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# THE CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

*CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN  
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

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## ART. IV.—JOHN WYCLIFFE.

**JOHN WYCLIFFE** entered into rest on the 31st of December, 1384. Five hundred years have passed away since Wycliffe closed his grand career, and it is only just now we have begun in some degree to recognise the debt of gratitude we owe to the great Reformer. The Metropolis has celebrated the Wycliffe Quincentenary. The University of Oxford has just discovered "his place in history," and one of her learned professors, in his three lectures on Wycliffe delivered in the schools, has thus summarized our obligations to his memory: "To Wycliffe we owe more than to any one person that can be mentioned—our English LANGUAGE (for his translation of the Bible is a 'rich well' of old English), our English BIBLE, and our Reformed Religion."<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe (he added) founded no colleges, for he had no means. No human fabric enshrines his ideas, no great institution bears his name, and yet so vast is the debt the country owes his memory—so overpowering the claim, it might be thought no very extravagant recognition, Professor Montagu Burrows affirms, if every town in England had a monument to his memory, and every university a college named in his honour.<sup>2</sup>

Yet neither in London, nor in Oxford, nor in York, nor in Yorkshire, not even in Wycliffe Parish Church, does a statue or a tablet record Wycliffe's name. Only in Lutterworth Church, his former rectory, has a monument been erected to his memory, and that tribute he received only fifty years ago. The site of his birth-place in Wycliffe Parish is now unknown.<sup>3</sup> The ancient parish church in which the great Reformer was probably baptized contains, indeed, memorial brasses, exhibiting the arms of the Wycliffe family, and recording the names of various individuals, including William Wycliffe, Lord of the Manor of Wycliffe, A.D. 1537. There is also a stone, built into the outer wall of the church on the south side, having a large foliated cross, richly sculptured, with some other memorials of the family. But **JOHN WYCLIFFE**, the Morning Star of the Reformation, to whom England owes so much, is not mentioned. Yet Wycliffe is not forgotten! His record is on high. And He Who "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, and some pastors and teachers," gave John Wycliffe to England some five hundred years ago, "a burning and a shining light," in whose light—the light of his English Bible—we now rejoice!

<sup>1</sup> Professor Montagu Burrows.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Burrows, Lecture I., pp. 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> The present paper is substantially a sermon preached on occasion of the commemoration of the Quincentenary in Wycliffe Parish Church. (John v. 35: "*He was a burning and a shining light.*")

Of the MAN himself we have not much to say. Almost all we know of Wycliffe is gathered from his own writings, few of which have been printed and published; or from the writings of his adversaries, whose statements must be received with reserve and caution. A portrait of the great Reformer is preserved at Lutterworth; a second I have gazed upon with great interest in the Rectory of Wycliffe Parish, his native village; and a third is to be seen at Balliol College, Oxford, of which Wycliffe was the Master. Of their respective merits I cannot speak. But of that at Lutterworth, whatever may be its value as a portrait, Chambers, in his "Book of Days" (31 Dec.) writes: "It fulfils the ideal of the man. We behold, in what was said to be his 'spare, frail, emaciated frame,' the countenance of a Yorkshireman, firm and nervous; of one who could form his own opinion and hold it against the world; and all the more resolutely because against the world."

Of his WORK I have much to say. And here a curious and clever picture may be referred to, describing as it does so graphically Wycliffe's work as a Reformer in conjunction with that of Huss and Luther. For, in a richly illuminated copy of an old Hussite Prayer Book at Prague, Wycliffe may be seen at the top of the page lighting a spark; Huss, below him, blowing it into a flame; Luther, still lower down, waving on high the lighted torch!

I. Wycliffe was a great scholar, and in scholarship he shone as the Evangelic Doctor.

The first notice we have of Wycliffe's early days is his appearance as a Commoner in Queen's College, Oxford, in 1340. Thence he was soon removed to Merton, the most distinguished college of that day. In 1361 he was promoted to the Mastership of Balliol, and in 1365 he accepted the office of Warden of Canterbury Hall, now Christ Church, Oxford, being appointed by Simon Islip, the Archbishop of Canterbury and founder of that society. His university life was distinguished by contention against the Mendicant Friars, who were to Popery, before the Reformation, pretty much what the Jesuits have been ever since.<sup>1</sup> The eminent attainments of many of them in Canon Law and Scholastic Theology had obtained for them some of the most important offices in the university.<sup>2</sup> Fitzralph, the Chancellor of the University, had entered the lists against

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<sup>1</sup> Bagster, "Hexapla," p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Availing themselves of the influence they had acquired, the friars soon violated their vows of poverty, piling up, as the historian (Matthew Paris) says, their mansions to a royal altitude, exhibiting treasures within their spacious edifices and lofty walls, and applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke, or the terrors of confession as the agents of Papal extortion. (Lo Bas, p. 108.)

them on their own ground, and with their own weapons; but Wycliffe grasped the Sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God), and the more he used that weapon, the greater his skill in controversy and his love and reverence for Holy Scripture.

Nevertheless, Wycliffe preached, and disputed, and wrote as a scholar. In his day, the schools were in high repute. Then there were, in truth, but two professions—arms and the Church! Most lawyers, physicians, and even statesmen, were ecclesiastics. The universities were, therefore, thronged with crowds of students, and among them Wycliffe shone as a scholar, and as a scholar made his mark, among the learned and talented and influential of his day; his enemies themselves being witness. Knighton, a monk who abhorred him, wrote: "He was second to none in philosophy, and in the discipline of the schools he was incomparable."

Fitzralph, the Chancellor, was a learned disputant, but he fought on the low level of scholastic divinity, and never rose to a higher standard. Wycliffe, like Luther, attacked Papal corruption *with the Bible in his hand*, while he knew also how to use the learning of his day, and so to commend the truth by argument suited to gain the ear and to attract the scholarship of his hearers. Thus he made both Revelation and Scholarship serve his purpose, and, I suppose, but for *both*—and both combined, and both in their appropriate spheres—Wycliffe would never have proved the champion for Christ and His Gospel this Quincentenary acknowledges him to have been.

Here let us treasure up a practical lesson seasonable for the day in which we live. Theology as a science and study has its own place and use. Acquaintance with the writings of the learned Fathers of the Christian Church is a valuable attainment, as also the ability to quote their writings and expound their teaching. Further, how to argue, and how to apply an argument in a scholarly way, is a qualification most valuable of its kind. But this is not all. These are only means to an end. Behind Patristic theology there towers aloft the Old and New Testament itself. It has a Voice of its own clear and unmistakable and of unimpeachable authority, because God's own Voice. That treasure of Divine wisdom and truth, Wycliffe knew the value of, and he made it his own; and all beside, whether of ancient or of modern interpretation, was tried and tested by the words of Holy Scripture. Here, as a theologian, was Wycliffe's power, and as a controversialist, the secret of his wonderful influence and success. He was the *Evangelic Doctor*. Thus he showed himself to be "the burning and the shining light"! He was the "Morning Star," himself illu-

minated by the great sun of heavenly light and joy—the *Bible* that he loved—the *Bible* he translated—the *Bible* that he gave to the men of his generation.

II. Let us change our point of view, and now regard Wycliffe as a patriot loyal to his king and country.

Englishmen can never think of King John's surrender of the British crown to Pope Innocent III., and of all its attendant circumstances, without a blush of shame! The submission, while it lasted, was always most bitterly reluctant; the formality of the homage was constantly evaded, and the annual tribute of 1,000 marks (£12,000) oftentimes interrupted! In 1365, no less than thirty-three years had elapsed since the last payment had been made. Pope Urban V. then thought fit to revive the Papal claim of 1,000 marks from England, in token of Rome's supremacy, together with the arrears of the thirty-three preceding years! History tells us the result. Edward III. laid the case before Parliament, and defied enforcement of the exaction.<sup>1</sup>

The adherents of Pontifical supremacy were greatly amazed at this bold protest. Their displeasure was soon expressed by an anonymous monk, who published a vindication of the Papal claims, and called on Wycliffe, by name, as the Protestant champion of the day, to reply.

His reply was as ingenious as it was conclusive. The argument is debated in his "Trialogus" by certain secular Lords, by whom the unreasonable claim is thoroughly examined and exposed. Thus Wycliffe attacked Papal supremacy, and that, too, in a manner (as Webb Le Bas says) which must have elated the soul of any loyal Englishman, and ensured the reading and study of his arguments just in those very quarters where their acceptance was most desirable. If the style of his so-called "Determination" (*i.e.*, of the question) was rugged, and it wanted the finish (as the Roman Catholic Lingard implies) of the scholar and divine, nevertheless (as Lingard himself confesses) it does honour to *his loyalty* as a subject of the realm, and, we may add, it is a grand testimony to his great abilities as a successful controversialist.

Two years after, we find Wycliffe in a new character, as "commissioner with the Bishop of Bangor, to conduct a nego-

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<sup>1</sup> The answer of the King and his Parliament is too courageous not to be remembered to their credit: "Forasmuch as neither King John, nor any other king, could bring this realm and kingdom into such thralldom but by the common consent of Parliament, *the which was not done!* therefore, that which he did was against his oath at coronation. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt anything against the King by process, or other matters in deed the King with all his subjects should, with all their force and power, resist the same."

tiation with the Papal embassy at Bruges, relative to the Reservation of Benefices" (Bagster). The popes were in the habit of granting benefices during the *lifetime* of incumbents, and in fact (Geikie, p. 39) claimed the right to dispose of all benefices in Christendom. Wycliffe spent nearly two years at Bruges in negotiation of these questions, and we presume a *successful* negotiation; for, as a reward for his services, he received the Prebendary of Aust and Rectory of Lutterworth.

I mention these two important public services that Wycliffe rendered to his country and his sovereign, with a twofold purpose: (1) To show how honoured and highly-trusted a public servant Wycliffe had become; and (2) to remind you what Papal supremacy really means—a branch of theological learning not to be forgotten in our Protestant Reformation schools and colleges. Those amongst us who in the present day simply regard the Church of Rome as an erring sister Church, with whose faults charity would bid us deal so tenderly, forget the testimony of universal history. History represents the Church of Rome as the usurper of both political and ecclesiastical liberty—nay, more! the liberty of *mankind*—wherever occasion favours her pretensions. If Dr. Isaac Barrow's unanswerable treatise on "Papal Supremacy" is but little known nowadays, you have only to study its pages (say from pp. 115 to 119), and Barrow will teach you how incompatible is loyalty to a Protestant Sovereign with loyalty to the Pope of Rome. The Pope's claim is supremacy! It all along has been so. It is so now, and though perhaps ostensibly modified by circumstances, it is known and felt, if not acknowledged so to be. Rome's doctrinal errors, as a Church, is one thing! Rome's claims to supremacy, wherever she gains a footing, is another? If we overlook the fact which all history and experience affirm, that Rome is a Confederation—an Anti-Christian Confederation against civil and religious liberty, we jeopardise our safety both in Church and State. I appeal on this subject, from what I have no doubt is the sincere protest of many a respectable and honourable Roman Catholic, to the past history and the present canon law of his Church.

III. From this notice of Wycliffe's ecclesiastical contentions, in which we have found him the faithful subject of his Sovereign, and a patriotic champion of his country's freedom, let us proceed to a brief consideration of Wycliffe as a theologian. And here we must not forget the midnight darkness whence this "Morning Star" arose. The historian (Foxe, book v., p. 224) tells us how "the state of religion amongst the divines [of Wycliffe's day] was that of a deep lethargy, and past all the help and remedy of man. Only the *name* of Christ remained

among Christians. His true and lively doctrine was as far unknown to most men as His name was common to *all* men. As to faith, consolation, the end and use of the law, the offices of Christ, our impotency and weakness, the Holy Ghost, the greatness and strength of sin, true works, grace, and free justification by faith, the liberty of a Christian,—of all these things [Fox writes] wherein consists the sum of our profession, scarcely a word was spoken. Scripture-learning and divinity were known but to a few, and that in the Schools only; and *there* it was almost all turned into sophistry. Instead of the Epistles of Peter and Paul, men occupied their time in studying Aquinas and Duns Scotus. The world was altogether led and blinded by outward ceremonies and human traditions . . . The people were taught to worship nothing but what thy saw, and they saw almost nothing which they did not worship."

Turn your eyes, now, from this dark picture of Wycliffe's day, and, with his Bible in his hand and Bible truth upon his lip, was not Wycliffe as "a light shining in a dark place"?

Wycliffe's apologist, Dr. Thomas James, names the theologians whom Wycliffe studied: "By Abelard he was grounded in the right faith of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. By Bradwardine, in the nature of a soul-justifying faith against merit-mongers and pardoners, Pelagians and Papists. By reading Grossteste's Works, with which he seemed most conversant, he descried the Pope to be Antichrist." But Dr. James thus prefaces this statement: "God gave Dr. Wycliffe grace to see the truth of His Gospel, and by seeing it to lothe all superstition and popery." And we may inquire, how did God give him that grace? Surely, we may reply, in the study of that Bible Wycliffe loved so well and translated into English for the use of his fellow-men.

And that he conducted his study not only of theologians of repute *in a right spirit*, but Holy Scripture also, let the very solemn declaration of Wycliffe, contained in his tract "De Veritate S. Scrip.," testify—words so humble, so ingenuous, so truly Christian, we cannot but admire them:

Let God be my witness that I principally intend the honour of God and the good of the Church, from a spirit of veneration to the Divine Word, and of obedience to the law of Christ. But if with that intention a sinister view of vain glory, of secular gain, or of vindictive malice hath crept in unknown to myself, I sincerely grieve on that account, and by the grace of God will guard against it.

But here let me be somewhat more particular. I ask you to admire Wycliffe's views: 1st. On the authority of our Canonical Scriptures. Like his Master, so with Wycliffe, his one appeal was, "What saith the Scriptures?" Scripture-

proof settled all, any difficulty notwithstanding! And what a sensible exhortation is the following, in reference to the Apocryphal books:

I think it absurd to be warm in defence of the Apocryphal books when we have so many that are undeniably authentic. In order to distinguish Canonical books from such as are Apocryphal, use the following rules: (1) Look into the New Testament and see what books of the Old Testament are therein cited and authenticated by the Holy Ghost. (2) Consider whether the like doctrine be delivered by the Holy Ghost elsewhere in the Scripture.

Notice, too, some good rules that Wycliffe lays down for an expositor or a preacher of the Word: "He should be constantly engaged in comparing one part of Scripture with another. The student should be a man of prayer, and his disposition should be upright. He needs the internal instruction of the Primary Teacher." Wycliffe knew something of the blindness and depravity of the natural heart, and in reference to the illumination of the Holy Ghost, he records his estimate of the inestimable benefit and privilege that an expositor or student enjoys who is *led and taught by the Spirit of God*. Further, as Wycliffe contended for the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture as the test of truth and rule of life, and gave the Bible to the people of his day in the tongue they understood, so he valiantly contended for *the right of the people* themselves to possess and read and study the Holy Scriptures.

(2) We must record Wycliffe's open protest in the Schools<sup>1</sup> that his principal design was to recover the Church from idolatry—especially in regard to the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. With all his might Wycliffe opposed the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation, and (even Dean Milner admits) "he maintained the ancient and Scriptural truth of the Lord's Supper." With this view, Wycliffe published sixteen conclusions, the first of which is thus expressed: "The consecrated host which we see upon the altar is neither Christ nor any part of Him, but an effectual sign of Him." Wycliffe offered to defend this and his other conclusions in *public* disputation. But the University of Oxford prohibited the attempt. Wycliffe's doctrine on this crucial subject was *that* of our Church Articles. He did not drop from transubstantiation into consubstantiation as Luther did; and therein, for Scripture orthodoxy as a Reformer (though so many years his predecessor) we give Wycliffe the palm of merit in preference to Luther. Christ's presence, according to Wycliffe, was Christ in the heart, and not in the hand! "The Baptist [argues Wycliffe] was made Elias by virtue of Christ's words, in Matthew xi., yet

<sup>1</sup> Foxe, vol. i., 485; and Milner, p. 594.

he did not cease to be John the Baptist. And [Wycliffe proceeds to argue] St. Austin observes that the Scripture does not say that seven ears of corn and seven fat kine *signify* seven years of plenty, but that they *are* those years. Such expressions [Wycliffe adds] denote that the subject is ordained of God to *figure* the thing predicated according to its fitness."

(3) Would you know Wycliffe's opinion upon *Image Worship*? He thus disposes of the old defence, "We worship not the image, but the Being represented by the image." Wycliffe rejoins: "Suffice it to say, idolatrous heathens said the same."

(4) Would you know his opinion on the *Invocation of the Saints and observance of festivals*? "The festival of the day is to no purpose, if it do not tend to magnify the Lord Jesus, and induce men to love HIM."

(5) Would you know his opinion on Simony and the sale of *indulgences*? "Those stupid Simonists imagine that grace may be bought and sold like an ox or an ass."

(6) Would you know his views on *Redemption*? "The merit of Christ is of itself sufficient to redeem every man from hell. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation, and without faith it is impossible to please God."

(7) On *Justification*? "Unbelievers [writes Wycliffe] though they might perform works good in their matter, still are they not to be accounted righteous men. All who follow Christ become righteous through the participation of His righteousness, and are saved."

(8) On our *fall in Adam*? "Have mind that when thou wert a child of wrath and hell, for the sin of Adam Christ laid His life to pledge, to bring thee out of that prison; and He gave not, as a ransom for thee, either gold or silver, or any other jewel, but His own precious blood that ran out of His heart. This should move all men to have mind of God, and to worship Him in thought, word and deed.<sup>1</sup>

Wycliffe taught that "*human nature* is wholly at enmity with God." "All men [he wrote] are originally sinners, not only from the womb, but in the womb;" as our Church Catechism says, "Born in sin, and by *nature* a child of wrath."

Here may well be quoted the following words, well worthy of an Evangelic Doctor—the secret of his power as a preacher—and the great Evangelist of his day:

We cannot think a good thought unless Jesus send it. We cannot perform a good work unless it be *properly* His good work. His mercy *prevents* us, so that we may receive grace! Heal us, good Lord! we have no merit! Give us grace to know that all Thy gifts be of Thy goodness only!

<sup>1</sup> Bonar, "Words Old and New," p. 49.

Thus Wycliffe laid the sinner in the dust, and exalted Christ upon His throne.

IV. We have spoken of Wycliffe as a skilful controversialist and great theologian. I must add, that he was a great PREACHER. In the earlier days of his ministry, both at Oxford and in London, Wycliffe was a preacher of considerable note. Crowds of students hung upon his lips when he occupied the University pulpit.<sup>1</sup> But it was in Wycliffe's later days, especially when Rector of Lutterworth, he became the *preacher*! It was his own personal love of God's Word, his diligent study of it, and instruction therein of his "poor priests"—who became his evangelists throughout the Midland Counties—that made Wycliffe not only, as at Oxford, the Evangelical Doctor, but now, in his parish pulpit, the Evangelical Preacher. His gospel was emphatically the Gospel of the Grace of God, distinguished by that Scriptural theology I have already attempted to delineate. And this he preached faithfully, invariably, vigorously, with homely telling illustration, in plain and simple language.<sup>2</sup>

V. And this great preacher in the Church—whether St. Mary's, Oxford, or the London churches, or a country church as at Lutterworth—was a most diligent *pastor* to his flock. Canon Pennington says:<sup>3</sup> "Tradition informs us that every morning, after he had himself taught and trained and superintended the movements of his poor priests" (who were to the County of Leicester pretty much what our City Missionaries are to London, and our Scripture Readers to town and country), "clad probably like his preachers, in his russet gown, with sandals on his feet—this man, who shook the pillars of the

<sup>1</sup> Canon Pennington tells us (p. 106) that Wycliffe was occasionally a preacher in London, and that in the London pulpits, as in the disputations of the university, he spoke out boldly against the evils of his day. His accusers thus reported him to Courtenay, the Bishop of London. He was "an eloquent man" who, by his eloquence, drew after him many great lords, who hardened him to blunt the sword of St. Peter, and draw after him "many citizens of London into the bottomless pit of error."

<sup>2</sup> Thus, *e.g.*, would Wycliffe impress on the farmers of Lutterworth, and the young men who sat before him at church, the distractions and vexations the novel ceremonies introduced into the services of his day occasioned. His illustration is taken from the ploughed field and the harrow, and from their games on the village green: "Antichrist [he cried] turneth Christian men from serving Christ in Christian freedom; so much so, that *they* might well say, as the poet saith in his fable *the frogs said to the harrow*, '*Cursed be so many masters!*' for in this day Christian men are oppressed—now with Popes, and now with Bishops! now with Cardinals under Popes, and now with Prelates under Bishops! And now their head is assailed with *censures!* In short [said Wycliffe] buffeted are they, as men would serve a football." (Le Bas, pp. 206, 207.)

<sup>3</sup> "Life, Times, and Teaching of Wycliffe," p. 225.

Papacy, on whom the eyes of the King, the Pope, statesmen, prelates, and priests were fixed, might be seen in Lutterworth entering their rude dwellings, and engaging in friendly conversation with the inmates. If they are notorious offenders, he addresses to them words of warning or of exhortation; if they are suffering from sickness or sorrow, he pours the oil and wine of heavenly consolation into the wounded spirit; if their spirits are about to quit their earthly tabernacle, he speaks to them words of peace and joy. . . . He preached also to his flock by the silent eloquence of a holy life, remembering his own words, that 'they who live well in purity of thought and speech and deed . . . are very prophets of God, and holy angels (ambassadors) of God, and the spiritual lights of the world.'"

VI. Besides the Preacher, the Pastor, the Evangelist, and Trainer of Evangelists I have described him, Wycliffe was a very distinguished *Tract-writer*; and (as the art of printing was then unknown) he must have had a small army of scribes at his disposal to multiply his tracts, written some in English and some in Latin. Two hundred and more in number we know the titles of, though many now are lost.

VII. Omitting all reference to his other writings, I must touch upon Wycliffe's greatest work of all—the work that made him the foremost Reformer of the Church of Christ, and the greatest benefactor of his countrymen—his translation from the Vulgate into English of the Holy Bible. Wycliffe gave to his countrymen the Bible, the whole Bible, in the language they could read and study. *That Wycliffe was the first translator of the whole Bible into English, and that he so multiplied copies throughout the land that the Bible was no longer a sealed book, this is his chiefest praise!*

In what light did his *avowed enemies* regard this work? If some Protestant writers (strange to say), as Foxe, the Martyrologist, have forgotten it or passed it by in silence; and if others, for reasons of their own it would be hard to imagine, have written in sparing commendation of such a work, listen to what his bitter enemy, Henry Knighton, the Roman Catholic Canon of Leicester, had to say concerning it. Knighton's censure is Wycliffe's glory! "The Gospel which Christ committed to the clergy and the Doctors of the Church that *they* might sweetly dispense it to the laity and weaker persons according to the exigency of the times and the wants of the people hungering after it in their mind, this John Wycliffe hath translated out of Latin into the *Anglican*—not *Angelic* language; whence through him it has been published and disclosed more openly to laymen and women able to read than it used to be to the most learned and diligent of the clergy. And

so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under feet of swine; and what was dear to clergy and laity is now rendered, as it were, the common jest of both, so that the gem of the Church becomes the derision of laymen, and *that* is now *theirs for ever*, which before was the special property of the clergy and Doctors."

Translators of portions of the Bible into Saxon and into English had preceded Wycliffe.<sup>1</sup> When Saxon gave place to English we hear of an English translation by an unknown scholar, dated by Archbishop Usher A.D. 1290; and then, towards the close of the following century, John de Trevisa, Vicar of Berkeley in Gloucestershire, is spoken of as a translator of the Scriptures into English; but this translation is supposed to have been confined to a few texts which were painted on the walls of his patron's chapel at Berkeley Castle, or scattered in some of his writings known to exist in MS. Nearly one hundred years after John de Trevisa came John Wycliffe, whose translation is a translation into good English, sentence by sentence, of the Old and New Testaments from the Latin Vulgate.<sup>2</sup>

It is a distinguishing feature of Wycliffe's translation that it never was shut up in the libraries of the learned, but as it was made it was transcribed and put into the hands of the people—a book for the people, whose right to possess it, and read and study it, and understand and interpret it.

When Wycliffe commenced his work of translation, how long it took him, and what help he had, are questions not so easily answered. I believe he was a student and a translator

<sup>1</sup> All honour to those learned men. We will not forget the work of Cædmon the monk, who, about A.D. 680, produced a religious poem (the most ancient specimen of Saxon poetry), the materials of which were taken from the Scriptures. But this was not a translation. Then Adelme, the first Bishop of Sherborne, translated the Psalms into the Saxon tongue about A.D. 706. A Saxon version of the four Gospels was made by Egbert, Bishop of Lindisfarn, who died A.D. 721. A few years after, the Venerable Bede translated the Bible, or the greater part thereof, into that language. Nearly two hundred years after Bede, our learned and noble King Alfred, executed another translation of the Psalms, and probably of the Decalogue, which he made the basis of the Statute Book of England. And lastly, as far as the Saxon tongue is concerned, Ælfrie, Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 995, made a translation of the Pentateuch, and some other parts of the Old Testament. Then (Hartwell Horne, vol. ii, p. 235) a chasm of centuries ensued, during which the Scriptures seem to have been buried in oblivion.

<sup>2</sup> Bagster's "Hexapla" gives us: Wycliffe's translation of 1380 from the Vulgate, Tyndale's of 1534 from the Greek, Cranmer's of 1539, the Geneva of 1557, the Rheims of 1582, the Authorized of 1611. The revised version of 1881 is a book of common reference.

of the Vulgate Bible from his earliest days. Certainly from the time he became a public controversialist and an effective preacher. His power was the power of Scripture. It was his acquaintance and familiarity therewith, and his knowledge how to use it both in quotation and application, that made Wycliffe five hundred years ago the power in Christendom he was acknowledged to be, and the upright, bold, and holy man, whose Christian character his very enemies were unable to assail. He drew his light straight from the fountain of Light; and his strength and courage, his wisdom and superiority to the men of his day were his "heritage" as a man of prayer and faith, whose "delight was in the law of the Lord, wherein he meditated day and night." What a book of peace and comfort must his Bible have proved to Wycliffe amid the many and great dangers of his honoured yet anxious career!—*e.g.*, when summoned before Bishops and Archbishops and Papal delegates; when deprived of his honours as Warden of Canterbury Hall; when publicly assailed even in the Oxford Schools as a heretic; when, as he was supposed to be upon his deathbed, and the friars called on him to recant, and his servant raised him on his couch, Wycliffe told them: "I shall not die, but live and declare the evil deeds of the friars." Bold and courageous man! His blessed Master was as "a wall of fire" around him to protect him, or short work would Rome have made of Wycliffe. Rome hated Wycliffe with a special hatred as the translator of the Bible and the unfolder to his countrymen of every rank and age of the words of eternal life. While *living*, Rome could not burn him, but when dead, Rome disinterred his bones, "consigned them to the flames, and cast them (as the inscription on his monument in Lutterworth church records) into the waters of the adjoining stream." Mad rage! Futile revenge! All the while, though dead, Wycliffe spake; and he speaks to-day in the Bible he translated. The translations into the many languages of earth which are the glory of our own day, Wycliffe's translation is to all as the morning star ushering in a day of Gospel light on this dark world.

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