determinatio* in or about 1366; its proper date is the (academic) year, following the controversy with Woodford on dominion, i. e. 1377-8 for the controversy with Woodford came at the very end of 1376-7, also in the long vacation. (Cf. *De civili Dominio*, iii, pp. 351 ff.)

immediate purpose the precise date is not important. What we want is a *terminus ad quem*, say July 1377, for the date of Wycliffe's disappointment, for which the papal letter<sup>1</sup> gives us a *terminus a quo*, namely December 1373.

The passage from the *De civili Dominio*, iii. 17, is as follows :

Dominus papa dedit michi prebendam in ecclesia Lyncolniensi et, facta sollicitudine ad colligendum sibi primos fructus quadraginta quinque librarum, contulit uni iuveni transmarino eandem prebendam per viam reservacionis abdite, non facta inquisitione de inhabilitate persone mee nec facta instancia ex parte mea pro huiusmodi dispensacione ; . . . Nec dubium, si dominus papa potest committere alienigene ydiote sine hoc quod ministret in suo beneficio secundum aliquid officium clericale, potestatem et officium spoliandi clericos non convictos ex inhabilitate officii, etc.

On 4 March 1375 (in extension of a former mandate issued in May 1374) instructions were given by the pope to the bishop of Bologna to dispense a certain Philip de Thornbury on account of illegitimacy to hold one, two, or three benefices, one of which might be a dignity or prebend in a cathedral church.<sup>2</sup> In February 1378 this same Thornbury was rehabilitated on account of his having accepted under a mandate of provision from Gregory XI a canonry at Lincoln and the prebend of Caistor without being dispensed on account of his illegitimacy. These, we are informed, he still held and had held since their voidance by Henry de Ingleby's death.<sup>3</sup> Not very long before Caistor had been valued at 68 marks.<sup>4</sup> We do not know when Ingleby died, but as other preferment held by him was filled on 28 November 1375 he probably died before the autumn. Moreover, it would seem that Caistor must have fallen vacant after 4 March 1375 or, if it fell vacant before, was not yet filled at this date.

Now Philip de Thornbury was the illegitimate son of Sir John de Thornbury, an English leader of mercenaries then in the pope's service, and a priest of the diocese of Modena (*transmarinus, alienigena*) ; he was young (*iuvenis*) and still a student (*ydiota* : though this description does some injustice to Thornbury's ability and standing, it would be good enough for a controversial statement). He had apparently a general, not a special reservation (*per viam reservacionis abdite*—a general reservation, such as Thornbury's seems to have been, took precedence of a special reservation, such as Wycliffe's), and if he were given a prebend he was not to be required to reside (*sine hoc quod ministret*, etc.). The description given by Wycliffe of his successful rival tallies so closely with the description of Thornbury as given in the

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Papal Letters*, iv. 193.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 194, 210.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> In September 1366, *Calendar of Papal Petitions*, i. 535. This agrees with the *xlv libras* in the passage from the *De civili Dominio*, iii, quoted above.

papal documents<sup>1</sup> that we can hardly doubt that Thornbury was this successful rival, and that Caistor was the prebend which Wycliffe thought should have come to him. We get, accordingly, a better *terminus a quo* for Wycliffe's disappointment, March 1375, and we note that the statement that Thornbury had held the prebend of Caistor since its voidance by Ingleby's death does not favour any tenure of it by Wycliffe, even for a short time; and that by using a general reservation, Wycliffe could have been passed over according to custom without any trouble at all about the first-fruits.

The *terminus ad quem* can, moreover, be fixed earlier than July 1377; in fact, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that all was over by October 1375. For, unless I am very much mistaken, the passage in the *De civili Dominio*, iii. 17, is not the first allusion to his Lincoln prebend to be found in Wycliffe's writings. The nearest in date to July 1377 is in chapters 43 and 44 of the *De civili Dominio*, i, the third tractate of the *Summa* (pp. 358 ff.), within some eighty pages of the end. No part of the *De civili Dominio*, i, can be later than December 1376, and no part earlier than January; in fact it is extremely difficult to devise any consistent or well-considered scheme of chronology for Wycliffe's writings which does not make the gradual publication of the lectures contained in this book begin soon after Easter and continue into December 1376, vacations excepted. Chapters 43 and 44 would fall accordingly about the beginning of December 1376. Wycliffe, in these chapters, has much to say on Frederick of Lavagna, on Lincoln, and on papal methods of patronage; and on p. 387 he writes as follows:

Cui, quaeso, crederetur, si caput ecclesiae hodie concedit michi aliquid, non cameraliter sed manifeste, per bullas patulas ad sumptus non modicos et labores; et cras, sine obice a me posito, aversa voluntate pape, propter affectionem affinitatis, peccunie, vel sanguinis aut aliam personalem, falsificat bullas atque sentenciam hodie confectas?

It seems evident that Wycliffe, when he wrote these lines, had his own Lincoln prebend in his mind, and almost certain that he had heard of Thornbury's appointment. Wycliffe, we may infer, had been passed over before 1376 was out. We note the words *aversa voluntate pape* and the absence of any mention of *sollicitudo* for the first-fruits.

The next allusion, working backwards, is in the *De Mandatis*. The *De Mandatis* is the first tractate of the *Summa* and is separated from the *De civili Dominio*, i, by the *De Statu Innocentiae*, a very short work, the shortest tractate of the *Summa*.<sup>2</sup> These two

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Papal Letters*, iv. 194, 210, 227.

<sup>2</sup> Neither so far have been published, but the late Dr. F. D. Matthew kindly gave me access to his copies.

books, I believe, represent the 'lectures' given by Wycliffe in the Michaelmas term 1375 and the Hilary term 1376. In the *De Mandatis* Wycliffe is very anxious and perturbed and even violent. Much of his anxiety was largely due no doubt to the temporary loss of his prebend of Aust (November 1375, but recovered thirteen months afterwards), which is pretty clearly in his mind; but it had other causes. Not far from the beginning of the *De Mandatis* Wycliffe writes, 'Ubi Christi vicarius scribit " fiat ", et ipse qui dixit et facta sunt non approbat, adquiritur ius aliquod impetranti';<sup>1</sup> a little later he says that papal appointment of itself confers no right to any number of benefices; while further on he declares that a bishop ought to ignore the pope's orders to promote one who is *ineptus* or *minus ydoneus*, and afterwards he complains of proctors and others who take fees or gifts to see a matter through and hinder rather than advance the interests of their client. All this seems a reference to his disappointment at Lincoln, and leads me to think that this occurred before the *De Mandatis* was begun, i.e. before October 1375. As about this date the pope was very much in Sir John Thornbury's debt and would doubtless be desirous to give him something on account, we need not be surprised if Caistor was filled promptly by the appointment of his son.

The remaining and earliest allusion is of a different kind. It comes in the *De Ente*, ii. 6, at the very end in a passage not yet published. This was written after Wycliffe became a doctor of divinity, and is therefore later than the first Lincoln reservation, which as we know came just before he obtained his licence; but though separated by several months from the date of Wycliffe's doctorate (almost certainly Michaelmas term 1372), it must be earlier than December 1373, when Wycliffe's reservation was renewed on better terms. July 1373 would seem to be about the date. This passage shows that even at the date when it was written Wycliffe was already being threatened by his enemies at Oxford with the loss of his reservation, and its chief interest is in suggesting that Wycliffe's hope of preferment was never very good.

We return to the words quoted above from the *De civili Dominio*: 'Dominus papa dedit michi prebendam . . . et, facta sollicitudine ad colligendum sibi primos fructus . . . contulit uni iuveni transmarino eandem prebendam.' The evidence given above persuades me that Wycliffe never got possession of his prebend and never paid and was never asked to pay the first-fruits. It hardly follows from this passage that he did. For in a controversial passage such as this we can do full justice to *dedit michi prebendam*, if we take it merely of the giving of the reservation, which in ordinary circumstances was a very valuable

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *De civili Dominio*, l. 385.

gift. If on the other hand Wycliffe had obtained possession, paid the first-fruits, and then been dispossessed, we should have heard much more about it, either here or in the *De civili Dominio*, i. 387, where as we have seen the first-fruits are not mentioned in direct connexion with the prebend, or, and especially, in Wycliffe's later works. It would not be Wycliffe's way to speak so moderately had he been treated quite like this. Here I note that Wycliffe's attitude in 1375 or 1376 towards such payments is by no means clear. No doubt in the *De Mandatis*, and in the *De civili Dominio*, i. 201, 202, there is a good deal about the first-fruits. Indeed, in the latter passage he denounces as simoniac those who covenant to pay the first-fruits, but a little later he condones such payment on occasions, and further on<sup>1</sup> complains of certain not inconsiderable charges (*sumptus non modicos*) to which he had been put in connexion, as I take it, with his two reservations. Anyhow, he paid these charges; this does not admit of doubt, for he got the bulls; the last of them was paid for late in 1373 or early in 1374, Wycliffe knowing when he made this payment that the first-fruits would be asked for later on. Moreover, in November 1375 he must have made some payment for the ratification of his prebend of Aust in Westbury and others also which would include the payment of the first-fruits thirteen years before at the date of his petition and provision to this prebend. It cannot therefore be assumed that, when it came to the point, he would not have paid the first-fruits for Lincoln had he had the chance. Nor does it at all follow from this passage that Wycliffe was the person troubled about first-fruits; it may have been his successful rival. First-fruits, we know, were always in the air, and a gibe about them was a commonplace. We must accordingly not be unprepared to find that the passage means that the pope, after giving Wycliffe the reservation of a Lincoln prebend, passed him over when his turn came and gave it to Thornbury, from whom, Wycliffe adds, he took good care to collect the first-fruits. It is important to remember that while the papal court would have given up the first-fruits in order to secure a man on whom it could depend, readiness to pay would not help one who showed signs of turning out a traitor. Suspicion of Wycliffe's loyalty was the real cause of his disappointment.

In the natural course of events, as Mr. Salter points out, Wycliffe after being passed over would have merely had to wait, and in a year or so would have been provided to another, though perhaps less valuable, prebend. His chances, however, were never perhaps very good. Not long after he had been given the reservation (c. Dec. 1371), his enemies at Oxford were threatening him with its loss, and about July 1373<sup>2</sup> he expresses his

<sup>1</sup> p. 566 above.

<sup>2</sup> *De Ente*, ii. 6, end.

concern about it. His concern was perhaps to some extent set at rest by the concession made him in December 1373. But Rome was again careful only to promise, and was doubtless watching how he would develop. In April 1375 Thomas Stowe was confirmed in the prebend of St. Cross, Lincoln (11 marks<sup>1</sup>), and was assured that the pope did not regard it as reserved for his use. In September 1375 nothing was done for him at Bruges, although for a time he had served on the commission, and at some time about this date, probably a little earlier, but perhaps a few months later, Philip's general reservation was used against him. The papal court was in this within its rights, as a general took precedence of a special reservation; and the claims of Philip's father were doubtless urgent; but these claims could have been met from other sources, had it had the mind. Wycliffe's chances of success were of course beyond recovery when his conclusions were condemned in May 1377.

One other point remains to be considered. In July 1374 Wycliffe had been employed at Bruges in certain negotiations between the pope and the king of England. The results of these negotiations and of others carried on before and after, in which apparently Wycliffe took no part, were embodied in certain bulls, which were issued in September 1375, though the papal nuncio had power to prorogue the articles therein contained. In these bulls the pope surrendered all reservations of his predecessors not already used and in certain cases remitted first-fruits. Had then Wycliffe's reservation come to him from Urban V, it could easily have lapsed in September 1375, for between Ingleby's death and the sealing of the bulls there was at the best but little time in which to use it. Probably, before the vacancy occurred, the terms of settlement had been practically agreed upon, and the pope would hardly be expected to snap a prebend up at the eleventh hour, even for a man on whom his heart was set. But though the first bull, in which the pope gave the Lincoln reservation on conditions, has so far not been found, the language of the second bull<sup>2</sup> shows that Gregory XI was responsible for both, and that about two years came between the two; Wycliffe, it says, was first granted his Lincoln reservation just before he gained his licence in Divinity (Hilary, 1372, as it seems, which was also the date at which the Canterbury Hall affair was being settled). Gregory's reservations were not affected directly by the settlement.

H. S. CRONIN.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Papal Letters*, iv. 208

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 193.