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OF
JOHN WYCLIFFE

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Victorious Sun of Righteousness,
At whose supreme command
Thy Morning Star flamed forth afar
O'er England's darkened land,
We praise Thee for that man of fire
Who, called and sent by Thee,
Flashed through the night the living light
Of truth and liberty.

We, heirs of Wycliffe's glorious name,
Light-bearers fain would be,
Till Christ shall shine o'er palm and pine,
O'er continent and sea.
Mid clouds and darkness forward go,
Glad heralds of the Lord—
Come gain or loss, our pride the Cross,
Our boast, God's conquering Word.

From the Wycliffe College Song by Canon C. Venn Pilcher, Toronto.

THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

BY

DYSON HAGUE

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TO MY FRIEND AND COMPANION IN LABOUR

PRINCIPAL McELHERAN

WHOSE DEVOTION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHMANSHIP HAS WON FOR HIM THE CONFIDENCE AND LOYALTY OF THE GRADUATES AND FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF WYCLIFFE COLLEGE, OF WHICH HE IS THE HONOURED PRINCIPAL.

In his *Wycliffe's Place in History*, Professor Burrows said: "Wycliffe founded no colleges, for he had no means; no human fabric enshrined his ideas; no great institution bears his name. And yet so vast is the debt that we owe to his memory, so overpowering the claim, that it might be thought no very extravagant recognition if every town in England had a monument to his memory, and every university a college named in his honour."

Four years before Professor Burrows of Oxford wrote this, the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School was founded in Toronto in 1877 by a body of Evangelical Churchmen to maintain and propagate the principles of the Reformation; and in 1882, possibly, if not probably, because of his suggestion, the name was changed to Wycliffe College. Since that day it has sent out over four hundred and eighty graduates who have gone forth as ordained clergy of the Church of England, not only in the Dominion of Canada, but in Japan, China, South America, Palestine, India, and in the Arctic, of whom seventeen are Bishops and two Archbishops. To-day, with nine Professors and sixty-eight students, it is one of the largest Anglican colleges in the Empire.

ORIGINAL PREFACE (1909)

A CAREER like Wycliffe's should never be forgotten by men who speak the English tongue, and love the thing called British liberty. He was such a splendid Englishman, such a splendid scholar, and, above all, such a splendid Christian. It does one good in these modern days to freshen up one's knowledge of the man and his work. Though dead and gone over five hundred years, one cannot read of his day and doings without getting a clearer vision of the needs and questions of this twentieth century, and the present-day problems of the Church. Like the wave pulses that go on and on and on, the influences of his epoch-making life are still spreading with most persistent force. John Wycliffe being dead, yet speaketh.

I have endeavoured to verify with the utmost care every quotation, reference, and historic fact.

My chief authorities have been: Green's *History of the English People*; Fisher, D'Aubigné, Blunt, Beckett, Geikie, Massingberd, on the Reformation; Wylie's *History of Protestantism*; the well-known works on Wycliffe, such as The Religious Tract Society's, Burrows, Varley, Pennington, Poole, S. G. Green, LeBas, Sergeant, Carrick; and, above all, the great works of the German writers, Professor Lechler, of the University of Leipsic, and Professor Loserth, of the University of Czernowitz. For the quotations and references I have also used the writings of Wycliffe by the Religious Tract Society, the English works of Wycliffe, by F. D. Matthew, and, above all, the invaluable editions of his Latin works by the Wyclif Society, especially the *de Eucharistia, de Ecclesia, de Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, and the *Opus Evangelicum*.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND AND ENLARGED EDITION (1935)

OVER twenty-five years ago I wrote a short life of Wycliffe, as an historical study, taking pains to secure, as far as was possible, all the literature upon the subject that was available. Since that time important additions have been made to the fund of Wycliffe literature and, in bringing out this enlarged edition, I have endeavoured to secure all the light that could be thrown upon the character and career of this extraordinary man. The more I have investigated the efforts of his life and the sources of his energy and principles the more I have been impressed with the magnitude of his labours, and the obligation of England, England's Church, and English Christians to the man who, over five and a half centuries ago, stood forth as the protagonist of all those great principles which have made England great and the Reformation mighty. As Jowett of Balliol said, Wycliffe above all things was an Englishman; his heart and soul were always with England, and most of all when it was against Rome. (*Jowett's Sermons*, 10.) Or, as Bishop Creighton says: "Wycliffe was no unapt symbol of some of the most characteristic qualities of English thought: deep moral earnestness; an abhorrence of semblances; entire self-forgetfulness in the pursuit of truth; sincerity, clearness, honesty; a type of later English movements and the true spirit of the Gospel." (*Historical Essays*, 200.)

Few men in history have been more maligned and misunderstood. It must be remembered by the student of English history that Wycliffe's career was progressive, and that the Wycliffe of 1382–4 was a man far more enlightened spiritually and more definitely decided as a Protestant than the Wycliffe of say 1370 or 1377. That Wycliffe in an earlier stage held opinions with regard to certain Church practices and doctrines that are now universally discarded by Protestant Churchmen is unquestionable.

> "Many things that once I thought strange, now seem to me to be catholic: when I by God's power became a man, I put away by God's grace childish things."

This should be remembered when critical judgments are made of his doctrinal position by Roman Catholics and others. There is often a strong distinction between the real doctrines of Wycliffe and those that have been attributed to him, to the serious injury of his good name and reputation.

Within the last twenty-five years very valuable contributions have been made to the study of Wycliffe, chief among which are: Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*; G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*; and that masterly work of Dr. Herbert B. Workman in two volumes, *John Wycliffe, a Study of the English Mediæval Church*, a work that occupied much of his time for twelve years, during which, as he says, he lived in Wycliffe's presence until his words and presence alike became strangely real. Workman's volumes are extremely able, most learned, full of valuable material, and they will probably remain for many years the classic upon the subject. But it is written from the viewpoint of a Nonconformist and a critic of many of the commonly received views of Wycliffe. Workman fails, in my mind, to grasp the essence of Wycliffe's greatness as an Evangelical Church Reformer, and to properly measure his positive influence upon the definite principles of the Reformation

Protestants, and especially of the doctrinal teaching of the Church of England, and the large place he occupied in the movements of Protestant regeneration in the reigns of Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth.

I want to express my indebtedness again to Matthew, *English Works of Wycliffe*, by the Early English Text Society, and also to the volumes of Robert Vaughan on *John de Wycliffe, D.D., A Monograph* of 577 pages, published by Seeleys, a very able historical and biographical summary published in 1843, and followed a couple of years later by The Tracts and Treatises with selections and translations from his manuscripts and Latin works. It was brought out by the Wycliffe Society with a biography in 1845. It is a most valuable and scholarly summary of all that Wycliffe was and did. I would gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Provost Cosgrave of Trinity College, Toronto, for his generous gift to Wycliffe College of the large four-volumed Wycliffe Bible, edited by Forshall and Madden, the Oxford University Press, 1850, which was presented by the University of Oxford to the library of Trinity College, Toronto, 1857. Most of the quotations of Wycliffe's Bible have been taken from these volumes, the four volumes consisting of about 2,800 pages. However, in most of the quotations I have accepted the modernized spelling in order that the ordinary reader may read without too great difficulty. I have found Arnold's three volumes of *The Select English Works of John Wycliffe* of great value, and also Herbert E. Winn's *Select English Writings of Wycliffe*. I have received many valuable suggestions from Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, one of the most scholarly works on the historic side of Wycliffe's times. Poole, in his *Wycliffe and Movements for Reform*, is excellent from the historic side; as are also Capes, *The English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*; Sergeant, *John Wyclif, Last of the Schoolmen*; Carrick, *Wycliffe and the Lollards*, a most excellent work by a Presbyterian author; and Canon Pennington, *John Wiclif* (S.P.C.K.),

which is one of the most fair-minded and excellent works for its size on Wycliffe's times and teaching. I must confess my indebtedness to Thorold Rogers, *Historical Gleanings*; Parkes Cadman, *Wycliffe* in *The Three Religious Leaders of Oxford*; Creighton, *Historical Essays and Reviews*; and Baldwin Brown's *Essays*.

I desire here to record my heartfelt thanks to Bishop Knox, to my colleagues on the staff of Wycliffe College, the Rev. Professor Isherwood and the Rev. Ramsay Armitage, and also to the Rev. J. S. Harrington of the Bible Society, for their kindness in revising the proof sheets and giving many valuable suggestions; and to the Librarians of University College, Trinity College, Knox College, and especially to Dr. Locke of the College Street Library, Toronto, for their kindness in permitting me to see and borrow many volumes on Wycliffe and his age.

The work has been to me throughout a labour of love. While it will possibly add little to the knowledge of those who have delved into the numerous volumes to be found in almost any civic or college library on the life and writings of John Wycliffe, it will, I hope, not only freshen up in many readers their knowledge of this extraordinary English Christian, but awaken in all a sense of our debt unpayable to this great Churchman, the greatest of all, as Jowett said, of whose teachings and principles we are the heirs and residuary legatees. The more I read history, especially ecclesiastical history in the Church of England, the more I am impressed with the fact that it is all repeated in our present-day life. The things, the men, the problems, the controversies, the aims, the parties, the complications, the dangers, the duties are in essence, in spite of external and nominal variations, the same as in the days of Wycliffe. Rome is just as strong, just as aggressive, and its doctrine and teaching just as false and repugnant to the Word of God as ever. (Articles XXII, XXVII, XXXI.) The poor are in just the same need; the rich in just the same danger. Human nature and the human heart are

just what they were. Culture, civilization, scholarship, science—these are only on and of the surface—the man's a man for a' that, a sinner guilty, a soul immortal, a sheep that has gone astray. The Gospel that Wycliffe preached, the Bible that Wycliffe published, the Christ that Wycliffe adored and loved are the only supply for the world's need to-day.

If I have been able, in the writing of this new edition of Wycliffe, to stir anyone to a new desire to stand up for Christ and the Truth, to take up Wycliffe's torch and hold it high, to fight to the death all aberrations from the Bible and the Gospel and all falsehoods which are propagated in the name of the Church, I shall feel that I have not laboured in vain or spent my strength for nought.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE MAN

JOHN WYCLIFFE was a Yorkshireman. He belonged to a family which had been lords of the manor from the days of the Conquest. He was born probably about 1320, or perhaps 1324. It is impossible to fix the date with exactitude. He died on the last day of the last week of 1384.

If not the greatest man of his age, John Wycliffe was the greatest Englishman. He was its foremost scholar. He became its most influential teacher. He was the most outspoken nationalist of his day, the voice of England, the Hampden of the fourteenth century. He was, as Lechler, the German biographer, puts it in a word, the centre of the whole pre-Reformation history. In insight, vivid; in living, holy; in preaching, fervent; in organization and labours, unwearying; he came to be, slightly to alter Lowell's word of Abraham Lincoln:

"The kindly, earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient,
New birth of our new soul, the first great Englishman."

The life and work of John Wycliffe may be regarded as a proof of the providential disposals of the great Head of the Church. He seems to have been purposely raised up to do a work that only could have been performed in the age in which he lived by a man of his varied attainments and spiritual character.

THE AGE IN WHICH WYCLIFFE LIVED

The age in which Wycliffe lived was one of the epoch-marking eras of England's history; the fourteenth

century. In many ways it was an age of strange unsettlement, upheaval and unrest. It was as if the four winds of heaven were striving upon the great sea of the life of England. Men were beginning to think as they never thought before. The struggle against tradition and undisputed ecclesiastical authority had begun. The common people were rising. The middle classes were realizing their strategic power. The ominous murmurings of socialism and the mutterings of communism were beginning to be heard. A new spirit was pulsating in the minds of serfs and franklins. The politicians were, of course, planning to remedy the social evils of the age. The grievances of the lower and the lowest classes, of the higher and smaller land-owners were clamorous. The dreamers were dreaming dreams of self-government and of national unity. (Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, Chapter 3.) It was the age of commercial progress, of more representative government and a revival of learning before the Renaissance. The Black Death, 1348–50, which devastated Europe and cut off half the population of England, decreasing it from five millions to two and a half millions, only demonstrated the invincible spirit of England rising from the ashes of defeat to build with undaunted spirit a better world. (Cadman, 133–6.) It was an age of vigorous and reconstructive thinking. It was the golden age of intellectual activity, as Burrows called it, the highest pinnacle of the most profound learning, of the most daring speculation of the scholastic centuries. Oxford was then at the height of its power as the centre of learning in Christendom. What Rome was in the ecclesiastical world, Oxford was in the intellectual: the Mecca of the scholarship of Europe. It is said that there were over thirty thousand students there before the Black Plague calamity, though this was probably an exaggeration, but the filthy streets and dingy hovels, with sanitation unknown, would shock our modern senses. (Cadman, 30–5.) It was the golden age of chivalry—the age when England won its famous

victories at Crecy and at Poitiers—the age of Edward III, the royal upholder of England's national rights, when Plantagenet grandeur, English military glory and European chivalry were at their zenith. (Burrows, p. 46.) It was the birth age of England's national consciousness. It was the age of the emergence of that little island kingdom upon the sphere of history as the realm of a strong and liberty-loving people. For the distant island kingdom of the northern seas had long ceased to be the haunt of warring and barbarian tribes. England then was becoming a nation and its name, even then, was identified with the ideas of valour, of independence, of justice, and of law. Patriotism had become a national passion. The masterful blood of the Norman had mingled with that of the stalwart and patriotic Saxon, and the blend had produced the Englishman, the English language, the English constitution, and the English nation.

The restless Dane, the hardy Celt, the sturdy Saxon,
The Norman, dauntless, dominant,
These are the bloods that intermingling form
The modern Briton;
These are the strands that interwoven blend
To make the race that conquering rules,
And finding takes, and taking holds,
For liberty, and law, and righteousness, and God.

It was during the fourteenth century that these elements of national greatness, which have since lifted England to the highest rank, came into operation. It was during the fourteenth century that the inflated increase of Papal pride synchronized with the emerging dignity of English nationalism. It was during the fourteenth century that the English language emerged from the lingual chaos of centuries, and became fixed as the language of the nation. In 1356 Sir John Mandeville wrote the first book ever produced in English, and in 1362 English became the authorized language of the law courts.

In 1327, when Wycliffe was a mere child at his mother's

side, Edward the Third ascended the throne of England. The imperial and independent characteristics of William the Norman, of Stephen Langton the outspoken Anglican, and of Robert Grosseteste the Anti-Papist blended in his royal character. He had his faults, and his private life towards the end of his career, as Workman shows (I, 214), was sadly marred. But, after all, he was a man who had that old British love of justice and fair play. He was a typical Englishman. He believed in English supremacy, and had an Englishman's impatience of foreign interference. He had a passionate desire to free England from the exacting avarice of foreigners. It was a time when England's realm and England's Church were overrun with foreigners; when Italians and Frenchmen were sent by Papal authority to occupy or collect the revenues of the most valuable positions in England; when the nobles were wearying of clerical misrule, and the rulers and lawgivers were awakening to the insolence of Rome's demands. And in this reign and at such a time as this God raised up John Wycliffe and brought into the political and ecclesiastical arena of the great fourteenth century an English Churchman who was not only the outstanding Englishman of the century, but was destined to be the first, if not the greatest, of the Protestant reformers the world has known.

THE DISTINCTIVE WORK OF WYCLIFFE

The distinctive peculiarity of the work of Wycliffe was neither its nationalism nor its anti-papal zeal. It was neither the vigour of his exposure of abuses nor the amazing valour of his defiance of the popes. It was something different from this. It was something deeper and more real. It was, rather, the fact that he was the first great Catholic Churchman to discern fully the falsity of Rome's doctrinal position, to denounce it boldly, and to announce clearly and rehabilitate the truth as the truth is in the Bible and the teaching of Christ.

Others, doubtless, had seen and known these things. To the Cathari and the Waldenses, to Claude of Turin, and Peter Waldo, it was given to understand through the Scriptures not only the glory of the Gospel, but the corruptions and apostasy of the Church of Rome. Perhaps the most noteworthy of all was Thomas Bradwardine (1290–1349), scholar of Oxford and Archbishop of Canterbury. He was the first of the ante-Reformation reformers to discuss and teach the need of the grace of God and of the Holy Spirit in the work of heart renewal. Hole, in his *Manual of English Church History*, says that Bradwardine was the first precursor of doctrinal reforms. His epoch-marking work was De causa Dei contra Pelagium (the cause of God against Pelagius), which laid great stress on the doctrine of justification by free grace. (Hole, pp. 93, 281, 379.) Nor can we overlook that remarkable man, Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1235–53), scholar, patriot, reformer, and prophet before the dawn. In his opposition to Roman abuses he was a Protestant of the first order. He hurled his anathema against Rome like a Luther. He exposed the corruption of the court of Rome with the withering sarcasm of an Erasmus. He said the Pope appointed men of shameless lives to the offices of the Church, and in his defiance hinted that the Pope was the son of perdition and a true Antichrist. (See Perry's *Student's English Church History*, I, pp. 325–50.) There is little evidence, however, of his ever having grasped the Evangelical aspect of truth like Bradwardine, or of the Biblical and Scriptural teaching of the New Testament like Wycliffe. But as a valiant English Churchman and nationalist, and an unashamed opponent of the Papacy in its darkest days, he was a true precursor of Wycliffe and the Reformation.

But of Wycliffe it may be distinctively asserted, that he was the first really great and enlightened advocate of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and the first great practical exposer of the falsity of the keystone doctrines of the Roman Church. Others had done, and were doing,

the political part of Protestant reform. Grosseteste had done it. Edward the Third had done it. Parliament had done it, and would do it again. But the work of John Wycliffe was higher and deeper. It was the indispensable other half, without which all the mere anti-papal legislation and anti-vice preaching in the world would never have freed the Church from Popery. It was the shaking not merely of Papal pretensions, but of Papal falsities. It was the impeachment not merely of vices, but of errors. It was the propagation not merely of negative protests, but of Evangelical principles.

One of the commonest fallacies of history is the fallacy of speaking of Wycliffe's reformatory work as if it were chiefly reform of morals in the Church, and a correction of national abuses.

This is a great mistake.

It is the mistake that makes men completely misapprehend the English Reformation. The English Reformation was not merely a reform *in* the Church. It was a doctrinal reform *of* the Church. This was in essence also the work of Wycliffe two centuries or so before. While its negative aspect dealt largely with the exposure of Papal abuses and clerical vices, it derived its chief strength from its positive aspects; the exposure of doctrinal errors widely received as Scriptural truths, of Papal falsities long believed as Catholic verities, and the dauntless declaration of the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Other men had whispered; he cried aloud. Others had spoken in the secrecy of closets; he proclaimed on the house-tops. Others had denounced the vices of popes; he denounced the very foundation principles of the Papal Church system. It is this that constituted Wycliffe not merely the morning star, but the rising sun, of the Reformation, the man in the opinion of Canon Pennington (*John Wiclif*, p. 268) who ought to be venerated by all members of the Church of England, because he held nearly all the doctrines embodied in the Articles and formularies of our Church.

The reforming zeal of John Wycliffe may be traced to two fountain-heads. It was from these that the essential movement of the reformation of the Church of England sprang a century and a half or two centuries later. Those two great fountain-heads were personal conversion and Scriptural enlightenment. It was his knowledge of a personal Saviour in the newness of life that was the secret of Wycliffe's greatness. He loved Christ. He knew whom he had believed. He spake that which he knew. Therefore, also, he loved the Word of God. That path of life which he had found therein he determined all his life long to make known to others.

There is no record, so far as I have been able to discover, of any life transforming experience in Wycliffe's career such as that which flashed over Luther's soul when the life-bringing word of the Lord, "The just shall live by faith," came to him on the Sancta Scala in Rome. (D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, ii, p. 54.) Nor of that epoch-marking conversion of Latimer when he was brought to the light of life through the confession of Bilney and the words of Isaiah i, 18. (See my *History of the Church of England before the Reformation*, pp. 267–8.) But that he was a genuinely transformed man, who lived and loved Christ, in whose heart the love of God was shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, and who brought forth fruit of the Spirit as he advanced in years and grace, no unbiased student of history can doubt. The charges of Dr. Hearnshaw, Professor of Mediæval History in the University of London, that Wycliffe "seems to have had no religious experience; no sense of sin; no consciousness of conversion; no assurance of salvation; no heart of love; no evident communion with God"; in fact, "Wycliffe was not a religious man at all" (Hearnshaw, *Mediæval Thinkers*, pp. 221–2), remind one of the infamous attacks of the Roman ecclesiastics in Wycliffe's day, with their contumelious diatribes. They are like the incredible accusations of some of the Laudian Churchmen who said that John Wycliffe was a grand dissembler, a

man of little conscience, that what he did to religion was more out of vainglory to obtain himself a name than out of honesty, and that he adopted his principles out of revenge and disappointment at being refused preferment. It seems impossible almost for some men to be fair; and it is certainly impossible for some Roman and Anglo-Catholics to understand the beauty and power of so noble a Christian.

The reformation of England's Church owes it foundation and inception to the Scriptural illumination of men taught and led by the Spirit. The nation was weary of the yoke of Rome. The people were disgusted with the lives of the clerics, and the degradation of religion. It was, of course, a great matter to rid the Church of the Papal exactor. It was a great matter to rid the Church of immoralities and abuses. But any nationalist, a man of the world like Simon de Montfort, or an Englishman of pride like John of Gaunt, could move measures against Papal interference. Any man of earnest life could declaim against the vices of the day in convent, court, and cloister. But the greatest evil, the root evil, was the yoke of Romish bondage; the bondage of unscriptural ecclesiasticism, and of idolatrous superstition. He alone could see this and remove this who had been himself enlightened through the understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

It is in this, therefore, that the hand of God is so evident. Not merely in the raising up of a man of such splendid patriotism and colossal mental power, but in the selection of a man who, by the devoutness of his Christian life, the strength of his will, and the depth of his convictions, would stand forth before the world like the Seraph Abdiel,

> Faithful found,
> Among the faithless, faithful only he;
> Among innumerable false, unmoved,
> Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;

Nor number, nor example, with him wrought,
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single.

The reforming work of Wycliffe in the fourteenth century was characterized very largely, also, by the same features as the reformation of the Church of England in the sixteenth century. It not only sprang, as that did, from the personal enlightenment of the leader of leaders; it had, broadly speaking, three distinct parts or movements.

The first stage was the political.

The second stage was the ethical.

The third stage was the doctrinal.

First of all there came the political and anti-papal stage, in which he came forward as the embodiment and exponent of the national consciousness and of the national Church spirit in defiance of the pretensions and claims of the Pope of Rome. Then there followed the moral or anti-vice stage, when the infamous lives of monks and friars and ecclesiastics generally were arraigned for popular indignation. Last of all came the doctrinal or anti-error stage, when the cardinal doctrines of Popery, or the Roman system, were attacked, and the true doctrines of the Apostles of Christ were expounded, though the anti-friar anti-monk censures continued almost to the end. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, as the Master said. (Mark iv, 28.) Or, in other words, first of all there was the removal of external obstructions; then the rectification of internal conditions, and then the rehabilitation of foundation principles.

CHAPTER II

WYCLIFFE AS A NATIONAL CHAMPION

IT was in the character of a national champion, the champion of the rights of the Sovereign and of the people of England, that Wycliffe started his public career, treading in the steps of Langton, Grosseteste, and Richard Fitzralph or Radulphus, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and Archbishop of Armagh.[1]

Born, as it has been conjectured, about 1320 or 1324, or even 1328, and educated at Oxford, a doctor of divinity, a master of logic and philosophy, Wycliffe was about forty when he stepped into the arena as a nationalist. The air was full of the strife of tongues. There was the clerical party with the ecclesiastics as a fierce unit on one side, and the anti-clerical party, absolutely Roman to a man, but increasingly anti-papal. All England was aflame at the time on account of the insolence of Pope Urban V, who had demanded for the first time for thirty-three years, the arrears of the annual rental which used to be paid to the Pope as a sign of the vassalage of the realm from the days of "that abomination of England's nobles and vassal of slavery to the Pope," as Matthew Paris called him—King John, 1213.

[1] Stephen Langton, 1150–1228, Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal, first name on the Magna Charta, 1215.

Robert Grosseteste, 1175–1253, Bishop of Lincoln, Scholar, Promoter of Biblical learning, anti-papal champion, and Protestant precursor of Wycliffe.

Richard Fitzralph, sometimes called St. Richard of Dundalk, Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, 1300, and Vice-Chancellor of the University, 1333, a saintly scholar and practical reformer.

For a fine study of Richard of Armagh and the Mendicant Orders, see Lechler I, 75–84.

It was a bad time for a Pope to make any demands on England for tribute money to Rome. The First Statute of Provisors, which was the first great parliamentary attempt to limit the temporal power of the Pope, and cut away the very root of the Papal power in England by taking the appointments to all Church benefices out of the hands of the Pope, had been passed in 1351. Edward III seems to have acted in this matter with right Protestant clearness. He absolutely defied Rome to present any foreigner to an English Bishopric or benefice, empowered his sheriffs to imprison any Frenchmen or Italians who might come into England with their bulls and Papal authorization. (Perry, I, 405.) And in the First Statute of Provisors, passed in 1351, when Wycliffe was a young man at Oxford, the Parliament declared that elections and presentations to benefices were no longer to be in the hands of the Pope, and that any ecclesiastics claiming bishoprics or benefices by bringing letters from Rome would be fined or imprisoned. It sounded rather well, and seemed pretty strong, but as a matter of practical politics it was a dead letter. The Pope paid no attention to it. The bishops systematically evaded it. (Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, III, 329.) The barons and gentry found that it only involved them in further trouble. For the Pope, in accordance with time-honoured usage, was accustomed to summon all whom he pleased to Rome, overruling all sentences of the English courts. *He* was the final Court of Appeal. He would summon all who dared to refuse the Papal nominees to Rome itself, a process which involved not only enormous expense, but most vexatious and humiliating delays. (Green, III, 48.) Something had to be done. And England did it by passing, in 1353, the Act of Præmunire, which finally settled the question whether the King's court or the Pope's court was the Court of Appeal. English matters were to be tried in English courts. And that decision was to be final. There was to be no appeal to Rome.

Anyone who tried to carry his case to Rome as to a foreign court would be guilty of a penal offence.

Not only, as we have said, had thirty-three years gone by without a mention of any Roman tribute, but England was in a very different state from what it was in 1213, and Edward III was a very different man from King John. Besides that, too, what touched England to the quick was the exasperating fact that the money demanded by the Pope had been handed over to the French to help them fight against England, and England had twice thrashed the French, and thrashed them badly, at Crecy in 1346, and Poitiers in 1356. However, in 1366, Pope Urban V thought it was about time to collect the neglected tribute, and summoning Edward III to recognize him as legitimate sovereign of England, demanded the payment of all the arrearages, this annual sum of twelve thousand pounds, as England's grateful tribute for the privilege of having such a spiritual blessing as the lordship of the Pope, or, as he put it, " for the defence of the territories of the Roman Church against the incursion of impious companies of perverse men "—English soldiers in the service of the Viscounti, the Lombard rulers of Milan.

The answer of the Parliament was short enough. Neither King John nor anyone could subject his kingdom or his people without their consent. It was a violation of the King's Coronation Oath. They would not pay it.

The episode is remarkable as a proof of the growing sense of England's national consciousness. But to us it is remarkable, also, for the fact that it brought out upon the stage of England a Churchman who was destined to become her foremost defender against Rome. The ablest man of his day, Wycliffe took up the matter in dead earnest. As one who was summoned to Parliament by order of the King in 1366 he exposed before the King's Council the Roman pretensions with masterly force. He took the claims of Rome one by one and with relentless logic tore them in pieces. (Lechler, I, 240–2 ; Burrows,

p. 64.) He showed that the action of a tribute by an alien was subversive of the primary principles of constitutional government. A tribute is, constitutionally speaking, a *quid pro quo*. It is given rightly only to him who can guarantee protection in return. This the Pope could not grant. Therefore the State need not pay a subsidy. Going deeper, he showed that the supreme and final lordship of the realm was neither in the King nor in the Pope, but in Christ, and Christ alone. The Pope, as a man, subject to sin, has no control over that which is held for Christ. The claim of a Pope to hold and control a kingdom like that of England was a clear violation of the spiritual principles of the kingdom of Christ. In a most dramatic form, generally entitled *The Determinatio*, or " The Speeches of the Seven Lords," Wycliffe put in a nutshell of seven propositions the argument of England. (Lechler, I, 202–11 ; Workman, I, 231–8 ; Burrows, 72–3.)

1. England had not been obtained by Papal grant, but by conquest !
2. The lord was bound to protect his vassal. The Pope gave England's king no such protection.
3. On the contrary, the Pope fostered and protected England's enemies.
4. The estates of the Church of England were so vast that the Pope was rather as a tenant under a tenant than the King's lord paramount.
5. If the Pope pardoned King John in 1213 for the sake of seven hundred marks a year he was guilty of sinning. (Fancy the shudder of the ecclesiastics at such a word, and the surprise of the common people ! The Pope guilty of sinning ! !)
6. In any case, seven hundred marks was an absurdly inadequate sum for such a fief.
7. And finally, John had no right or power to pledge his kingdom or surrender its independence.

These were daring words for 1366. And they were startling theorems. England was delighted. The whole kingdom rang with his propositions, and the name of Wycliffe was soon in every mouth. Preachers in the pulpit and politicians in Parliament alike were eager to employ his arguments. He found himself famous, as it were, in a day. From the highest to the lowest, in court and castle, in Parliament House and homely fireside, his name was regarded as that of a man to be always relied on to stand up for the people's rights. To the mass of the people John Wycliffe became the spokesman and champion of the nation on every moral, social, and ecclesiastical question.

In 1374 he was sent as a member of a royal commission to Bruges, in Flanders, to negotiate with the Pope's representatives with regard to the shameless infractions of the Provisors' and Præmunire Statutes by the Roman Court. It was not only a high honour for Wycliffe, as Lechler says, but it throws light upon the political situation in England, that a man of the type of John Wycliffe should have been made a royal commissioner for these diplomatic transactions with the Roman Court. He is described in the commission as "Master John de Wicliff, Professor of Theology," a title with a curiously modern flavour. But he called himself "peculiaris clericus regis," that is, in a special sense a cleric of the King. Some think he meant that he was a Royal Chaplain, and others a member of Parliament, or of the King's Council. But whatever it meant, it certainly meant that he occupied a distinguished position and was one of the leading Englishmen of the day. (Workman, I, 239–40; Lechler, 212–15; Burrows, 64–5.)

The results of the Bruges conference, on the whole, were not satisfactory to the people, for they were a compromise to the Pope's advantage. But two results must be regarded as satisfactory. From that time onwards Wycliffe became a more determined opponent than ever of the Papacy. At this conference he met the

foremost Papal dignitaries of the day, and their haughtiness, pretentiousness, and lordly indifference so disgusted him that his antagonism to the Papacy as a spiritual system claiming the rights over kings and kingdoms, and lives and lands, became finally and permanently settled as a conviction of his soul. As one modern writer puts it:

> "Bruges was to Wycliffe what Rome was to Luther: a place of revelation."

He saw something of the venality and corruption of the Roman system. His anti-papal instincts and resolves were fortified. That was the real date of the beginning of that distinctive feature of his career which is graven in the monument that stands to-day in the old Church at Lutterworth, to perpetuate his name:

> "His whole life was one perpetual struggle against the corruptions and encroachments of the Papal Court."

It was at this time, or before this time, and during these anxious days that Wycliffe produced his work on *The Divine Dominion*, or The Rule of God. It was confessedly the profoundest work of his career. It was written in three books, as a kind of preface to his magnum opus, his theological masterpiece, the *Summa in Theologia*, in twelve books. It looks as if the dream of his life was to publish a work which would set forth in a complete and scholarly way the great fundamentals, not only of his political and ecclesiastical, but of his spiritual principles, and in this work Wycliffe unfolds the very heart, or, as Lechler calls it, the kernel of the whole of his writings and actions. "The theory of dominion," said Professor Burrows, "forms the keystone of Wycliffe's position that was taken at this time and maintained throughout his life."

It is not easy to tell in modern language exactly what Wycliffe thought and expressed. It is, of course, a matter of interpretation. It is very profound and the thought and language of the schoolman is very much in evidence,

and he frankly admitted that he derived the main idea of his Dominion doctrine from Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh.

The inquiry, he says, has four sides: the subject, the object, the relation, and the law. There are three kinds of dominion: divine, angelic, and human. And there are three objects of created dominion; sixteen ways in which this dominion is exercised, and of these three which belong exclusively to the divine dominion, creating, upholding, and governing, a somewhat complex and profound logical catena, as anyone can see at a glance. Now, what did it all mean? It simply meant this, that Wycliffe grasped, as the fundamental of all his thinking, that God is the Lord, and all dominion is founded in God and any earthly dominion is given by grace. God, or God in Christ, is the Head of Church and State. God is the Supreme Lord of all earthly creatures. Therefore He has, as Creator, dominion over every creature. So each individual Christian is in himself a possessor of dominion, held directly from God. We see then how, if this is applied to the State and the relationship especially of the great overlord, the Pope, to England and the English Church, it cuts away the very roots of the Papal supremacy and the Papal pretensions and the Papal demands. Wycliffe, though at that time a thorough Romanist, apparently was slowly but surely coming to the conclusion that the pre-eminent question in the public mind of Europe was whether the State should be subservient to the Pope and the Pope an absolute dictator over the affairs of the kingdoms of Europe, or whether the State should be independent of the Pope and subservient to God alone. As Lechler says, it was a question of lordship. It had to do with *dominion.* (II, 51.)

In fact, Wycliffe was anticipating in this great principle the work of Luther, Henry the Eighth, and Cranmer a century and a half later. It was probable that the speeches of the seven anonymous lords which he reports in the second part of the Determinatio (Workman I,

231–7) were merely the setting forth of Wycliffe's own views. In them and through them he states very clearly that

> "It is the duty of the Pope to be the chief follower of Christ. But Christ disdained all civil dominion. And more. As the Pope is the servant of the servants of God, it follows that he should take no tribute from England except for services rendered. There cannot be two lords in England. We reserve to the King the right of feudal superiority. The Pope claimed that he was the overlord. It is necessary to oppose the first beginnings of this mischief. Christ Himself is the Lord Paramount and the Pope is a fallible man."

But it seems to me that Wycliffe, in his *De Dominio Divino* went far deeper than this. He saw the vision of Christ and Paul that all men in the eyes of God have a sublime equality as the children of God who have been made in His image; and that all His sons are of the royal birth and all His subjects priests of God. In the Church, save for the purposes of law and order, there are and can be no lords over the soul of man. Priests and prelates and popes and people hold equal place in the eye of God and are responsible directly and immediately to Him. His words are like those of Erasmus, Luther or Latimer, or the Puritans whom Macaulay describes in that great essay of his on Milton. Green, in his *History of the English People* (III, 98) says that by this theory, which established a direct relation between man and God, Wycliffe swept away the whole basis of a mediating priesthood, the very foundations on which the mediæval Church was built. More than this. In this great work on The Divine Dominion it seems to me that Wycliffe went deeper, far deeper than the mere feudal, political, ecclesiastical. For in it he uprooted from the foundation the very basic idea of mediæval theology, the enslaving power of a mediatorial priesthood. It was the universal idea that the spiritual office

of the priest was a dominion. That all power was given to him directly from Christ. The priest guarded the way to God. Through him alone was access to God. Wycliffe set forth the higher, nobler New Testament view of Christ and His Apostles, that the clerical office was not a dominium, a magisterium, but a ministerium. In fact, he grasped anticipatively the doctrine of the leaders of the Reformation that, as the servants of God, the Pope and all his clergy should as Christ's followers obey the ideal of their Master. "I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke xxii, 25–7.) And not only so. He went farther still. He touched the very heart and kernel of the modern Social Service idea of the Christian life, that a man's power or influence or position is to be held for the benefit of his fellow-Christians; that property is an obligation, and anything and everything a man has is not for himself but for his Master and his fellows. As Burrows says, his teaching was the precursor of our famous modern apophthegm: Property has its duties as well as its rights. (Burrows, 18.)

But, above all, the grandeur of Wycliffe's conception was but an echo of the teaching of St. Paul (Romans xiv, 9–12) that Christ died and rose and lived again that He might be Lord of the dead and the living; that Christ is enthroned (Ephesians i, 21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and that God hath put all things under His feet; that all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him, who is before all things and the Head of the body, the Church, that among all and in all He might have the pre-eminence. (Col. i, 16–18.) From these passages, too, Wycliffe even seems to have formulated the idea of the dominion of Christ over the angels and the archangels and outlined his belief that the end of all things will be Christ's conflict with the powers of darkness and a tremendous decisive struggle between the Church of

Christ and the Antichrist. (Lechler, II, 57.) Perhaps he was thinking of Revelation xvi, 14–16, and the final Armageddon battle.

But if Wycliffe promulgated astonishing and original ideas in his Theory of Divine Lordship and struck at the root of all hierarchical claims, in his great work on Civil Dominion, *De Civili Dominio*, he set forth ideas even more startling. His theories seem wild and weird in these days. It is a very large work. Workman says it is over one thousand pages. It contains two main truths, which form the foundation upon which the whole of his subsequent argumentation turns. The first is that the sinner is nothing and can possess nothing. The second is that no man in mortal sin can hold dominion or lordship, for the sinner is a conspirator against God, a disloyalist who has forfeited his right to possession. For possession, of course, depends upon the right to possess, and this right can only be held by those who are in favour with God. On the other hand, the righteous man, or the man standing in grace, has not only a right to, but has in fact, every gift of God. The righteous man has all things, the godly man possesses all. (Workman, I, 261.) It seems to be the teaching apparently of 1 Corinthians iii, 21–2: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours"; worked out from a system or in a system of curiously mediæval logic. In fact, if pushed to its logical conclusion the ideas of Wycliffe would end in sheer Communism, or, at all events, the Christian Communism of Acts ii, 44: "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common"; and Acts iv, 32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." It was a utopia of socialistic philosophy that could not really be carried out in practical life then or now.

Of course Wycliffe was misunderstood then. Of course he is misunderstood now. His enemies calumniated him then. Their echoes calumniate him to-day. To be great, says Emerson, is to be misunderstood. They called him a communist. They decried him as the friend of anarchists and spoilers. They called him the father of insurrection and disorder. They made him responsible for the wilder teachings and actions of the extreme revolutionists, and blamed him for all the riots and revolts of the times, for the Peasants' Revolt and the work of John Ball, the priest agitator. (Workman, II, 240.)

But, after all, there is no clear evidence that Wycliffe ever advocated communistic socialism. He held a strong theory of Church disendowment, and advanced ideas on the communizing of goods. His idea was that the enormous wealth of the religious orders, the monasteries, churches, should be restored to those whose "grandfathers' piety or fathers' fear of purgatory" had given them endowments. But he feared very naturally that any scheme of disendowment would simply mean that the money would pass over to the great princes and nobles and not to the poor gentry, much less to the common people. "The goods of the Church should be prudently distributed to the glory of God, putting aside the avarice of Prelates and Princes." (Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, 39–83.) But that he ever advocated or patronized the wild communism of a John Ball, or a Wat Tyler is an assertion that proceeds only from ignorance. It is, as Sergeant says, ludicrously false. (*Wyclif*, 259.) To denounce the greed and pomp of ecclesiastics was one thing; to advocate the spoliation of property, another thing altogether. He was entirely opposed to this. His aim was not to favour a communistic reorganization of the State. He held and taught that the ultimate power lay in the people; that the right to govern depends on good government; that men are not bound to pay tax or tithe to

bad rulers; that it is justifiable to put an end to tyranny, and to punish or depose unjust rulers. He was, in a word, the Hampden of the fourteenth century. In some ways, indeed, his ideas, teaching, theories were strangely in accord with the ideas and theories of the twentieth-century Christian socialists. But they were theories only. To promulgate personal views was one thing; to advocate violence was a totally different thing. To stand by the poor and advocate their claims against the inequitable capitalists of the day was one thing. And Wycliffe did that with all his might. He was ever the friend of the poor, and spoke to the lords and landlords with the daring of a Moses (Deut. xxiv, 14–15), or a Jeremiah (xxii, 13), and with James denounced them with anger for withholding their wages. (Workman II, 242–4.) But to urge armed rebellion was another thing. That he never did. Nor is there any clear evidence that the views of Wycliffe with regard to Church property and clerical possessions were at variance with the plain teaching of Scripture and the words of Christ. There was really nothing in Wycliffe's ideas about money, and the right of the clergy to wealth and property, that is, beyond the fair and honest interpretation of the teaching of the New Testament on the subject. He seems only to have taught what Christ Jesus taught (Matthew vi, 19–20; x, 9; Luke xii, 33–4); and to have advocated what His Apostles advocated (Acts xx, 33; 2 Cor. xii, 14; 1 Peter v, 2). When we consider these passages, and remember, in addition, the startling wickedness of the clergy and the corruptions of the age, we need not be surprised to find that a man like Wycliffe should have taken the stand he did, or have spoken the strong words he is said to have spoken. He was not immaculate. He had John the Baptist work to do, and he did it. It was no time for rose-water and soft platitudes. He had to speak sternly and strongly. As he was human, he may at times have spoken almost violently. The times were very evil. The diseases were virulent. With

the daring of a prophet he put the trumpet to his mouth and showed the age its sins and needs. As Trevelyan finely puts it, "a man of war from his youth up, the truth was ever more to Wycliffe than peace."

The reader is referred to the treatment of the Peasants' Revolt by Workman (II, 221–5,) Lechler (II, 220–9), Trevelyan (199–202) and Sergeant (281–98, The Headless Rebellion). They all vindicate the innocence of Wycliffe and completely absolve him from the scandalous attacks of the Romanists of his day and subsequently. They show that he was in no way responsible either for the outbreak of the rebellion or the excesses of it. The Peasants' Revolt was an effect of the times. The spirit of anarchy was seething within England and the Continent. It was the fourteenth-century interpretation of the French Revolution with its Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité catchword. The pauperized and oppressed of the day were led to think that a better state of the world was possible than that in which they found themselves and Wycliffe seemed to them a kind of voice of deliverance. But the outrageous murders with the noisy cry of "Let's kill all the lawyers," and the incendiarism and destruction were revolting to him.

CHAPTER III

WYCLIFFE AS AN ECCLESIASTICAL REFORMER

IN treating of this phase of Wycliffe's career, of Wycliffe as an ecclesiastical and ethical reformer, it is necessary for us to really try and grasp the state of the Church and of religion in his day. The times seem to be prophetically described to the letter in 2 Timothy iii, 2–6, trying, grievous and hard to understand. Or, in the picture of the Babylon of Revelation xiv, xvii, xviii. Or, perhaps the Church of Thyatira, Revelation ii, 18–24. Anyway it seems almost impossible for us to believe the stories which are told of the state of things in the Church of England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. If they were told of degraded Romanists in Guatemala, or Peru, it would be credible enough. But to be told that the lives not merely of English Church people, but of the Bishops and clergy of the Church of England, were, in many cases, immoral and discreditable, is hard for us in a Protestant land to understand.

Yet the statements are established by multiplied and unimpeachable authorities. Churches abounded. Religious houses were everywhere. Ecclesiastics of all sorts swarmed in city, town and country. Crosses dotted every highway. Shrines attracted innumerable devotees. The Mass was celebrated daily on thousands of altars. The worship of the Virgin, the adoration of saints and images and relics, and of the bones and clothing of departed saints, was everywhere indulged in. There was plenty of religion; that is, the Romish religion. But the lives, the lives of masses of the clergy were scandalous to a degree. (See Pennington, p. 127 and Arnold III,

320–3.) They were immersed in the most absolute depravity. If there is any truth in contemporary evidence, and the witness of men of the day, it is certain that multitudes of the priests of Holy Church, that is, the Holy Roman Church, of which the Church of England, the Ecclesia Anglicana, was then a part, the professing successors of the Apostles and teachers of the Christian religion, were walking as enemies of the Cross of Christ. Their god was their belly. Their glory was in their shame. They seemingly lived wholly for the world. Many dignitaries of the Church, from the Pope downwards, lived the foulest of lives, when, as their own Cardinal Baronius said: "Harlots governed at Rome, and their paramours were intruded into the See of Peter." It was a Roman Archbishop who charged fifty of the Popes with grievous criminalities.

The keeping of concubines seemed to have been the commonest thing. A cleric, an Archdeacon, might compound for his sexual sin by paying a fine, "for simple fornication twenty shillings," which seems to have given him not only absolution but permission to go on for a year in sin, a "condonation of incontinence." The children of such foul and illicit alliances were actually the subject of Church synods, and one Synod forbade the clergy (the Roman priests) to acquire houses for their children or concubines from the revenues of the Church. (Workman, II, p. 117.) A century and a half later, Erasmus in his Greek Testament, 1516, in commenting on 1 Timothy iii, 2, "A Bishop must be the husband of one wife," sarcastically remarked that "homicide, parricide, incest, sodomy, can be got over, but—marriage is fatal! There are priests in vast numbers, enormous herds of them, seculars and regulars (that is, the parish priests and the monks) and it is notorious that very few of them are chaste. The great proportion fall into lust and incest and open profligacy—foul and miserable pollution." (Froude, *Erasmus*, p. 126.) In that famous satire that appeared anonymously in Paris in 1513, and

set all Europe talking, called Julius II Exclusus—a Dialogue in Froude's *Erasmus*, pp. 149–168—(do read it if you have not)—the Pope says that he wanted the Duchy of Ferrara for a son of his own, and Peter exclaimed: "What? what? Popes with wives and children?" Julius: "Wives! No, not wives, but why not children?" Peter: "You pretend to be a Christian, you are not superior to a Turk. You think like a Turk, you are as licentious as a Turk. If there is any difference, you are the worse."

They were, moreover, men of corrupted minds, bereft of the truth, looking upon religion as a way of gain. The Pope, cried one of the Roman Catholic saints in a work authenticated, it is said, by Pope Benedict XIV, has changed all the Ten Commandments into this one: Money, Money! Religion was, indeed, a way of gain. It was the most paying thing of the age. They had the monopoly of merits, which had a splendid sale and commanded great prices until Luther broke up the demand. They fattened on the wealth of the land and waxed wanton. In fact, the great mass of the wealth of the land was in the hands of the clerics and of the friars. Many were literally clothed in fine linen, and purple and scarlet, and were decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. Their luxury exceeded description. They lived deliciously, and their merchandise was gold, and silver, and marble, and incense, and ointment, and horses, and chariots, and the bodies and souls of men. (Revelation xviii, 7–16.)

The Church was drunk with simony and avarice, the Pope's revenues enormous, and the exactions of his agents preposterous. Of all the Roman Catholic countries, England seems to have been fleeced most cleanly. It was a proverb at the Papal court that the English are *good asses*—they will carry all the loads laid on them! (Workman, II, pp. 86–9—See the notes.) The revelation of the Pope's income in Julius Exclusus is a flash-light.

> "I have five millions in the treasury. I have filled Rome with palaces, with purple and gold, with revenues so vast that kings are poor beside the Roman Pontiff. Look at our gorgeous churches; Bishops like kings, with retinues and palaces; Cardinals in their purple, and myself Supreme Pontiff, and the kings of the earth scarce admitted to kiss my Holiness's foot."

No wonder Peter said to him:

> "Insolent wretch! I brought Rome to acknowledge Christ. You have made it heathen again! You call the Church flourishing when it is drunk with luxury and tranquil when it can enjoy its wealth and its pleasant vices, with none to reprove." (Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, pp. 158–73.)

Doubtless there were throughout the Church, scattered here and there, men of simple and beautiful piety. Many a case of lovely Christian purity and virtue was unquestionably found. But of a large number of the clergy, secular and regular alike, parish priests and monks and friars, their condition was incredibly shameless. But in all the revelations of the immoralities of the clerics of the day, the monks and friars seem to stand forth always as the chief offenders. Their condition was often incredibly shameless and the lower depths of depravity were, as we shall presently show, touched by them in England. Their moral apostasy is the more remarkable when we consider what they were. "One of the choicest vines planted in God's vineyard, He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

THE MONKS AND FRIARS

The monks and friars mark a curious stage in the evolution of the ecclesiastical character. Originally the specialty of the monks had been the mission of retirement. Their ideal, in theory at any rate, was excellent. It was to withdraw from the wickedness of the world,

and spend the days in quietness and prayer. Their vows were those of poverty, celibacy, and, to a greater or less degree, of silence. In carrying them out they became the builders, the architects, the copyists, the agriculturalists, the chroniclers, and the philanthropists of the Middle Ages. In theory and ideal they were the Pietists of Mediævalism, with their mission of quietness, peace, and purity of life. But alas! alas! for poor human nature, they developed into anything but apostles of gentleness and poverty and devotion. Their wealth became enormous. One abbey possessed property in more than one hundred and twenty manors and was a sort of bank for the whole county. The offerings of pilgrims to the shrines were beyond computation. Vast sums were given to them for endowments. The whole population of England could be maintained out of their income.

> "The monks, with their red and fat cheeks and great bellies, are but squanderers of national wealth better bestowed on the poor. What they eat up would keep many families. The diverting of charity funds into the monastic coffers was simply maintaining the religion of fat cows who live a lustful life to feed the flesh, and the vast endowments given to the monks and monasteries, with their lies and deceits, their saints and their myth of foundation (the Augustines), were nothing less than sin and a national disaster. Many of these gifts, given to the monasteries, were, after all, an attempt to bargain with God and to secure for the soul of the donor an escape from purgatory or hell fire." (For confirmation of these and Wycliffe's words, see Workman, II, 89–97.)

Instead of the plain and simple life of poverty they erected edifices that were palaces.

The friars, on the other hand, had for their specialty, evangelization. The monks were men who withdrew from the world. The friars were men who went out into the world. Their idea was to go out among their

fellow-men to seek and save the lost. It was a noble intention. And at first the Franciscans, the Grey Friars, named after the famous pietist, Francis of Assisi, and the Black Friars, the Dominicans, nicknamed the Lord's hounds or Watchdogs, poor, bareheaded and barefooted, went out in the highways and by-ways to compel men to come in by their forceful evangel. They were the Methodists, the street preachers, and the Salvationists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

> "These men are sent by two and two to preach as it were before the face of the Lord, and in preparation for His Second Coming. They are poor after Christ's own heart, carrying neither purse nor scrip. They possess no gold or silver—that holy order of Friars, that admirable exemplary Religion of apostolic men, whom we believe the Lord to have raised up in these last days before the face of Antichrist." (Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, ii, pp. 168–9.)

But alas! they also fell. The ideal was too high for poor human nature. Soon they came to be mere heresy-hunters. Then they fell still lower. They sank into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. They became enormously wealthy. As they grew in power and numbers, they went from pride to pride, from insolence to insolence. They entered parish after parish, and snapped their fingers at the authority of the parish priest. With alarming rapidity they amassed great properties, secured emoluments, pushed their way into nearly all the leading posts in the universities, until they became, as a modern writer tersely put it, dangerously rich, alarmingly powerful, hopelessly lazy.

No modern writer, perhaps, has caused such a flood of light on the monastic world as Professor Coulton, a Cambridge scholar and lecturer of great eminence. His *Five Centuries of Religion* is a compendium, or rather an encyclopædia, and may be taken as the last word in this century for authoritative and scholarly exposition.

The student who wishes to master the story of the Church in the Middle Ages, and especially of the monastic orders and the friars, will find in his volumes, published at the University Press, Cambridge, a mass of information gathered through years of intensive study. No one can question that he is one of the fairest as well as the ablest of modern historians. More perhaps than any competent modern writer, he has investigated a mass of mediæval records and out of them has brought a picture unsurpassed for fullness and fascination. As he himself says in his first introduction, his volumes represent an attempt to grapple with the neglected evidence of the last five mediæval centuries. He says they are a pioneer attempt. But they represent the first serious struggle to narrate the story of the monastic centuries from all kinds of contemporary documents. He says that, having striven to tell the truth, he welcomes criticism from other students who can convict him either of misstating facts or of ignoring essential evidence. He challenges those who disagree with him to face his facts and says: "I am convinced that no man will venture henceforth to ignore the vast mass of first-hand evidence which lies at the feet of all scholars who deign to stoop and make use of it."

In the first volume he treats of the monks and the rise of monasticism; its early ideals of consecrated living and other worldliness, and how the rule of Benedict was that of a Roman and military in its discipline. He depicts its strange perversions of theology, its weird ideas of Tritheism and Dualism, of hell and purgatory, and its curious acceptance of superstitions of the Mass and Transubstantiation, and, above all, of Mariolatry. He frankly admits the deep piety and saving common sense of St. Benedict's rule and the greatness of St. Bernard, whom he praises with extraordinary generosity (I, 288–90). But in the later chapters he traces the breakdown of the severity of monkish ideal and the decline of its spiritual and moral life. He shows

how, here and there, the strict order and rule of the monastery was relaxed and how the devil in many shapes crept into the very holy of holies of these professional saints. And, alas, in his chapter on the Eternal Feminine, he shows that, in spite of all intercourse with women being forbidden, little by little, not only was the prohibition to see or speak to women removed, but abuses and moral disorders became quite common.

The mediæval hell and Mary legends and other sections of the Appendices are extraordinary reading. You think, as you read it, of the two baskets of figs that the Lord God showed unto the prophet Jeremiah (xxiv, 2): "One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." The good figs were very good and the evil figs very evil. We fear, however, that towards the end, in the days immediately before the Reformation, the monasteries, taken as a whole in England, were hopelessly corrupt. One can easily believe the story of Bishop Latimer that when the report of the visitors sent to investigate the actual state of the abbeys was read in the House of Commons from all sides of the House there arose one long cry: "Down with them! Down with them!"

In the second volume Dr. Coulton tells of the rise of the monks into positions of great social and political power. How they became worldly and covetous. How they lived in lordly houses, put on worldly apparel, exercised magisterial privileges. They became the aristocrats, almost the snobs, of the day. The abbeys, palatial in their splendour in the midst of beautiful parks, rivalled those of the great feudal lords. They looked down from the high altitude of disdain upon the common people, and revelled in grandeur as the capitalists of the day. And, of course, as they grew in worldliness they fell in influence. He tells of the rise of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, of their wonderful power and the glory of their early consecration and preaching power. And

then he tells of the friars' decay and how, little by little, they fell, in many cases fell so low that it is hard to believe how God's soldiers became the devil's, and received the devil's wages for lechery, avarice, simony and gluttony. No wonder St. Catherine of Siene wrote:

"All stink in my nostrils with the stench of mortal sin."

In his Appendices he gives complete and unanswerable authority for all his statements. Nothing could be more overwhelming or horrible than his picture in Contemporary Generalizations (I, 553–647). It is simply incredible. The wickedness, the blatant sexual immorality, the notorious hypocrisy, the sins in the nunneries, as well as in the monasteries, the shameless gluttony, the falling into filthy living, the lasciviousness, the reckless defiance of all religious claims of these blind leaders of the blind. These sinful priests and monks scorn the service of God and consume their wealth with harlots. Shame! shame! shame! We do not wonder that Dr. Coulton complains of the historians. Of course, he means the Roman Catholic or like biased writers, who slur over or completely omit the most significant fact in English ecclesiastical history and deliberately put the skeleton into the cupboard. He charges Mr. Algar Thorold with deliberately suppressing chapter after chapter in the dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena, 1378, in the authorized Roman Catholic translation. He actually omitted fourteen chapters or about thirty-six pages; and it is done so cleverly that it would take a very clever reader indeed to discover the fraud. In fact, as Dr. Coulton says, it is one of those pieces of literary dishonesty which go far to justify Lord Acton's warnings that "we can hardly expect historical truth from a believer in Papal Infallibility on questions where the Church's honour is thought to be at stake."

The reader will remember, perhaps, that Mr. Froude, in his *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, tells the same story (330–2). Dr. Coulton's *Life in the Middle Ages*, in four

volumes, is a remarkable unveiling of what he calls the real Middle Ages. It is, as he says, an appeal to those who desire to study genuine human documents. It deals with first-hand facts and facts only, the harvest of thirty years' study of all sorts of mediæval writings. He gives you in a series of sketches every conceivable type of life, high and low, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, lay and cleric, society ladies and political courtiers. They are all most readable.

The fourth volume deals with the monks and friars, good and bad, pious and profane. Both sides are told impartially. But to a modern, it is a strange revelation of the superstition and falsity of the whole monkish system, and some of the stories reveal a side of the religious life that is almost incredible. That picture of a worldly abbot is simply awful. Perhaps the most trenchant criticism of the monasteries is taken from a treatise by John Von Tritheim or Trithemius, one of the most distinguished monks of his day on the *State and Ruin of the Monastic Orders* (II, 407).

> "Where are the oaths? Where the promised observance of the rule? All is confusion, profanity, presumption. Divine service is performed so confusedly and disorderly and dissolutely. The whole day is spent in filthy talk; their whole time given up to play and gluttony."

And he concludes with the most impassioned plea, like fire from the very depths of his soul: "O most reverend Fathers! what abbots you have, and what monks!" Again Dr. Coulton complains that testimony like this is entirely ignored by those who have written on this subject in England during the last twenty years. I suppose he refers to men like Cardinal Gasquet and Mr. Thorold.

We can well imagine how creatures like these must have seemed in the eyes of a man like John Wycliffe. The sturdy Yorkshireman, who hated shams and religious humbug above all things, and looked at things in the

light of common sense, regarded them simply as a lot of sanctimonious rascals. He exposed their corruptions with unsparing thrusts. What are they *for*? What do they *do*? What *good* are they? They profess to be preachers; what do they preach? They profess to be benefactors; whom do they benefit? Their self-assurance, their indecent irreverence, their self-glorifying ignorance, their immoralities, and above all their menace to the liberties of the people, snatching from the people their possessions and their rights, and crushing them by the terrorism of the Holy Father; these were the leading points in his indictment of the friars.

In these days Wycliffe's language seems violent in the extreme. His charges were indeed terrible. In the *Vae Octuplex* he literally applies to the friars Christ's eight denunciations of the Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. "Christ bade us beware of these false prophets who come in clothing of sheep, and the wolves of raveyne (ravin). These are the men of the new orders, these friars that have last come in." (Arnold, II, pp. 379–389.) In his controversial tract, *De Ecclesia et ejus* (Arnold, III, pp. 338–365) he launches fifty charges against the clerics, high and low. But it is the friars who come in for his fiercest diatribes.

> "They spoil the people in many ways by hypocrisy and other leesings (falsities); they steal poor men's children; they are cursed traitors, members of the devil; they destroy and disturb the peace and rest of the king and his realme; their orders are founded on lyings, proud hypocrites that they are; they nourish the prelates and lords in great blasphemy against God, teaching them to think less of the just curse of God than of the wrong curse of a sinful man though he be a damned devil; they seek busily their own worldly worship and put the worship of God behind and against the teaching of Jesus Christ and St. Paul; they take the glory that belongs to God (*is approbid*), and so make themselves even with God; they exalt themselves (sit high) above Christ; they

> lift themselves up with the pride of Lucifer; they sacrifice to false gods; they love worldly muck more than the love of Jesus Christ; they are raised by Antichrist to a cursed life of sin, cursed adulterers (*avoutreris*), extortioners, procuratoures of symony and indulgences, the most perilous enemies to Holy Church and all our land."

And so on and so on. Then in his terrific blast entitled *De Blasphemia, contra Fratres* (Arnold, III, pp. 402–29), he charges the friars with threefold blasphemy: against the Eucharist, against begging, and against their sharing merits, calling them the clergy of Antichrist, and all sorts of awful things. No wonder he summed up his treatise with the scathing charge that the friars are the cause, beginning, well, and maintaining of disorder or perturbacioun as he called it—a curious instance of the pure Norman word—in Christendom and of all evils of this world. (See the Appendix in Dr. Coulton's work—II, 504–647, an awful picture.)

To the end Wycliffe continued his warfare undaunted by Papal Bulls or clerical menace, and the story told by Foxe has become famous. That is what Foxe says (*Book of Martyrs*, Foxe, 3–20):

> "When Wycliffe was lying very sick at London certain friars came unto him to counsel him; and when they had babbled much unto him, Wycliffe being moved with the foolishness and absurdity of their talk, with a stout stomach (that is, a brave heart), setting himself upright in his bed, repeated the saying out of the Psalms: 'I shall not die but I shall live and declare the works of the Lord.'"

But Lewis according to Workman (II, p. 148) says there were four aldermen as well as four friars, and that what Wycliffe said was: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars."

There is another side to this, though, and that is the tender heart of Wycliffe and his longing that the friars might have a change of heart and be brought to a better

mind. His heart's desire and prayer to God was, like St. Paul's, that they might be saved from their falsities and sin, for he closes his great indictment with the striking sentence that the errors of the friars will never be amended until they are brought to the freedom of the Gospel and the clean religion of Jesus Christ. And then, out of his heart of hearts, he breathes a final prayer:

> "God, for His endless mercy and charity, make very peace (verrey pees), unity and charity among Christian men and bring all priests to Christ's clean religion without error of wrong by laws" (withouten errour of wronge by lawes). Amen. (Arnold, III, 401.)

It was a prayer that love might take the place of hate in the hearts of these hateful and hated men, and that the pure Gospel of Christ might lead them from the fatal error of thinking that they could merit God's favour by works of the law.

Lechler, in his *John Wycliffe* (319–324), states that before 1378–81 he spoke very favourably of them and was on their side. He also refers to Wycliffe's extraordinary prophecy of what the friars might do if they were converted.

> "I anticipate," he says, "that some of the friars whom God shall be pleased to enlighten will return with all devotion to the original religion of Christ, will lay aside their unfaithfulness and with the consent of Antichrist, offered or solicited, will freely return to primitive truth and then build up the Church as Paul did before them."

He thinks that this was a prophecy and that the Reformation was a remarkable fulfilment of what John Wycliffe presaged. In fact, he goes farther. He thinks that in those words of Wycliffe there was a fulfilment of John xvi, 13 that the Holy Spirit would show His servants things which were to come, and that it was a prophecy, the like of which the history of Christ's Church has many

more to show. Neander was the first to call attention to this prophecy, and it is extraordinary, when you come to think of it, that such a prophecy should have come from the pen of so determined and implacable an enemy of the friars. But it was the case of St. Paul and Luther.

After that Wycliffe did not long continue in the role of a national or political champion. Little by little, he seems to have abandoned the more political side of his work, and to have become more and more absorbed in the spiritual or religious. As D'Aubigné tersely puts it, he busied himself less and less about the kingdom of England, and occupied himself more and more with the kingdom of Christ. Or, as Workman said, Wycliffe returned from Bruges a disillusioned man. He determined to fall back upon his academic position and devote his life to the advancement of his ideas (I, 257).

There came about this time a great turning-point in Wycliffe's life. Henceforth he would devote those great gifts which God had given to publishing to the world in pamphlets, treatises, and volumes those high principles of truth that he was gradually but definitely coming to believe through the teaching of the Scriptures. It was more. It was an epoch-making and an epoch-marking point in the after history of England, for in the consecration of that singularly evangelical genius to the productions of those great works, the *Determinatio* and the *de Dominio Divino*, he laid deep and strong the foundations of his theological convictions and national policies. If he had begun his career in the political road as an Englishman rather than as an ecclesiastic, and was led in the first instance along the path of patriotic nationalism, he was now led to see that that was not the highest path. It led him into questionable alliances and doubtful partnerships. It yoked him with John of Gaunt and Lord Percy, and that class of men. It threw him in with the great hero of the anti-clerical rabble, good, bad, and indifferent, some with base aims, some with high aims, but all glad to have in their fight against an alien

Pope, and mitred abbots, and purse-proud prelates, the alliance of so illustrious a man as John de Wycliffe, the pride of Oxford, and the friend of the King.[1]

Gradually, then, as the eyes of his mind were illumined, he turned to a truer work; not the examination of Papal claims and parliamentary rights, but of the state of the Church of Christ, and the needs of the day. Without ceasing to be a patriot or a Protestant, he was led to the second stage of his career, a distinctly higher and better work: the task of exposing the abuses and false doctrines which were universal in the Church.

[1] Wycliffe's attack on the "possessionale" and "Cæsarian" clergy naturally won for him much popular support, especially in London, as well as those powerful lords and knights who were already nosing after the spoils of the Church. At this stage he also found defenders where he was afterwards to find his bitterest enemies—the friars. (Trevelyan's *History of England*, 248.) I think, though, that Workman is hardly fair to Wycliffe when he says that it was deplorable that Wycliffe should have allowed himself to be made the tool of a man like John of Gaunt (I, 275–289). Better, much better, is Pennington when he quotes Milner's, "Politics was the rock on which Wycliffe split," and adds, "But as we shall see, this was only one step in his progressive development. And more. He was not busying himself with worldly politics. His object was to deliver his native country from the exactions and tyranny of her great spiritual oppressor." (*John Wiclif's Life and Times*, 66.)

CHAPTER IV

WYCLIFFE AS AN ANTI-PAPAL PROTESTANT

WE pass now to another and a far greater stage in Wycliffe's career. As an Englishman daring and outspoken for the liberties of England, as a reformer daring as Grosseteste and more outspoken than Fitzralph of Armagh, he had become the foremost figure in England. He was a marked man. His words were trumpets and swords; his speeches and sermons thought-awakeners. The eyes, not only of England, but of Rome, even of the Pope himself, are to be turned on the devoted Rector of a small English parish, and the most talked of Professor in Oxford. He was the man who was to gather up in his own person all the forces which were to herald the great Reformation, and to epitomize prophetically the fundamental doctrines of the *re*-formed Church of England.

It is not easy to fix the exact date of Wycliffe's definite emergence upon the field of Protestantism. For a long time he had been steadily growing in the clarity of his spiritual insight and the fervour of his anti-Romish zeal. And it is evident that there had been steady growth in his Evangelical views, and that his progress from the Romish background of his religious life to the gradual perception of the errors of the Roman system, was due to an increasing knowledge of the teaching of the Word of God. He says very frankly that there was a time in his life when he was a child in the knowledge of the faith; he spoke as a child and understood as a child; and that he defended with tenacity teachings and views that were oft-times unscriptural, such as, for instance, the seven Sacraments, Priestly Absolution and Mariolatry.

But then there came the great transformation, the secret of his labours and influence and the explanation of his dynamical career :

> " At last the Lord, by the power of His grace, opened my mind to understand the Scriptures." (Lechler, II, 2.)

Slowly but surely after this the light began to dawn with increasing brightness, and he became because of it an opener of the gates of dawn. Gradually he was coming to the conviction that the Bible, and the Bible alone, was the foundation of all true religion and that the Holy Ghost is the alone Interpreter of the true understanding of Scripture, as Christ opened the meaning of the Scripture to His Apostles. (Luke xxiv, 45.) Little by little he came to acknowledge the supreme and final authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and that the Bible and the Bible alone was perfect and entire in its sufficiency for the soul's salvation, and in its authority for the Church's teaching. (Pennington, 178–9.) Now this extraordinary fact cannot fail to strike the student of history as a curious parallel. About one hundred and eighty years after this, Archbishop Cranmer in his reply to his Papal opponent, Dr. Smith, who had charged him with changing his views on the Real Presence of Christ's body in the Sacrament, used almost precisely the same language. Cranmer was brought up a Romanist, as Wycliffe was. He was steeped in Romanism, as Wycliffe was, but he gradually came from darkness to light, and in that famous confession he made shortly before his death, he acknowledges that his change of views as a Churchman was due to the opening of his mind, by the Holy Ghost, through the Scriptures and his personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

> " I confess that not long before I wrote what he charged me with, that I was in that error of the Real Presence, as I was many years past in divers other errors : as of transubstantiation, of the sacrifice propitiatory of the

> priests in the mass, of pilgrimages, purgatory, pardons and many other superstitions and errors that came from Rome; being brought up from youth in them and nousled therein for lack of good instruction from my youth, the outrageous floods of papistical errors at that time overflowing the world. But after it had pleased God to show unto me by His Holy Word a more perfect knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ, from time to time, as I grew in knowledge of Him, by little and little, I put away my former ignorance. And as God of His mercy gave me light so through His grace I opened mine eyes to receive it, and did not wilfully repugn unto God and remain in Darkness. And I trust in God's mercy and pardon for my former errors because I erred of frailness and ignorance. And now I may say of myself, as St. Paul said, 'When I was like a babe or child in the knowledge of Christ I spoke like a child and understood like a child; but now that I am come to mine estate and growing in Christ through His grace and mercy I have put away that childishness.'" (Cranmer on the Lord's Supper, Parker Society, 374.)

This, then, is obvious. The first great Protestant Evangelical in the history of the Church of England before the Reformation, and the foremost Protestant Evangelical in the liturgical and doctrinal re-formation of the Church were what they were because of a new vision of Christ and the Scriptures. If, as young men, they had not received the power of the Holy Ghost to know and see the things that were revealed to them in the spirit, as older men, they saw visions and dreamed dreams as they were led to see with opened eyes new truth for God and His Church.

It is generally acknowledged that no definite date can be assigned to this stage of Wycliffe's career. Roughly speaking, the year 1377–8 may be taken as the starting-point, for, on or about that time, the Church was awaking to the fact that there was a heretic of the first order.

> "Here was a dangerous man. An enemy, a sower of tares, scattering his mad lies, drawing many into the

bottomless pit of error, named John indeed but wrongly so, for John is 'grace of God' and he had long since cast away God's grace."

The Church must wake up. So early in February, 1377, Wycliffe was summoned by Bishop Courtenay as a heretic to St. Paul's. Here, calm and unabashed, he stood amid an excited crowd, "a tall, thin figure covered with a long light gown of black colour with a girdle about his body; the head adorned with a full flowing beard, exhibiting features keen and sharply cut; the eye clear and penetrating; the lips firmly closed in token of resolution—the whole man wearing an aspect of lofty earnestness and replete with dignity and character." (Lechler, I, 256; Workman, I, 286–9.) Around him, in the Lady Chapel of St. Paul's and before the assembled Bishops, a fierce battle of words went on between Courtenay the Bishop and John of Gaunt the Duke. After a violent and angry passage of arms the gathering broke up in confusion, and Wycliffe retired for a while from the public eye. He had faced the lion in his den. He had opened not his mouth. And he had come forth not only unharmed, but stronger in every way, and the more prepared for the trials yet to come.

But his enemies were more and more determined to silence him; and in May, 1377, on account of certain charges brought against Wycliffe, the Pope, Gregory XI, issued a series of bulls to the University of Oxford, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Bishop of London conjointly, and to the King, Edward III, then very near his latter end. It is not very clear who the accusers were. Some think it was the Bishops (Lechler I, 261); some, the monks and friars; others, a vituperative Benedictine. But Wycliffe himself says it was by some Oxford disciple of Antichrist, and a certain doctor *mixtim theologus*, a motley doctor! The charges were summarized in nineteen articles of extraordinary boldness. Never perhaps had any man dared to beard the Pope so in his den. Try and think, if possible, how the men

of that day must have stood aghast as they read or heard such words as these :

> " Not even the universal consent of manhood could give Peter and his successors political dominion over the world ! " " Property which has accrued to a delinquent Church can be lawfully taken away ! " " The Vicar of Christ cannot by his Bulls qualify or disqualify anyone ! " " No man is banned or excommunicated unless he is first excommunicated by himself ! " " The Pope only binds or looses when he conforms himself to the law of Christ ! " " Even the Pope of Rome may be lawfully corrected—even by the laity and also accused or impeached by them ! " (Sergeant, 177–9.)

No wonder the Pope was enraged. The words of his bulls proved it. His Holiness says that

> " He had heard with much concern on most reliable information that John Wycliffe had rashly proceeded to such detestable degree of madness as not to be afraid to assert, dogmatize, and publicly to preach propositions erroneous and false contrary to the faith and that threaten to weaken and overthrow the status of the whole Church."

He then called upon the Archbishop or Bishop to cause the said John Wycliffe to be arrested and laid in gaol, and to keep the said John in faithful custody in chains, until they should receive further orders. (Workman I, 294–7.)

The Pope, perhaps, could not anticipate, as Workman points out (I, 295), that, in doing this, he was doing the very thing that was the cause of England's severance from the Papal supremacy in the reign of Henry VIII. That is, he was claiming jurisdiction over the English ecclesiastical courts, with Rome as the Final Court of Appeal. He was trying again to recover what he had lost by the Præmunire twenty years or so before. Wycliffe stood his ground bravely. He said that to arrest an Englishman, because the Pope ordered him to be arrested, was

contrary to English law, and Oxford backed him up. "They should not imprison a man of the King of England at the command of the Pope, lest they should seem to give the Pope lordship and regal authority in England." But to save their face with the Pope they ordered Wycliffe to stay within the walls of the Black Hall, which thing Wycliffe was quite willing to do.

But Rome was not going to give in so easily. Something must be done. The arch-heretic must be silenced. And so the Chancellor of Oxford, acting at last upon Pope Gregory's Bull, early in 1378 gave Wycliffe thirty days to appear before the Bishop, the Pope's Commissioner in St. Paul's, London. But either he took no notice of the summons or the court was not held. A month later, however, the citation was changed and Wycliffe appeared in the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth before a select body of Papal ecclesiastics. There they were, Bishops, professors, monks and friars. Fearless and frank as ever, the indomitable man faced them with as majestic a mien as Luther at the Diet of Worms, one hundred and forty-three years later. He began his Protestatio with the words:

> "I profess and claim to be by the grace of God a sound (that is, a true and orthodox) Christian and while there is breath in my body I will speak forth and defend the law of it. I am ready to defend my convictions even unto death. In these my conclusions I have followed the Sacred Scriptures and the holy doctors, and if my conclusions can be proved to be opposed to the faith, willingly will I retract them."

He then proceeded:

> "I deny that the Pope has any right to political dominion: that he has any perpetual civil dominion: that he can qualify or disqualify simply by his Bulls."

And so on, and so on, as he took the nineteen theses one by one that the Pope's Bulls condemned, and defended and justified them.

And then a wonderful thing happened. In the middle of the session a message came from the Queen-Mother—a kind of Pilate's wife injunction: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man"—to the effect that no judgment should be pronounced upon Wycliffe. Then a crowd of Londoners crashed into the Chapel, and with menacing voices declared that the trial should not go on, and the trial came to nothing. Once more the reformer passed out before them all unscathed, with a few mild words from the Commissioners, "words softer than oil to the loss of their own dignity and the detriment of the Universal Church" (Workman I, 309), as one Roman Catholic writer sarcastically put it, to the effect that neither in lectures or sermons in college halls, or pulpit, was he any longer to promulgate his heresies. Which thing, of course, Wycliffe was determined not to do.

This second victory had a great effect upon Wycliffe. It strengthened his courage. It deepened his convictions. It fortified him in his defence of what he knew more clearly than ever to be true. It emboldened him more than ever in his defence of what he saw more and more clearly to be false. The thunder-bolts of Rome were *vox et praeterea nihil*, simply empty noise. They called him arch-heretic and slippery hypocrite, but their adjectives had no terrors for him. He had the approval of conscience. He knew he was on the Lord's side and that God was with him. He felt in his soul that he was right, and he knew in his soul that they were wrong. Oxford, the Queen-Mother, the London burghers and a strong following of England's people were with him. There can be no doubt that this Lambeth trial marked an era in Wycliffe's career. He had lifted up his voice. He had denounced the Pope. He was supported by the finer and better feelings of England. He had fulminated against the power of the Pope. Now from this time on he will fulminate against the doctrines of Rome. He will appeal from the traditions of the Church to the pages of Scripture. The Bible and the Bible only will

henceforth be his only standard. Henceforth the energies of his massive mind and heart will be dedicated to the destruction of the Church teaching of the age, the exposure of the false and the establishment of the true. He will presently begin that higher and more spiritual crusade for Protestant Evangelical truth on the issue of which, as has been finely said, were suspended the everlasting destinies of many millions of his fellow-countrymen. (Pennington, 130.)

But before we deal with this we must deal with that extraordinary event in the history of the Papacy known as the Papal Schism. The most reliable authorities upon the life of Wycliffe all seem to agree that the thing that exercised a most critical influence upon Wycliffe, and set him on fire for reformation with all his strength, was the Papal Schism. (Burrows, 84–91 ; Lechler, I, 277.) Some called it the Babylonian Captivity. Others the Scandal of Avignon. Anyway, it was the crowning scandal of Papal Christianity. For seventy-three years, from 1305 to 1378, there had been no Pope in Rome. The seven Popes of that interim were Frenchmen, who transferred the Papal headquarters to Avignon, a city on the Rhine, in the south of France. The state of things was unbelievable. (Workman, II, 72–89.) Though some of the Popes, Benedictine XII, Innocent VI and Urban V were high charactered and earnest enough, the Papacy during this interim touched the very depths of vileness and apostasy. Decency was gone. Religion, real religion, was almost extinct. It was indeed in a measure the Seer's vision in Revelation xviii, 2, 3, 12, 13. Avignon had become

> "The habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

The Pope's palace was Satan's throne. Luxury unbounded, simony incredible, passion unbridled, vileness indescribable, with envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, was the order of the day. But worse was to follow. For in 1378 the Roman Cardinals, who were nearly all Frenchmen, elected an Italian to reign as Pope, Urban VI, at Rome, and then another set of Cardinals chose a Frenchman to reign as Pope, Clement VII, at Avignon.

There they were, the two infallible heads of the Roman Church, fighting each other like wolves, quarrelling like dogs over a bone. Each claimed to be infallible. Each claimed his own right. Each claimed to be the Viceregent of Christ. Each claimed to be the representative of the unity of the Godhead in heaven, and the Church on earth. Urban VI, the Pope of Rome, excommunicated his rival, the impostor at Avignon. Clement VII, the Pope at Avignon, excommunicated his rival, the impostor at Rome. Each promulgated decrees, scattered bulls, and played the role of the visible head of Christ's Church. Each cursed the other as a schismatic and a false pretended Pope, and as the representative of God upon earth hurled against his rival the most frightful anathemas. The effect of this upon Wycliffe was electric.

For a long time, doubtless, the seeds of suspicion with regard to the whole Romish system had been ripening within his mind. The Christianity of Christ was utterly irreconcilable with the Christianity of the Pope. The teachings of the Apostles were so absolutely contrary to those of the Papists. His work as a patriot and constitutional reformer had opened his eyes to the falsity of the Papal claims. His impeachment of the morals of the clergy had convinced him of the corruption of the Papal communion. But now he seems to have reached his final conclusion. The whole fabric of the Papal system was Anti-Christian. The Pope was Antichrist. To call the Pope Holy Father was but "gabbing," idle

chatter, a joke. He is the man of sin who exalteth himself above God (2 Thess. ii, 3–4), an apostate, a limb of Lucifer, the head of the serpent. (Workman, II, 79–82; Lechler, II 211.) The Popish system was a mass of error. The Papal decrees were the laws of the enemy of Christ. Christ is truth—the Pope false.

In the *Trialogus* he said that neither the one Pope nor the other was a real member of the Church, for their walk and work are opposed to Christ and the Apostles. It would be better for the Church if she had no Pope at all, for neither one nor the other has anything to do with the Holy Church of God. In the *Supplement to the Trialogus* he condemns both Popes as Antichrists, calls them monsters and incarnate devils. (Lechler, II, 214.) He wrote a tract entitled *The Schism of the Roman Pontiffs* (*De Pontificorum Romanorum Schismate*), which he began by saying that the dissension between the Popes seems to signify the perilous times that Paul said should come in the last days (2 Tim. iii, 1), and that true men should declare this to the people. (For this unkouthe discencioun that is bitwixe thes popes semeth to signyfie the perillous tyme that Poul seid schulde come in thes laste dayes, herfore schulde true men declare this to the peple.) (Arnold III, 242.) He said that the desire for the worship and praise of the world and worldly glory were at the bottom of it all. The whole thing was Antichrist, Antichrist, the falsest conquest that ever the devil had made.

True men ought to see that. The whole thing is of the devil. If Paul reproved Peter, why should not men now reprove Popes, if they had done far worse? To speak of infallibility in connection with such a system was absurd. How could there be infallibility? The falsity of it is evident. And with the great consciousness of the rightness of his contention he claims that the whole schism is just God's vindication of their cause. Christ Himself has helped us graciously to this conclusion, for He has cloven the head of Antichrist and made one part

fight against the other. Emperors and kings should help in this cause to maintain God's law. (Ffor he hath bigunne to helpe us graciously, in that that he hath clofe the heved of Antichrist, and maad the ton parte figte agen the tother. And so emperrour and kyngis schulde helpe in the cause, to maynteyne Goddis lawe.) (Arnold III, 247.)

I think it can be safely said no Protestant before or since ever sent forth such a clarion blast against the Papal Antichrist. Never had any Catholic Churchman ever dared to use such bold invective. Never had any Anglican used such defiant language of reproach. Wycliffe seems to have felt the call to leadership. There was born in him the consciousness of being a leader in the struggle for Church reform, and his words are like the trumpet call of a leader who is collecting a party and leading them in closed ranks into the battle. He calls upon all Evangelical men—*viri evangelici*—to come together as for battle and unite their forces for Christ and against Antichrist and all his followers and the devil and all his angels. One man can do much, but union is strength. The dream of his life (*desidero*) was to bring back the Church to the ordinance of Christ and pure conformity to His law, and to purge and purify the Church and bring it back to the position which Christ Himself established.

He knew that it would be a mighty battle, and Wycliffe determined that it should be a fight to the finish. His cause was God's cause. He was contending for the Truth, and God's cause must triumph in the end. His heart is fired as he thinks, and at one time he bursts out with the words:

> "What a glorious cause! What a glorious cause! (*Quam gloriosa causa*) in which to end this present miserable existence."

Then, as he thinks of the greatness of his undertaking and the peril of his stand for Truth, he cries out from the depth of his soul:

> "O that God would give me a teachable heart, a heart full of constancy and perseverance, and love to Christ and His Church."

And then, with a touching, a Christ-like tenderness, the very love of Christ, he adds:

> "And love to those members of Diabolus who are lacerating the Church of Christ that I may meet them in pure brotherly love." (Lechler II, 152.)

The more he searched the Scriptures the more he became confirmed in Evangelical convictions and became convinced that the whole system of Rome was contrary to the Gospel of Christ and His Apostles. It was but natural, then, at this time that he should turn from the sarcastic impeachment of the faults and sins of Popes to the more serious task of exposing the doctrinal errors of Rome, and restoring the foundations of primitive truth as revealed in the pages of the New Testament and the teachings of the apostolic days.

And further. It is evident, as he approaches this great work of rooting out and pulling down and destroying the falsities of Rome and building and planting the eternal verities of the Gospel, that his soul is full of longing and pressure after a God-pleasing restoration of the Church's purity, and that Wycliffe was a Church reformer of the true Evangelical type.

CHAPTER V

WYCLIFFE AS THE DOCTRINAL REFORMER

WE now proceed to that great stage in his career, his work as a doctrinal reformer. There can be no doubt that the Papal Schism marked a real crisis in his spiritual life, a most momentous turning-point in his development. It led him to investigate the foundations of the religious dogmas of the day. It drove him back upon Scripture and, whether it was the study of the Bible through his translational work or the direct illumination of the Holy Spirit, it is evident a great change was taking place in Wycliffe's convictions. For some time back he seems to have had doubts with regard to the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation, and though it is difficult to assign dates it was about the year 1379 or 1380 that he came to the conclusion that that great dogma which was the very citadel of Rome's position was really unscriptural and absolutely false. Up till 1376 or 1377 Wycliffe unquestionably held the traditional view of the Roman Church with regard to the doctrine of the Mass. He could honestly say with Cranmer:

> "I was in that error of the Real Presence as I was many years past in divers other errors as of Transubstantiation, of the sacrifice propitiatory of the priests in the Mass."

What was the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation? That the reader may clearly understand what the doctrine really was, as set forth by the Church of Rome before his day, we give the decree of the Fourth Council of Lateran, 1215:

> "There is one universal (Catholic) church of the faithful, out of which no one whatever can be saved. In which Christ Jesus Himself is the priest and the sacrifice, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar, under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being transubstantiated into the body, and the wine into the blood, by the divine power, so that for the accomplishing the mystery of unity, we may receive of his nature that which he received of ours."

When the words *Hoc est enim corpus meum* are pronounced by the priest in the consecration act in the Canon of the Mass the whole substance of bread departs and the whole substance of Christ (that is, the true body and the true blood with His soul and divine nature) takes its place, while the form and appearance, that is, the accidents, as they are called, of bread still remain. That is, the body and blood, the soul and divinity of our Lord, the entire Christ, exist equally in each species and in each particle of each species, and the bread and wine thus consecrated are to be worshipped with the same adoration that is paid to God Himself.

It must further be remembered, in order to understand Wycliffe's strongest attacks, that every man who was consecrated to the priesthood by the Pope or the Roman Bishops claimed to have the power, and was believed to have the power, of making Christ, making our Lord's body, making God, or, to crown it all, making his Maker. It seems incredible to some of us that men could believe this, but to-day there are millions upon millions who do so, and some of the greatest metaphysical thinkers in our Church, like Newman, and practical men like Manning, have been led to accept this extraordinary dogma, that in the moment or at the moment of the utterance of the consecrating words by the priest the bread and the wine vanish, *leaving nothing behind* but appearances of bread and wine, which were not bread and wine at all, but the body and blood of Christ. A miracle has been performed

that transcends all human explanation and comprehension. *The bread has ceased to be bread*, barring appearance, form, colour, weight and taste; and the body of Christ has been created by a miracle divine.

The exact date when doubts with regard to this extraordinary delusion came into Wycliffe's mind, and what were the processes of their development, cannot be told. It is almost certain that it came through his study of the Word and that he might have said in the very words of Cranmer:

> "But after it had pleased God to show unto me, by his Holy Word, a more perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ, from time to time as I grew in knowledge of him, by little and little, I put away my former ignorance. And, as God of his mercy gave me light, so through his grace, I opened mine eyes to receive it, and did not wilfully repugn unto God and remain in darkness." (Cranmer on the Lord's Supper, Parker Society, 374.)

Try as he might, he could not reconcile the traditional view of the Roman Church with the truth as it was being gradually revealed to him in the pages of Scripture.

And so he came to the parting of the ways. He said very frankly:

> "Though I once took the utmost pains to explain transubstantiation in agreement with the sense of the early church, I now see that the modern church contradicts the church of former times, and errs in this doctrine."

There was only one thing for an honest man to do, that an honest man could do. The world must know that he could no longer profess the teaching that he had accepted from his childhood as the teaching of God. He must speak out. In those days it was the custom to publish what were called theses, written statements of one's views in a series of propositions, and to put them up in some public place, as on a church door. Wycliffe

apparently did not nail them up on the door of his college as Luther nailed up his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg, but he sent them to Oxford, probably to the Chancellor himself.

It was in the summer of 1381 that a startled ecclesiastical world received his twelve theses upon the Lord's Supper, under the title *Conclusiones Wyccklyff de Sacramento Altaris*. (Lechler, II, 219.) The outstanding articles were these:

(1) The consecrated Host which we see on the altar is neither Christ nor any part of Him, but the efficacious sign of Him.
(2) Nobody upon earth is able to see Christ in the consecrated Host with the bodily eye, but by faith.
(3) The Lord's Supper, in virtue of the sacramental words, contains both the body and the blood of Christ, truly and really, at every point. (The words in the Latin are *vere et realiter* and they are curiously identical with the words of the Anglican Church Catechism: "The inward part or thing signified in the Lord's Supper is, the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.")
(4) Transubstantiation, Identification and Impanation—terms made use of by those who have given names to the signs employed in the Lord's Supper—cannot be shown to have any foundation in the Word of God. (Which is extraordinarily like the second paragraph of Article XXVIII: "Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ: but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament and hath given occasion to many superstitions.")

The twelve theses are given in Lechler in English (II, 216, 217); in Latin (II, 219–220).

The last seven theses enter into the extremely involved metaphysical abstractions of the current philosophical disputations with regard to accidents without subject,

Wycliffe maintaining strongly that it is repugnant to the sentiments of the saints to say that in the Host there is an accident without a subject, and that the idea of an accident existing without a subject is unprovable, because if it were so God is annihilated and every article of the faith of Christianity perishes. In the eleventh article he reiterates this curious subtlety and says that

> "Whosoever shall obstinately maintain that the said sacrament is 'an accident,' a quality, a quantity, or an aggregate of these things, falls into the beforesaid heresy."

That is, Wycliffe, as a schoolman, held in his first phase of doubt that a mathematical body was the substance of the accidents, and later, in a second phase, that there was some substance to the accidents. He did not know what exactly, but he came slowly but surely and triumphantly to his Everlasting Yea, that after consecration the bread is bread, remains bread, and that it is the Body of Christ figuratively and symbolically and sacramentally only. This came to be his final position.

> "And if prelates were to ask me what was the sacrament of the altar in his kind I would say that it was bread, the same as it was before, for that is what the Gospel teaches us to believe. And if you ask further whether it be the substance of material bread I would not grant it or doubt it or deny it. No one can affirm accident without subject, for accident without subject neither man nor God knows, as Augustine teaches and reason proves."

Of course, such an attack upon the Roman citadel could not be passed by. It was evidently the sensation of the day and Oxford speedily flung out its flag of defiance. A number of eminent theologians were summoned by the Chancellor of the University of Oxford to discuss the situation, and the result was that Wycliffe's conclusions with regard to the sacrament of the altar were taken up

one by one and a declaration, signed by the Chancellor, William de Barton, and twelve professors, doctors and ecclesiastics, condemned them as opinions which completely destroyed the mystery of transubstantiation, contradicting Catholic verities and the determinations of the Church. They asserted that the two pestiferous teachings of Wycliffe were:

First, that in the sacrament of the altar the substance of the material bread and wine remains really after consecration; and

Second, and still more execrable, that in the venerated sacrament the body of Christ is not essentially or substantially or corporally but figuratively or tropically (*figurative seu tropici*).

They then stated that by the sacramental words the bread and wine are substantiated and that after consecration truly change into the body and blood of Christ without any of the material bread and wine remaining in their own substances or natures but only their species. The declaration ended with an inhibition that no one in Oxford University should publicly hold, teach or defend Wycliffe's views without penalty of incarceration and suspension from all collegiate functions. (Sergeant, 243–7.)

It is said that Wycliffe was in his chair as a professor delivering a lecture to the students on this very doctrine when a messenger entered the lecture room and, in the name of the Chancellor of Oxford and all his coadjutors, read first of all their pronouncement and then their sentence. Wycliffe was taken completely by surprise but, after a moment, rose and with great dignity asserted that he was not to be put down by a mere threat of brute force. He would appeal from their decision to the civil power. He would appeal not to the Bishop, or the Chancellor of the University, or to the Pope. He would appeal to the King. If they silenced his voice in the college they would not silence his pen. (Vaughan LXX; Lechler II, 218–19.) From that time on he took his stand. In season and out of season, from that time he

held his ground. His arguments, compressed into a nut-shell, were something like this:

It is contrary to reason to assert that the accidents of the bread can remain in the eucharist after consecration, and the substance of the bread not be there. That is, it is utterly unphilosophical and unreasonable to say that the piece of bread can look the same, and feel the same, and weigh the same, and taste the same, and smell the same, and break brittlely the same, and yet not be bread at all, but something else than bread; or, that the wine can look the same, and weigh the same, and smell the same, and taste the same, either sweet or sour, and yet not be wine at all, but Christ's own blood. The thing is impossible. If the accidents of a thing are there, then the substance of the thing is there also. If they seem to be bread and wine, they are bread and wine. Now, it is undeniable, that after consecration the consecrated bread is to all appearance bread, just the same as before. That is, the so-called accidents of the bread remain. This is fact. But it is equally true that the accidents of a thing cannot remain without its substance. That is philosophy. It is common sense. The corporal presence of Christ, or transubstantiation, is therefore impossible. God requires us to believe many things which are above reason, but never anything that is contrary to reason. To believe a mystery is one thing; to accept a thing that contradicts common sense is another. To say that what is seen is bread, but what is there is not bread, but the physical body of Christ, is not faith, but superstition.

> "Let the believer rouse himself," cries Wycliffe, "and demand strictly what the nature of this venerable sacrament is, if it be not bread; the language of the Gospel, the evidence of our senses, and arguments that have in their favour every probability of saying that it is veritable bread."
>
> "This transubstantiation teaching is such manifold fraud. It repudiates the Scriptures; it wrongs the people;

it causes them to commit idolatry." (Vaughan's *Wycliffe Monograph*, 231.)

"Let us lay this down as a proposition that of all the external senses God has bestowed upon man touch and taste are least liable to error in the judgments they give. But this heresy (that is, of transubstantiation) would overturn the evidence of our senses and the sacrament would be a sacrament of Antichrist, overturning grammar, logic, natural science and the meaning of the Gospel." (Vaughan, *The Trialogus*. On the Eucharist, 141.)

"The insane fiction of an accident or quality without a subject is a tenet insulting to the Church and injurious to God." (Vaughan, *Life*, 114–15 and 428–33, where the Latin Confessio Magistri Johannis Wycclyff is given in full.)

But then came the obvious objection. He puts it into the mouth of Alithia in the *Trialogus*, in his question to Phronesis: "There is one thing I would like to know, and that is in what sense the bread is the body of the Lord and yet not identically the same body." (Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises*, 147.)

Did He mean, this is My body, or did He mean something else? If He meant this is My body, then the substance or subject after consecration must be, not bread, but Christ's body.

Wycliffe's argument in answer to this was emphatic. The words, "This is My Body," were intended by Christ in a virtual, figurative, and sacramental sense. The bread after consecration is still bread. Substantially or really, as regards its subject, it is what its accidents declare it to be; bread, real bread. But sacramentally it is the Body of Christ. "The bread, by the words of consecration, is not made the Lord's glorified body, or His spiritual body, which is risen from the dead, or His fleshly body as it was before He suffered death; but the bread still continues bread." No one surely could mistake his meaning. Take, for instance, these words in the *Trialogus*:

> " Some expressions in Scripture must be understood plainly and without figure, but there are others that must be understood in a figurative sense. Just as Christ calls John the Baptist Elias, and St. Paul says that Christ was a rock, and Moses in Genesis 41 that the seven good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. You will meet with such modes of expression constantly in Scripture and in these expressions, without a doubt, the predication is made figuratively." (Vaughan, *The Trialogus on the Eucharist, Tracts and Treatises*, pp. 148–9.)
>
> " The consecrated Host we priests make and bless is not the body of the Lord but an effectual sign of it. It is not to be understood that the body of Christ comes down from heaven to the Host consecrated in every church."

No ! It remains ever fast and sure in heaven. In the Wickett tract, which will be referred to later defined as " A very brief Definition of these words : *Hoc est corpus meum*," (This is my body), Wycliffe denounces as monstrous the idea that the priest renews at each sacrament the propitiatory sacrifice of Calvary. And as still more monstrous the idea that at the word of a simple and ignorant and sometimes sinful man the Lord of heaven descends from His throne and suffers Himself to be immolated upon the altar, incorporating Himself in the place of a wafer from which he expels the substance, displacing it by Himself !

> " They make us believe a false law. The most falsest belief is taught in it, for where find ye that Christ or any of His disciples or apostles taught any man to worship it ? In the Mass Creed it is said of Christ, He is begotten, not made, and in the Athanasian Creed unmade (that is, uncreated) is the Father, unmade is the Son and unmade is the Holy Ghost. And thou then that art an earthly man, by what reason must thou say that thou makest thy Maker ? If thou makest the body of the Lord in these words, ' This is My body,' thou thus must be the person of

> Christ or else there is a false god. In the beginning God made heaven and earth and all things by Christ, and if you cannot make the works that He made, how shall you make Him that made the works?"

An unanswerable argument surely! And equally unanswerable was the argument which follows:

> "Now I shall ask you a word and you answer me: Is the body of the Lord made once or twice? Is both the flesh and the blood in the Host of bread? Or is the flesh made first and the blood made next? Well. If you say it is full and whole Christ in the Host of bread, both flesh and blood, skin, hair and bones, then you worship a false god in the chalice; unless you say that Christ is made two times. Yes, if you worship the full manhood of Christ in the Host of bread, then, by your own confession, you must worship a false god in the chalice."

And then he climaxes his argument by saying that Christ did not speak of the material bread which He held in His hand, or the material wine, any more than when He said, "I am the vine," He meant that He was a very vine, an earthly vine, and if Christ became not a material nor an earthly vine, nor material vine became the body of Christ, so neither the bread, material bread, was changed from his substance to flesh and blood of Christ. (Wycliffe's *Wickett*; Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises*, 276–9, 280–3.)

Wycliffe never retracted these views. Of course, he was persecuted. Of course, he was prosecuted. The world and the Church of the day were against him, and the Church (that is, of course, the Church of Rome, for that was what the Ecclesia Anglicana was doctrinally then) grew more and more violent in its opposition and denunciation. In October, 1381, Wycliffe's most violent opponent among the Bishops was the Archbishop of Canterbury, and from that time on Archbishop Courtenay did all in his power in meeting after meeting and synod

after synod and proclamation after proclamation to combat the teachings of Wycliffe.

> "As the Metropolitan of all England, I feel it my duty to condemn these doctrines as heretical and erroneous and no Churchman shall even listen to the abettors of such pernicious tenets but resist them as snakes that diffuse pestilence and poison."

And, for the first time in the history of England and of the Church of England, a sort of statute or proclamation provided for the punishment of the crime called heresy, ordering all the sheriffs and other servants of our sovereign lord the King to arrest such persons and imprison them. Fortunately, Parliament did not sanction this fiat of the clergy, but it was the ominous root of all those abominable laws against heresy which afterwards defiled the pages of our Church history and, in Mary's reign, brought Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer to the stake. They did not seem to have the slightest effect, however, upon Wycliffe. They suspended him. They denounced him. In November, 1382, a synod was held in Oxford of the great men of the realm, both seculars and men of holy Church. Vaughan calls it a meeting of the Parliament and a convention, and the Primate said that their object was to remedy certain disorders which had too long disgraced the university. Wycliffe's friends were timid. Even John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, seems to have swung over to the side of the clergy and deserted him. It mattered not. The courage of Wycliffe was invincible. He had ceased to put his trust in princes or in any child of man. His help was in the Lord his God.

As he stood alone then before the Archbishop and all these Bishops and learned doctors of the law, ecclesiastical and civil, he abated not a jot of his contention. He answered them both in Latin and in English; Latin for the ecclesiastics; English for the laity. And both in the Latin and in the English he again declared that though there is a real presence in the sacrament, it is not a

corporal presence. In the Latin confession he said that in the Eucharist Christ is virtually, spiritually and sacramentally present. But as for His substantial, His corporeal, His dimensional presence—that is in heaven. Why he almost used the very words of the Black Rubric in the Prayer Book of one hundred and seventy years later:

> "For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians); and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one."

It is true that in some of his arguments he employed subtle phrases and certain obscure and equivocal expressions. But this was to be expected. Wycliffe was a schoolman, and delighted in the subtleties of the schoolmen of the age. The main thing is that he still stood to his point; that the bread is still bread and the wine still wine after consecration. That the bread had ceased to be bread and the wine had ceased to be wine was an insult to reason, a mockery of human perception, the most anti-Christian of all the anti-Christian delusions that had ever swept over the Church.

It is certain that Wycliffe never recanted or even seemed to recant. Roman Catholic writers have asserted this again and again. They have tried to make out that he offered an ambiguous recantation at the Oxford synod, November 1382. But, as Workman says (II, 295) the story rests upon hypothesis and blunder. The Church condemned him, but the commons were with him in heart and Wycliffe never flinched. He ended his great apology with the proud avowal:

> "Finaliter veritas vincet eos." (I believe that in the end the truth will conquer them.)

And, strange to say, from that time until the end of his

life Wycliffe was left alone. Why Courtenay refused to push matters to extremes against the heresiarch, and why Wycliffe was left to close his days in peace in the little quiet parish of Lutterworth and no Bishop ever summoned him or threatened him with excommunication, no one will ever probably be able to tell. Some think that the hand of John of Gaunt was still protecting him. Others think that it was because Wycliffe accepted his expulsion from Oxford and consented to remain in his parish. But, anyway, the very fact of his being unmolested is a wonderful tribute, as Workman says, to the greatness of Wycliffe's position.

As we pass away from this phase of Wycliffe's career and his magnificent crusade against the very citadel of the Roman position and the phalanxed host of defenders and maintainers of the Roman Catholic position, we feel that nothing could ever have emboldened him to begin such a dangerous conflict, or to maintain it so unflinchingly, but a profound conviction of the truth of his teaching and of its absolute accord with the Word of God. The postulate of our Sixth Article was becoming more and more the very heart and life of Wycliffe's investigations. As Lechler says (II, 193–4):

> "Wycliffe's attack upon the dogma of transubstantiation was one so concentrated and delivered from so many sides that the scholastic conception was shaken to its very foundations. The animated polemic which was directed against Wiclif and the strong measures which were taken by the hierarchy against him and his party are the loudest testimonies to the importance of the attack which called forth its resistance."

CHAPTER VI

WYCLIFFE'S PREACHING AND POOR PREACHERS

THE last years of Wycliffe's life were amazingly prolific. Oxford had banished him. The Church had banned him from public service. No university man was allowed to attend his preaching. He was suspended from all scholastic functions. He was regarded as the Antichrist and chief enemy of the Church. His books and tracts and writings were interdicted. (Lechler II, 259–66.) Yet during these years of penalty and proscription he continued his propagation of the truth with unabated zeal. His brain power seems to have been more active than ever. In fact, Wycliffe might have said with St. Paul: "I would have you to understand, brethren, that the things that have happened unto me have turned out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. i, 12.) For in that little rectory at Lutterworth, as Paul in his prison house, and Luther in his Wartburg prison chamber, he devoted himself with tireless assiduity to the great cause of the Truth, and exercised through his writings, his tracts and treatises, and his messages through his itinerant preachers, a far wider and more permanent influence than he ever could have done by years of college lecturing and peripatetic preaching. The great instruments employed by Wycliffe during these crowded years were his preachers, his sermons, his tracts and his Bible. We will take up first the matter of his preaching evangelists, generally called his poor preachers, and himself as a preacher.

THE POOR PREACHERS

Where Wycliffe got the idea of his itinerant Gospel preachers is not definitely known. Perhaps it was from Francis of Assisi and the early ideal of the friars as street preachers and itinerant evangelists, or more probably from Luke x, 1–4. But somewhere and at some time, probably about 1377–8, there came to his mind the thought that it would be a good thing to send out into the highways and villages of the land a body of men who would go from county to county and from town to town, and in churches and churchyards, in markets and fairs and open places, wherever his fellow men gathered together in numbers, preach the Gospel, proclaim the Truth, and vigorously denounce the abuses and errors of Rome. He called them poor preaching priests, simple priests (symple preestis), faithful and true. Indeed, in one of his sermons he used of them the very language almost that was used of Peter and John (Acts iv, 13), " Idiotae et simplices."

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding with regard to these men. They were certainly not poor preachers in the present-day sense of the word, for the people flocked to hear them wherever they went, and, as one writer said, they went over all England seducing nobles and great lords and the people to such an extent that it was said that in one town every second man you met was a Lollard. Neither were they, as many think, mere lay preachers like the men of the Church Army or Salvation Army to-day. Many of them were university graduates. Most of them were men in orders. Lechler hazards the idea that while he was still at Oxford his organizing genius led him to gather together a number of university men, some of them graduates, some of them undergraduates, who could be trained to go out into a wider field and propagate his gospel and his views of Church truth. In one word, Wycliffe became the principal, as we would say in modern language, of a theological

college in *propria persona*. To have a teacher whose influence will strengthen and inspire is more to a student than bricks and stones and lifeless pedants. As an eminent teacher in our day declared, the school of all schools in America which had the greatest influence on American scientific teaching was an old barn in an island off the coast of Massachusetts where Louis Agassiz taught his students. And it was while he was in Oxford as a Doctor of Theology and preaching and lecturing that Wycliffe made his lecture room a training school for preachers, and established in embryo a Wycliffe College.

> "I have not a moment's doubt," said Lechler, "that while he was still in Oxford, Wycliffe sent out as voluntary itinerant preachers young men belonging to this circle of devoted students who had attached themselves closely to his person and had embraced his theological views as well as his practical Church principles." (Lechler I, 304.)

At first the idea was to have men in orders, and in his work on *The Pastoral Office* Wycliffe sometimes calls them priests, sometimes presbyters, titles that Wycliffe would certainly never have given to men who were not in holy orders. He was proud to call them "trewe prestis and cunnyng," that is, learned, as against pseudo-preestis preaching amys. (Arnold II, 173.) They were to be men, too, who were not tied to a parish. That left them more free to preach anywhere, and when they were persecuted by the clergy of Antichrist, as he called many of the beneficed clergy, they could go to another place and preach the Gospel there. Later on he began to employ laymen, and to the last he stood up against an angry Church for them and their right to preach. The Bishops, of course, were furious. Wycliffe was as strong on orders as any Churchman to-day, and I have no doubt whatever that he would have preferred to have sent out only ordained men. But whether ordained men or unordained, clergy or laity, licensed or unlicensed, Christ must be preached,

the Gospel message must be given. He could have said with St. Paul: "Notwithstanding in every way, in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached. I therefore do rejoice; yea, and will rejoice." And so later on he sent out lay preachers whom he called by the beautiful name of "evangelical men" or "apostolic men." In one of his later sermons he said most emphatically that the *sine qua non* for a preaching Church ministry was the divine call, and that even without the laying on of the hands of the Bishop the man who had accepted the divine call had the right to preach because God had instituted him.

> "As far as the effect of preaching goes, it seems to me that it is certain that one unlearned preacher (*ydiota*) by the grace of God does more for the building up of Christ's Church than many graduates in schools or colleges (*graduati in scolis sive Collegiis*); because they sow the seed of the word of Christ more humbly and more abundantly, both in work and in word." (Lechler I, 309–19.)

It is really remarkable how John Wycliffe, five and a half centuries ago, anticipated the conviction of an increasing majority of the laity and clergy of the Church of England to-day that the only man who can be a preacher is the man who has got the heavenly call. It does not matter whether he is a clergyman or a layman. He did just what our Bishops are doing to-day in licensing lay preachers of spiritual force and preaching ability.

There is a beautiful picture—fanciful, of course—of the aged rector standing by his rectory door and giving his parting blessing to a body of these young men who are going out. There they are with bare feet and a staff in their hands, clothed in a long reddish gown reaching down to their heels, as they began their errand of love to save men who were perishing in their iniquity. Take God's law, we seem to hear him say, Take God's law, and wherever you go in churches and churchyards, in markets and

fairs and open places, tell them the old, old story of Jesus and His Love. Remember that your business is to preach the Gospel, simply and plainly.

> "Preach openly to the people," he said. "Tell them that God thinketh more of works of mercy in a man's soul than of offerings to friars. You will have enemies, if you do, who will accuse you of heresy. See the falsity of these friars. How they hinder simple priests to preach the Gospel to the folk. They say falsely that none of Christ's disciples had leave to preach till that Peter had given him leave, and that no priest should preach to the people unless he has leave of the Bishop or leave of the Pope. Now this Gospel (Luke x, 1) tells the falseness of these friars' lying, for Christ sent His disciples to preach commonly to the people without letter of or asking leave of St. Peter. Lord!" he cries, "what reason should drive hereto to hinder 'truee preestis' to preach the Gospel freely without any hindrance or any fables or flattering, and to let these friars preach fables and heresies and afterwards sell their false sermons. Certes! The people should not suffer such falsehood of Antichrist. Thus shulden preestis preeche the peple freeli Christis gospel." (Arnold, *Select English Works*, I, 176.)

And so they went out, teaching, warning, calling, winning, preaching truth, exposing error wherever they could find a hearer in a church or in a chapel, in a graveyard or in a public street, pleading with the fervent enthusiasm of the evangelist. They went out as Christ's preachers sent before the face of the Lord. Their ideal and practice was to carry out His simple command, providing neither gold nor silver nor brass in their purses; neither purse nor scrip nor shoes (Matthew vii, 10; Luke i, 4); as poor but making many rich, rich in the knowledge of the Word of God. They seem to have been dependent for their food and raiment and board and lodging entirely on the goodwill of the people to whom they went, and to have lived a simple life of faith.

Their sermons were probably far from learned. Wycliffe was anxious that they should always be plain and simple preachers of the Word. That was the first thing, above all, that God's Word might be taught, maintained and magnified. Then they were to be bold in rebuking sin, great and open sin, and the heresy and hypocrisy of Antichrist. Rebuke them sharply, he would have said in the language of St. Paul. (Titus i, 10–13.) "The sin of the common people is great; the sin of the lords is greater; but, greatest of all, is the sin of the Bishops." But along with this, there was to be a winning attractiveness, an unction of the Holy Ghost, which would at once reach the conscience, subdue the will and win the heart. Slandered and reviled, denounced by Bishops as wolves in sheeps' clothing, by the friars as heretical idiots who do not know the sense of Scripture, they kept on, and, long after Wycliffe had passed from the scene, these earnest and ofttimes deeply taught evangelists kept on scattering the seed and laid the foundations throughout England for the great Reformation of a century and a half afterwards.

WYCLIFFE THE PREACHER

In discussing the question of Wycliffe as a preacher it may be frankly stated that it is extremely difficult to estimate his position and eminence. That he was a remarkable preacher, no one can doubt. He was not only an attractive and popular preacher in Oxford. Lechler says that he was a preacher in the pulpits of London and that he spoke out as boldly in the crowded churches as he did before in the great university. His preaching shook the city. He not only gained the ears of the multitude but won to his evangelical position some of the highest nobles of the land and made proselytes among the masses of the people. (Lechler I, 322–3.) But that he was a great preacher, in the modern sense or from our present-day viewpoint, it is perhaps difficult to say. Five hundred years is a long time, and all those local touches and descriptive eulogies which enable us to judge the

eminence of a Latimer, a Bunyan, a Wesley, a Whitfield, or a Spurgeon are altogether wanting. It is hardly fair, perhaps, to depreciate Wycliffe as a preacher, as Workman does (II, 213–20) because his style was not that of a Whitfield or a Wesley. The outlines of the sermonic remains are hardly enough to enable us to judge of his real preaching power. Who, to take a modern instance, could ever estimate the extraordinary power of such a great preacher as Charles Haddon Spurgeon by a perusal of his three-volumed *Sermon Notes*. To me it is marvellous to think of the power Wycliffe's sermons possessed in his own age to awaken the enthusiasm of countless thousands, to say nothing of their being the inspiration of the preachers of his day, and the seed bed of some of our great modern movements. We have two volumes of them in Arnold's *Select English Works*, and the very fact that innumerable copies of them were made for circulation and that they have, in spite of all the changes and chances of the centuries, held their own until they are published to-day in two large volumes of over eight hundred pages is itself an attestation to their great popularity at the time when they were preached and of their high value, both in Latin and English, when they were so religiously preserved and diligently propagated. (Arnold I, xiv.)

As to Wycliffe's style or voice or pulpit manner, we know little or nothing. It is quite possible that his sermons were devoid of rhetorical force. They certainly were not of the ornamental style of eloquence. He distinctly deprecates that in preachers, and says that a preaching that has for its object conversion and regeneration of souls is corrupted by it and its power paralysed. The best preaching is a humble and homely proclamation of the Gospel; a flowery and captivating style is of little value. Speak to the point, he would say (*compendiosius et copiosius*), in a plain and simple manner (*plana locutio*). And, above all, be genuine. Speak with the accent of conviction. "If the soul is

not in tune with the words, how can the words have power? If thou hast not love, thou art sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." Speak to the heart. "In every proclamation of the Gospel the true teacher must address himself to the heart so as to flash the light into the spirit of the hearer and to bend his will into obedience to the truth." (Lechler I, 291–3.)

Of course, it must be remembered that Wycliffe's sermons were of two kinds. There were, first of all, his sermons to the intellectuals, the more cultured people of the day. These were preached in Latin, and probably at Oxford to university audiences. Things are referred to in them that are quite beyond the range of an unlettered congregation, with references to the fathers, canon law and the logicians. In fact, they were teaching sermons. They were sermons adapted to an audience of professors and college students. They may not have the spiritual appeal and evangelical plenitude of some of his other sermons, for most of them were preached before he had attained that fullness of scriptural insight that marked his later years. But they were true to the Word and, whether expository, expostulatory or sarcastic in denunciation of popes and priests and monks and friars, they were ever true to the Word and faithful to the facts of the Gospel. If there were in them scholastic definitions and abstract theological disquisitions, it was to be expected. He was preaching to a class of men who would understand his style and argument. At the same time, his style was simplicity itself compared with the verbosity and subtle hair-splittings of his contemporaries in the pulpit.

Then there were his sermons in English. These were simple in style, forcible in expression, and quivering with earnestness. The poorest peasant in his audience on a Sunday morning as he sat could understand every word. We can picture the man as he stood in the pulpit there at Lutterworth, with that village congregation before him, their eyes all fixed, their ears attent, drinking

in every word of their beloved pastor as he expounded with such amazing skill the Gospel or the Epistle for the day. His words were swords as he wielded the sword of the spirit piercing to the very soul. Sometimes tender, gentle and sweet, full of comfort and rejoicing for those who loved the Lord, thrilling with hope, inspiring with courage and, in season and out of season, leading them to see and know the great outlines of the way of salvation, and founding them in the fundamentals of the faith upon the Rock of Ages. The questions of the day, the themes that were burning in the hearts of men, the rights of the laity, the claims of the poor, the evil of endowments, the monstrosities of the Papal practices and teaching, all these, from time to time, were touched upon, not as themes of a sermon or as matter for problem weavers, but as springing out of the text or the context, and touched and treated with marvellous skill by a man who was full of the spirit of Christ, and touched these matters of morality and civil polity as St. Paul did in the Romans, Ephesians or Colossians. How solemn and heart-searching were some of his appeals ! How he pleaded with men, as Paul did, when he said : We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

> " Be sure of this that the Lord's day is coming and in that day we shall have to answer to Christ for all that we have done." (*Domsday mut nede cum and we mut answere to Crist of alle that we han don.*)

As he declared that a thousand years are fresher in God's sight than yesterday in man's mind, he bids them live as men who hear the angel's trumpet sounding in their ears. And how he pleaded with men to turn their eyes to the cross. The pathos and the pleading of a Baxter, a Bunyan or a Whitfield seemed to be blended as he cried in tones that must have been vibrant with an intensity of Christ love :

> " Lift up, wretches, the eyes of your soul and behold Him that no spot of sin was in, what pain He

> suffered for sin of man. He swat water and blood to wash thee of sin; he was bound and beaten (ybounde and ybeten) with scourges, the blood running adown by His sides, that thou shouldest keep thy body clean in His service; He was crowned with sharp thorns (corouned with scharpe thornes) that thou shouldest think of Him and flee all cursed malice; He was nailed to the cross with sharp nails through hands and feet and stung to the heart with a sharp spear that all thy five wits should be ruled after Him, having mind on the five precious wounds that He suffered for man. And right in all His great pain this Innocent prayed for His enemies to His Father and said: 'Fader forgeve them this gylt for they wyten nougt what they doo.'" (Arnold III, 107.)

As he pointed them to the Lamb of God as he lay upon the tree he told them:

> "Just as Moses hoisted the adder in the desert to heal the people by looking on him, so must mannis sone, that is the Son of Man, be hoisted up upon the cross. Christ was in the form of the adder of venom but He had no venom in His own person, as the adder of brass had no venom in him. But as right looking on this adder of brass saved the people from the venom of the serpent, so right looking by full belief in Christ (bi ful bilieve in Crist) saved His people from sin." (Arnold I, 161.)

A study of his sermons shows us that Wycliffe, as a preacher, was of the highest and best type. They had that quality which is the highest of all qualities. They were creative. They were dynamic. They created thinkers, enthusiasts, propagandists. As you read them in the quaint English in which they were uttered or written, they strike you. They ring through the corridors of your memory. They stick. He was primarily an expositor. His idea of preaching was that of the great Bishop Temple who is said to have told his younger clergy the secret of true preaching: "Tell the people what the Bible says; then tell the people what the Bible means." Remember

what the preaching of the day was in Wycliffe's age: trashy, foolish, sensational, silly. If it were learned, the sermon was simply a string of abstract questions of logic and metaphysics and, as far as it touched anything in the Bible, it was an intricate discussion of the sensus tropologicus, and anagogicus. And if it were just theological, it was a catena of hair-splitting divisions and subdivisions and endless syllogistic processes. Anything and everything was preached but the Bible. The preachers tickled the ears of the groundlings with the most ridiculous stories; fables and legends and incredible miracles. Even one of themselves said that the stories the preachers used to amuse their audiences with were stale and absurd, the talk of buffoons. And the flowery appeals of the mediæval popular preachers were worse than silly. They were low and vulgar. (Lechler I 284–9; Workman II, 215–19.) They did not hesitate to make paltry jokes, tell scandalous stories and dress up their sermons with the fables of heathen mythology.

> "We hear of preachers who garnished their sermons not only with legends of the saints but with insipid stories, tragedies, comedies, fables, coarse buffooneries, unwholesome illustrations, tags of poetry, interpretation of dreams, glossing the Gospel as they pleased. The medieval anecdote was generally interesting but somewhat coarse, and the moral was not allowed to dominate too much. No tale was deemed too preposterous if only it would hold the people's attention. The multitude was amused, the collection was good, the sale of indulgences satisfactory, and the 'penny-preacher' could go on his way rejoicing, for there were friars of whom it was said that they would preach more for a bushel of wheat than to bring a soul from hell." (Workman II, 214–15.)

Wycliffe's preaching must indeed have been a revelation. The novelty of his preaching was not that he preached in English, for the friars often did that, but that he disdained the popular style and went straight to the

Bible. There seemed to ring ever in his ears: Preach Christ! Preach the Gospel! Preach the Word! In his ninety-fourth sermon he tells how

> "Some men tell the tales that they find in the saints' lives without Holy Writ (withouten holi writt). And such thing often pleaseth more the people. But we hold this manner good—to leave such words and trust in God and tell surely His law and specially His Gospels (speciali his gospelis). And, since these words are God's words, they should be taken as believed, and they will quicken (quykene men, give them life, new life) more than other words." (Arnold I, 332.)

Nearly all his sermons begin with the words:

> "This Gospel tells how Christ said this; This Gospel teaches how; This Gospel shows how men should; Christ telleth here two parables; This Gospel tells of the second advent of Christ. Or; This Epistle of Paul to the Romans tells how; This Epistle to the Corinthians tells how that men should love Him and live here."

And so, first of all and before everything, Wycliffe brought his audience straight to the Word of God. Of a doubt of God's Word, there is not a trace in all his writings. Just as the prophets used to preface their sermons or prophecies with the great: Thus saith the Lord; The word of the Lord came unto me, so must we too, said Wycliffe, as the Apostles, preach the Bible as God's Word and proclaim the Gospel as the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible was God's Word to be preached; God's Word as the Bread of Life, the Bread of souls. It is the seed by which men are brought into newness of life, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (I Peter i, 23.) As he thinks of it he is lost in wonder, love and praise, and cries:

> "O marvellous power of the Divine Seed! which overpowers strong men in arms, softens hard hearts, and

renews and changes into divine men, men who had been brutalized by sins, and departed infinitely far from God. Obviously such miraculous power could never be worked by the word of a priest, if the Spirit of Life and the Eternal Word did not, above all things else, work with it." (Lechler I, 285.)

Before I conclude this chapter I feel impelled to say that I must differ from Workman in his estimate of Wycliffe as a preacher. It is hardly fair to expect in a mediævalist the style and manner of a modern preacher, and to aver that because Wycliffe does not use anecdotes and illustrations, like a Moody or a Beecher, that he was lacking in either sympathy or keen power of observation, still less that he was not consumed with the passion for saving souls.

"He rarely illustrated from current manners" and "preachers who effectively use anecdotes are usually men with marked sympathies or keen powers of observation. Wyclif could not in preaching descend from his professional chair. He trusted too much to the pure intellect and did not sufficiently realize the value of the emotions and imagination. That was why Wyclif failed to touch his hearers, for he was not consumed with the passion for saving souls." But he adds, "The astonishing thing is not that his influence was so small but that it was so great." (Workman II, 219–20.)

Surely the fact that it was so great and is so great is the proof of his greatness as a preacher, and the astonishing thing is that Dr. Workman did not realize how there runs through many of his sermons and nearly all his later writings the passion for saving souls. In regard to Wycliffe as a preacher we are sure that Lechler is not only more appreciative than Workman, but nearer the truth.

"There is in the sermons and preaching of Wycliffe a veritable zeal for the glory of God—a pure love of

the Redeemer, and a sincere concern for the salvation of souls. There reigns throughout them a true godly mind, whose habit is to view all that is earthly in its relation to a higher world, and to deal with it all in the light of eternity. It is impossible to think otherwise of such a preacher, so full of earnest godliness and Christian conscientiousness, but that he must have made a deep impression upon all men who did not deliberately stand aloof from the sphere of his influence and power."

"He preached God's Word, not man's; not worldly things but saving truth, and always took his texts from the Bible, either from the Gospel for the day or for the preceding Sunday with the Epistle for the same. His supreme desire was to bring out the teaching of the Scriptures (*fides Scripturæ*) and his sermons were saturated with Bible thoughts, and even when discussing social, polemic and ecclesiastical political questions it is always the Bible which the preacher applies to these questions as his rule of judgment." (Lechler I, 294–7.)

CHAPTER VII

WYCLIFFE'S TRACTS AND TREATISES

THE three or four last years of Wycliffe's career seem to have been the busiest of his life. Though a rapidly ageing man, there was still plenty of fight left in him, as Lewis Sergeant says. Or, as Green says, there lay within this frail form an immense energy, and Wycliffe himself could hardly have suspected the immense range of his intellectual power and the far-reaching influence of his words and writings. His brain seems to have been more active than ever. During these prolific years the number of tracts and treatises and other writings that he composed and published is almost incredible. He poured out tract after tract, treatise after treatise, volume after volume with the assistance of a little band of faithful Evangelicals who stuck to him and wrote for him and at his dictation.

These tracts were mainly appeals to the people. They were not addressed to the learned and logical, the scholars and schoolmen of the day, but to all classes of Churchmen. He had addressed the University, and the University, at the dictate of a Roman prelate, had hardened its heart. The doctors had ears to hear, but they would not hear. As the Apostle of old said to the envious Jews: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, lo, we turn to the people." So Wycliffe turned to the people of the land. He addressed them in their own mother tongue. As Green says (*History of the English People*, III, 150):

"He appealed, and the appeal is memorable as the first

> of such a kind in our history, to England at large. With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry, syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers, were suddenly flung aside, and by a transition, which marks the wonderful genius of the man, the schoolman was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wycliffe is the father of our later prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the plowman and the trader of the day, though coloured with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible, is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it, the terse vehement sentences, the stinging sarcasm, the hard antitheses which roused the dullest mind like a whip."

The English tracts of Wycliffe and his Bible made English a literary tongue. The influence of these easily read little pamphlets was extraordinary. They spoke to the people not in French, the language of the court, or in Latin, the language of the Church, but in English, the newly born language of the people and of every-day life. Like the satires of Erasmus, they ran like wild fire. They were circulated widely. They were read voraciously. The common people read them or heard them gladly. They were earnestly believed. They created thinkers. They enlisted the devotion of awakened lives. It was the first Tractarian movement in the English Church. As Sergeant says, the last of Wycliffe's life saw him virtually transformed into a writer of tracts for the times, controversial, political, expository, tracts clearly intended to give popular interpretation of Scripture and the Church for the benefit of the common people. Wycliffe had caught the spirit of St. Paul, whose longing was to avoid an unknown tongue and to speak in the simple language of the people, with a plainness that could be understood. "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others

also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (I Cor. xiv, 19.)

There has been a great deal of difference, especially in the last few years, with regard to the genuineness of Wycliffe's English tracts, and it is evidently most difficult to differentiate between those that were written by Wycliffe himself and those that were produced by his immediate followers. If style is made the rule, and style is often a very unreliable criterion, some of his most powerful, such as those *Of Prelates*, *Of Clerks Possessioners*, *Of Curates* would be ruled out. On negative grounds also, a very unsafe guide, some of the greatest, such as the *Fifty Heresies* and the *Curse Expounded* are attributed to Purvey, Wycliffe's ablest assistant. But as Workman says,

> "The reader should remember that the writings are genuine enough so far as the matter goes. The voice is the voice of Wycliffe, though the hand is not always his. We must remember that if Wycliffe dictated the scribe would pen it in his own dialect." (I, 331.)

Of this, however, there can be no doubt that Wycliffe did so fully infuse his own spirit and views into his assistants and amanuenses that there are such striking similarities of language, thought and style in the work of his colleagues and admirers that the critics of to-day find it difficult to decide which of his writings should be unhesitatingly attributed to Wycliffe and which were the production of his followers. The reader will find the whole question discussed in Arnold, *Select English Works of John Wyclif* (I, iii, xvi) and Workman (I, 329–32).

THE TRACTS

The tracts were largely controversial. They exposed and destroyed nearly every distinctive dogma of Romanism, and denounced most violently the wickedness of popes, prelates and priests. He held unflinchingly that

the great canon of the true religion of Christ was the Word of God and the teaching of the Apostles. What saith the Scriptures? What saith Christ's law? What did Christ and His Apostles say? Wycliffe had arrived at the conclusion, which was the reason of the Reformation, that all Church doctrine and Christian living is to be tested by God's holy Word. The result was a revelation. The things that were most widely and firmly believed by English Churchmen were without a shadow of foundation in Scripture. The great and massive structure of the Roman temple was built on a quagmire of superstition and fable. Pardons, indulgences, pilgrimages, auricular confession, image worship, saint worship, the adoration of the host, the absolution of the priest, the infallibility of the Pope; these things were the very substance of Church religion. And they were all wrong; they were false. This was a tremendous conclusion for a man in that age to arrive at. But God was his judge, and the Word of God his authority. The Church doctrines were not in the scriptures. They were without authority there. Therefore they could not be true.

Some of the most important of his tracts were on *The Church and her Members* (Winn, *Selections*, 118–39; Arnold III, 338–65); on the *Papacy, De Papa*, in which the devil is shown to be the master of the priests, and the overlord of the Pope who gave sham absolutions, and gloried in cursings and vengeance (Matthew, 458–82); on the *Pastoral Office, De Officio Pastorali*, with a very high ideal of the ministry as a pastorate, and a slash at the priests, and friars, and the Pope as the source of all evil (Matthew, 405–57); on the *Ave Maria* (Matthew, 203); on *De Dominio Divino*, the famous tract for Dominion (Matthew, 282); on *Confession* (Matthew, 325); on *Servants and Lords* (Matthew, 226); on the *Schism of the Roman Popes* (Arnold III, 242, *De Pontificum Romanorum Schismate*); on the *Great sentence of Curse Expounded*, a terrific blast against the cursings of those priests and popes who glibly and freely curse others

and are themselves accursed of God (Arnold III, 267); on the *Fifty Heresies and Errors of Friars* (Arnold III, 366–401).

As to the writings of Wycliffe, Lechler (II, 322–41) gives a very able summary with regard to his Latin and English writings, dividing his works into three great classes: First, his theological or philosophic or scientific works; second, his homiletic and expositional, which cover a very great number of subjects, doctrinal, practical, Old Testament, Apocryphal, New Testament, in Latin and in English; and, finally, his great polemical writings and pamphlets, in Latin and in English, covering a vast variety of subjects and filling the reader with wonder at his extraordinary versatility and ability. Arnold's three volumes on *The Select English Works of Wycliffe* give one an idea of the vigour and originality of Wycliffe's mind, and its summary of Wycliffe's literature (Vol. III, xv) is a revelation in itself of the extraordinary place that Wycliffe has occupied in the literary world. Matthew also, in his fine work on the *English Works of Wycliffe Hitherto Unprinted* (1880), gives a very complete selection, with very helpful introductory notes to each tract and writing. A summary of Wycliffe's writings is found in Winn's *Select English Writings of Wiclif* (Oxford University Press), taken largely from Shirley, Arnold and Matthew. Winn suggests the thought that Wycliffe published a triple series of writings; the first in scholastic Latin for college men; the second in popular Latin for a lettered but less leisured circle; the third in English for the mass of the people (xxx–xxxix).

The most striking thing about these tracts, as about all the writings of Wycliffe, was their outspokenness. Never had an Englishman ever spoken as this Englishman. His words are daring in the extreme, and we can only understand them when we remember two things. First, the incredible state of the Church and of the times, the widespread immorality and wickedness of the Church and of the times; and, second, that this man Wycliffe

was simply saturated with the spirit of the prophets and of his master Christ and was so profoundly convinced that the Bible was God's truth and the Pope was Antichrist. His language at times is most violent. His invective and diatribes most vituperative. For instance, here is a bit from his treatise on the lives of the prelates:

> "Worldly prelates command that no man shall preach the Gospel, but at their will and limitation, and forbid men to hear the Gospel on pain of the great curse. But Satan in his own person never dared do so much despite to Christ or His Gospel. And, since it is Christ's counsel to priests generally to preach the Gospel, this thing they must not do without leave of their prelates who, in some cases, may be fiends of hell. Ah! Lord Jesus, are these sinful fools and, it may be fiends of hell more knowing and mighty than Thou, that true men must not do Thy will without leave from such? Ah! Lord God Almighty, all-knowing and all full of charity, how long wilt Thou suffer these Antichrists to despise Thee and Thy holy Gospel and to let the health (that is, to hinder the salvation) of Christian men's souls?"

Or, fancy a modern minister using such language as this. In *Satan and his Priests* (Matthew, 263–274) he says:

> "As Almighty God in Trinity ordaineth men to come to the bliss of heaven by three grounds, by faith, keeping of God's commandments, and perfect charity, so Satan and his worldly clerks maintain all manner of sin by these three cursed grounds: first is, that Holy Writ is false. The second is, that it is lawful and medeful (that is, meritorious) to lie. The third is, that it is against charity to cry openly against prelates' sins and other men's."

And who but a daring man of God would ever use such words as these:

> "Christian men should know, that whosoever liveth best, prayeth best; and that the simple paternoster of a

plowman who hath charity, is better than a thousand masses of covetous prelates and vain religion!"

And then he prays:

"Almighty God in Trinity, destroy these nests of Antichrist and his clerks, and strengthen all manner of men to maintain the truth of Holy Writ, to destroy falsehood, and openly to preach against the hypocrisy, heresy, and covetousness of all evil prelates, and priests, and feigned religion, both in word and deed, for then shall good life and truth, and peace, and charity reign among Christian men! Jesus Christ! for thine endless mercy grant us this end! Amen!"

But through all the invective and diatribe there runs a spirit of intense spiritual earnestness. One cannot help feeling that the longing of his very heart and soul was that God's Will and God's Word should be supreme and that the Gospel should prevail. For instance, after he has poured out his soul against the friars and all their sins, he ends with the assertion that these errors shall never be amended till the friars are brought to the freedom of the Gospel, and clean religion of Jesus Christ, and the prayer:

"God, for his endless mercy and charity, make very peace and charity among Christian men, and bring all priests to Christ's clean religion without error of wrong by laws."

One of the most influential and popular of his tracts was *The Wickett.* It was at once the exposition of the words of Jesus in John vi, 51, a very brief definition of the words in Matthew xxvi, 26 (in the Latin *Hoc est corpus meum*), and a diatribe against the Popish doctrine. It opens with a prayer that God will of His mercy strengthen us with His grace and Holy Spirit to make us strong after the evangelical gospel, and goes on to quote Daniel's words with regard to one who "shall defile the sanctuary and take away the continual sacrifice and give abomination into desolation and worship a god whom his fathers knew not."

" Most of all they make us believe a false law that they have made upon the secret host, for the most falsest belief is taught in it. For where find ye that ever Christ or any of his disciples or apostles taught any man to worship it? In the mass creed it is said, 'I believe in one God only, Jesus Christ, by whom all things be made'; and the Psalm, 'Quicunque vult,' there it is said, 'God is the Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Ghost; unmade is the Father, unmade is the Son, and unmade is the Holy Ghost.' And thou then, that art an earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker? Thou that sayest every day that thou makest of bread the body of the Lord, flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, God and man; forsooth, thou answerest greatly against reason.

" When the Scripture said Jesus took bread and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take ye, eat ye; this is my body, that shall be given for you.' But he said not, 'This bread is my body,' or that 'the bread should be given for the life of the world.' If Christ had spoken of the material bread that he had in his hand, as when he said, (*Hoc est corpus meum*) 'This is my body,' and it was made before, or else the word had been a lie; for if ye say, 'This is my hand,' and if it be not a hand, then am I a liar.

" They say that when there is left no bread, but it is the body of the Lord; but truly there is nothing but a heap of accidents, as whiteness, ruggedness, roundness, savoury, touching, and tasting, and such other accidents. And you would make more in one day by cart loads than He did in thirty-two years when He was here on earth. If thou makest the body of the Lord in these words, *Hoc est corpus meum*, thou thyself must be the person of Christ or else there is a false god.

" If you cannot make the work that He made in Genesis, how shall you make Him that made the works? and you have no words of authority.

" It is written, when Moses was in the hill with God (Exodus xx) the people made a calf, and worshipped

it as God. Thou makest a false god to worship in the chalice as well as the host of bread. But where find ye that ever Christ or any of his disciples taught any man to worship this bread and wine?

"When Christ said, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood' (Luke xxii, 20), now what say ye? that it was a material cup? No. Christ spake not of the material cup, neither of material wine. When Christ said (John xv) 'am a very vine,' (I am the true vine) wherefore worship ye not the vine for God as ye do the bread? Wherein was Christ a very vine? or wherein was the bread Christ's body? in figurative speech, which is hid to the understanding of sinners. Then if Christ became not a material, neither an earthly vine, neither material vine became the body of Christ; so neither the bread, material bread, was not changed from his substance to flesh and blood of Christ." (Wycliffe's *Wyckett*, Vaughan. *Tracts and Treatises*, 273–284.)

Surely simpler and stronger words could hardly be found. How anyone after reading this could ever believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, as it was then taught in the Ecclesia Anglicana or Church of Rome, it is hard to believe. It is such a complete exposure of the falsity of Rome's teaching in contrast to the simple sacrament ordained by our Saviour.

Vehement and almost fierce as Wycliffe's language is in most of the tracts, there can be no doubt that they reveal the very tone and style of the man who was spurred to talk to his countrymen in a tongue which they could understand and to use great plainness of speech. Arnold complains that his words exhibit everywhere a vehement and uncompromising spirit. But so did Jeremiah's. So did Paul's. So did John's. And above all, to read Matthew xxiii, 13–33, so did Christ's. But no one can read his tracts without feeling that Wycliffe was a true lover of his fellow-men; that the poor were ever on his heart, and their wrongs his grief and burden; that while truly democratic he was no demagogue; that he

was strongly opposed to war, though admitting that a king may be justified at times in waging it; that he was deeply opposed to the pomp and grandeur and luxury of the clerics, and felt that the clerical orders should be less priestly and more Evangelical. As Winn pertinently says, Wycliffe's longing was that the world as he saw it should be transformed from top to bottom, and his ideal of society was its reconstruction on the lines of a Christian commonwealth whose members should live by the precepts of Christ and the lives of the Apostles.

THE TREATISES

By Wycliffe's treatises we mean some of those larger works of his, not brief tracts, important as they were, such as the *Wyckett* or the *Dominion*. There was, for instance, the great theological collective work, *The Summa in Theologia*, and a somewhat philosophical work entitled *The Logica*, of which he says in the introduction:

> "I have been induced by several friends of God's Word (*legis Dei amicos*) to compose a treatise in explanation of the logic of Holy Scripture, with the idea that they will be the better able thereby to understand the Word of God. I propose, with the view of sharpening the faculties of believing minds, to give processes of proof for propositions which are all to be drawn from Scripture." (Lechler II, 5.)

But by far the most important of his writings was *The Trialogus*. It was a complete summary of his highest thinking and most careful writing. Vaughan hazards the opinion that the earlier portions were a digest of the lectures he delivered in Oxford as Professor of Divinity, and that he embodied in the *Trialogus*, as the great depository of his opinions, his early views, which are largely of the nature of theological speculations, and in the later his opinions concerning the Eucharist and the translation of the Bible into the people's language. It was called

by Wycliffe *The Trialogus*, and in form it consisted of a series of conversations between three speakers whose names were Alithia, Pseudis and Phronesis—Truth, Falsehood and Wisdom. Alithia's views are, of course, the Truth ; the views of Pseudis are the False ; and Phronesis is supposed to be Wycliffe himself. It consisted of four volumes and was a complete compendium of his views in Theology and Ecclesiology.

The first, second and third books were what we call in modern theological language largely apologetic. They set forth the ontological arguments or proofs for the existence of God as the first cause and Creator of all things and the Great Reality. One must say that they sound to-day pretty dull and prosy. I doubt whether even divinity students would understand them, let alone read them. They were the scholasticism of Wycliffe's day in a nutshell, argumentative, polemic, postulating a knowledge of metaphysics with the potentia and the notitia and the quietatio of the divine Trinity. At the same time, the arguments for the greatness of God, as the Creator of the universe, angelic orders (Ephesians i, 21 ; Colossians i, 16) and the Immortality of the Soul and the Christian virtues and morals are all such as any modern theological professor would use in the college lecture room. (See Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises*, 108–30.)

The fourth book relates to the doctrine of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist, and of the Church and the religious orders, and is a vigorous denunciation of Transubstantiation, and exposition of the way in which the bread is the body of the Lord, very much along the lines of his tract, the *Wickett*. In the latter part he exposes the scandals of the avaricious clergy (a favourite subject of his) and the abuses of penance, the confessional, Extreme Unction (many who have been anointed have nevertheless been doomed to everlasting condemnation —how like Antichrist for a prelate to assert that no one would be saved without partaking of a sacrament of the sort) ; of Indulgences, and of the enormities of the friars,

with their seductions and abuses and fraud and malice as the disciples of Antichrist (another favourite subject of his). (Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises*, 131–216.)

Of course he had a fling at the Pope, whom he described as the great Antichrist.

> "The Roman pontiff is the great Antichrist, for he falsely asserts that he is in a direct sense the vicar of Christ, most conformed to him in his life, and by consequence the most humble of Christians, the poorest of men, and one separated more than any man beside from the thraldom of secular things. But the falsehood and blasphemy of such assertions are manifest in the fact that his life is the reverse of all this, that he is the most powerful and the most wealthy man in the world; and what can be more contrary to the poverty of Him who had nowhere to lay His head? Can such an Antichrist be described as a vicar bearing resemblance to Christ? From the fact of what we see in him, it is clear, that so far from being the most humble of men, he is vicar to the king of pride, set up over us all."
>
> "After this great Antichrist, come the lesser Antichrists —the prelates, who desert the office Christ has assigned to them, and take up another office according to another law. The injunction of Christ to Peter was —'Feed my sheep'; but if you wish to bring this point to a test, look well to the life of Christ and to His Apostles, and see how ill they are followed by our spiritual leaders. The duty of preaching is set aside, and the practice of fleecing those committed to their care is introduced in its place."
>
> "The Papal Bulls should be superseded and the Scriptures take their place in reverence. That would keep the laws of the Papacy promulgated since the loosing of Satan within due bounds, and put the mandates of the Popes and other prelates in their just place."

And he concludes with words that almost take your breath away:

> "Those upstart doctors are to be accounted as especially worthy of all detestation, who endeavour to main-

> tain, that Holy Writ, of all writings or sayings, is the most false, and especially the words of Christ in the Gospel of John, which they think they can clearly demonstrate by their logic. In truth, of all heretical doctrines, I know of none more damnable than this, of none more fit for the purpose of Antichrist, none more hurtful to the faith of Christ. All the sophistries of Antichrist on this subject, lie concealed under this foul covering—'I understand Holy Writ in this way, and according to my logic it ought so to be understood; but the sense which I attach to it amounts to an impossibility; therefore Scripture, if logically interpreted, and by consequence the Author of Scripture, must be accounted false, and most unworthy of credit.'"

But the striking thing is that there runs all through a wonderfully strong appeal to the infallibility of the Word of God. The words of Christ are infinitely above the words of man, and the only authority he recognizes is not that of Popes or scholars but God's own words. And he concludes with a vindication of his indictments of falsities and friars by claiming the example of the Apostle who says their mouths must be stopped and they ought to be sternly refuted.

CHAPTER VIII

WYCLIFFE'S BIBLE

THE Bible of John Wycliffe was his greatest achievement, the climax and crown of his career. The glory of his achievement was not the style of the language or the accuracy of the translation. It was the fact that he was the first Englishman, the first Churchman of the Church of England, who conceived the idea of setting forth for the people the whole Bible in the English tongue. This was the longing of his heart and the dream of his life, and in 1382 this great gift of God to his age, his Church and his nation, became an accomplished fact. Of course, Wycliffe was not the first to attempt translating the Bible into the vulgar tongue. Centuries before the venerable Bede had translated St. John's Gospel into Saxon, a work which unfortunately has not survived. King Alfred translated the Ten Commandments in simple Anglo-Saxon and seems to have intended a translation of the Psalms. Early in the reign of Edward the Third two English versions of the Psalms were made by William of Schorham and Richard Rolle the hermit. But to all practical purposes these fragmentary translations were little more than ecclesiastical curiosities. Hardly anybody knew anything about them. The only version of the Bible that was known in England was in Latin, the Vulgate version, which was Jerome's re-revision from the old Latin version. The Church, so far from encouraging the reading of the Bible encouraged its obscurity. The Church of England, the Ecclesia Anglicana, so far from ordering it to be read in the churches, was soon about to order to prison everybody who read it at all, in

obedience to a decree of an early thirteenth century Council.

> "We forbid the laity to possess any of the books of the Old and New Testaments, except perhaps the Psalter or Breviary for the Offices of the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, which some, out of devotion, wish to have; *but having any of these books translated into the vulgar tongue we strictly forbid.*"

The error of Sir Thomas More, which led Cardinal Gasquet into the extraordinary error that Wycliffe was not the first translator of the Bible and that he purposely corrupted the holy text with glosses maliciously made, is very ably discussed and refuted by Workman (II, 185–90) and Lechler (I, 325–6). As a matter of fact, it can be confidently stated, without possibility of contradiction, that before the day of Wycliffe, not only was a translation of the whole Bible into English never executed, but it was not even thought of; that the only book which was ever translated into Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman and old English was the Psalter, the Book of the Psalms; that portions of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, were translated partially by Aelfric, the Abbot of Eynsham, and John's Gospel by Bede. And above all, for this fact is incontrovertible, there was no desire or design in any of these translations to give the Bible as the Word of God to the mass of the people of the land or for the people's use in their own homes. These pre-Wycliffe translations, fragmentary and, in a measure, unintelligible to English readers, were intended primarily to furnish aid to the clergy and to render service to the college educated and upper class. (Lechler I, 331.)

Not only was there no Bible available for the Church for clergy or laity, but the very idea of its translation into English aroused the most violent opposition. It was not to be thought of. It was heresy. It was wickedness unparalleled. Why should men want anything better than the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Scriptures,

which the Roman Catholic Church had authorized? One of the leading historians of the day called Knighton said that

> "Christ gave His Gospel to the clergy and learned (*clericis et doctoribus*) of the Church that they might give it to the laity and more infirm persons, according to the exigency of the time and the need of the persons. But this Master John Wyclif translated the Gospel from the Latin into the Anglican language not the angelican (*in Anglicam linguam non angelicam*). And Wyclif, by thus translating the Bible made it the property of the masses and common to all (*vulgare*) and more open to the laity and even to women who were able to read than formerly it had been even to the scholarly and most learned of the clergy. And so the Gospel pearl is thrown before swine and trodden underfoot and that which used to be so dear to both clergy and laity has become a joke (*jocositas* —a matter of jest) and this precious gem of the clergy has been turned into the sport of the laity, so that what used to be the highest gift of the clergy and the learned members of the Church has become common to the laity." (Forschall and Madden's *Wycliffe's Bible*, Vol. I, p. vi.)

And Archbishop Arundel, in one of his letters said something of the same kind, only perhaps in a little more vitriolic language:

> "This pestilential and most wretched John Wycliffe of damnable memory, a child of the old devil, and himself a child or pupil (*alumnus*) of Antichrist, who, while he lived, walking in the vanity of his mind—with a few other adjectives, adverbs and verbs, which I shall not give—crowned his wickedness by translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue."

It was the same Archbishop Arundel who a quarter of a century or so later presided at the Council of 1408 which enacted and ordained

> "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 Wycliffe aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication." (Vaughan's *Wycliffe*, II, 44.)

We see thus that to the mediæval mind the idea of a Bible in English was monstrous. It was sacrilege. It tended to undermine and destroy the very fabric of religion. The friars and monks with one voice shouted: It's heresy! It's heresy! Even for the laity to read the Scriptures in Latin is dangerous. Even twenty years after Wycliffe's death Oxford passed a decree that no man should learn Holy Writ for nine or ten years after he had got his degree, (Vaughan II, 50), which Purvey called a horrible and devilish cursedness of Christ's enemies.

We can now understand how it was, in such a state of things, with such views paramount in the Church, what a great and novel idea it was, and what a magnificent achievement it became—the translation of the Bible, the whole Bible, for the people in their own tongue. What doubtless was at the back of all that Wycliffe tried to do was unquestionably the conviction that he had slowly but surely arrived at, that the Bible and the Bible only was the final rule of authority, the final court of appeal, and the paramount guide in all matters of doctrine and of life. God's law, he called it. To him it was God's Word in its totality, the inspired revelation of the will of God. Wycliffe's creed concerning the Bible was that of Psalm xix, 7–9: It was the law of the Lord, perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord, sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord, right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord, pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord, clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord, true and righteous altogether." But more. Added to that there was the profound conviction that every

Englishman had the right to read the Bible in English. The Latin was all very well for clerics, but the laity need the Bible. Since the laity ought to know the basis of their faith it should be taught in whatever language is most easily understood.

> "Christ and His Apostles taught the people in the language best known to them. It is certain that the truth of the Christian faith becomes more evident the more the faith itself is known. Therefore, the doctrine should not only be in Latin but in the vulgar tongue and, as the faith of the Church is contained in the Scriptures, the more these are known in a true sense the better. The laity ought to understand the faith and, as the doctrines of our faith are in the Scriptures, believers should have the Scriptures in a language which they fully understand. Augustine constantly taught that the Scriptures contain the whole of truth. Christ and His Apostles evangelized by making known the Scriptures in a language familiar to the people, and to this end indeed did the Holy Spirit endue them with the knowledge of all tongues. If it is heresy to read the Bible, then the Holy Ghost Himself is condemned who gave in tongues to the Apostles of Christ to speak the Word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven. If Christ was so merciful as to send the Holy Ghost to the heathen men to make them partakers of His blessed word, why should it be taken from us in this land that be Christian men? If you deny Christ's words for heresy, then you make Christ a heretic. If you condemn the Word of God in any language for heresy, then you condemn God for a heretic that spake the word, for He and His word are all one and if His word is the life of the world how may any Antichrist take it away from us that are Christian men, and suffer the people to die for hunger in heresy." (Vaughan, *Life*, II, 44–8; *Tracts and Treatises*, 275–6.)

With these two driving forces Wycliffe went to work on his Bible. How and when he did his translation nobody

exactly knows. It was probably between 1380 and 1382. We would love to picture him as he sat in his vicarage at Lutterworth with his Latin versions all around him, and a little band of Oxford men, ardent, skilled, trained by their master, sitting near him with devoted enthusiasm, pens in hands, his amanuenses; the pause for thought and prayer; the eager eye, the rapid pens. But no record of anything like this remains. Nor will there be any way of ascertaining how the work was done. The workshop is gone, the workmen buried. But the work abides. It took probably a couple of years, if not more, of co-operative work. Apparently while Wycliffe was working on the New Testament, Hereford and Purvey were toiling at the Old. Of course, Wycliffe had no access to any of the Greek texts of the scholars of the day. The Latin Vulgate was his only original, and there may have been, as Workman suggests, English versions which he might have seen and used. (Workman II, 172–5.) Their ambition was to do the best they could with the material they had; to gather from the many versions a text that would be easily understood, and to translate as clearly as they could according to the sense and meaning. (Forschall and Madden I, 22.) It has been conjectured that he began the last first, and began with the translation of the Book of Revelation, and after that he went steadily on until he had translated the whole of the New Testament into English—a gigantic work for one man in those days; in fact, so gigantic that some of the modern critics think that so old and worn a man could not possibly have done it. In his translation Wycliffe does not seem to have been thinking of style or beauty. His soul was in his work and the glory of it. His only idea was to produce a translation that the common people of England, God's laity, would understand. It has been conjectured, that while Nicholas Hereford and John Purvey were translating the Old Testament, Wycliffe was constantly overseeing their work, and when it was finished he set himself to revising

it with great care. At last the work was done, and though other hands had translated parts of it the glory of the finished work must be given to John Wycliffe. To his zeal, to his encouragement and to his direction we unquestionably owe the first English Bible. It was in the year 1382 it was first published. Printing was, of course, not yet invented, but the devotedness of many transcribers produced abundant copies. It has been stated that hundreds of busy hands must have been at work to meet the demand that it created, for there are still extant after 550 years about one hundred and fifty hand-copy versions of Wycliffe's Bible. That year 1382 must ever be accounted a great date, not only in English Church history, but in English history. It is a year to be had greatly in honour by Englishmen. The Bible is now in the hands of the people. The Truth is abroad. The deepest foundation-stone of the reformed Church of England is laid. The Reformation has begun. God's great gift, His own Word, lies open before the eyes of England and there is now revealed to waiting multitudes the wonderful Word of God in a language that all classes could easily understand.

Think how their hearts must have burned within them when they opened the first page of the first book of the Bible and there stood before their astonished eyes those wonderful words that told how God created the heaven and the earth:

> "In the firste made God of nougt heuene and erthe. The erthe forsothe was veyn with ynne and void, and derknessis weren vpon the face of the see; and the Spiryt of God was born vpon the watrys. And God seide, Be maad ligt; and maad is ligt. And God sawg ligt, that it was good, and deuydid (divided) ligt fro derknessis; and clepide (that is, called) ligt, day, and derknessis, nygt. And maad is euen and moru (morn), o day. Seide forsothe God, Be maad a firmament in the myddel of watres, and dyuyde it watres from watrys. And God made the firmament,

and dyuydid watris that weren undre the firmament fro thes that weren aboue the firmament; and it is maad so. And God clepide the firmament, heuene. And maad is euen and moru, the seconde day."

Or think how their hearts glowed with a holy gratitude as they read the words of the 103rd Psalm:

"Blesse thou, my soule, to the Lord; and alle thingus that withinne me ben, to his holi name. Blesse thou, my soule, to the Lord; and wile thou not forgete alle the geldingus of hym. That hath mercy to alle thi wickidnessis; that helith alle thin infirmytees. That ageen bieth fro deth thi lif; that crouneth thee in mercy and mercy doingis. That fulfilleth in goode thingus the diseyr; shal be renewid as of an egle thi youthe.

"Aftir oure synnes he dide not to vs; ne aftir oure wickidnessis he gelde to vs. For after the heigte of heuene fro erthe; he strengthide his mercy vpon men dredende hym. Hou myche the rising stant fro the going doun; aferr he made fro vs oure wickidnessis. What maner wise the fader hath mercy of the sonus, the Lord dide mercy to men dredende hym; for he knew oure britil making. He recordide for pouder wee be, a man as hey his dayes; as the flour of the feld so he shal floure out. For the spirit shall thurg passen in hym, and he shal not stonde stille; and he shal no more knowen his place."

Or how the majesty of those great words of Isaiah xl, 27–31 would lift up their hearts.

"Whi seist thou, Jacob, and spekest, Irael, Hid is my wey fro the Lord, and fro my God my dom passede? Whether wost thou not, or hast not herd, God euere durende? The Lord that foormede the termes of the erthe, he shal not faile, ne trauaile, ne ther is enserching of his wisdam. That gyueth to the weri vertue, and to them that ben not, strengthe and stalwrthenesse multeplieth. Failen shul childer, and trauailen, and yunge men in ther feblenesse fallen. Who forsothe hopen in the Lord, shal chaunge

strengthe, take to federes as of an egle; rennen, and not trauailen; gon, and not faylen."

By the way, what a curious mixture there is here of the Latin, Norman and the newly made middle English and the then so familiar Saxon. We see in a passage like this our English language in the making. We can stand, as it were, in the factory and see the master workmen constructing the new language that in after centuries is to take its place as the dominating language of the modern world.

How they must have listened with hearts glowing with a strange emotion and eyes that glistened with tears as they read Isaiah liii, 3–8:

"And wee desireden hym, dispisid, and the laste of men, man of sorewes, and witenede infirmyte. And as hid his chere and dispisid, wherefore ne wee setteden by him. Vereli oure sicnesses he tooc, and oure sorewes he bar; and wee heelden hym as leprous, and smyten of God, and mekid. He forsothe woundid is for oure wickidnesses, defoulid is for oure hidous giltes; the discyplyne of our pes vp on hym, and with his wannesse we ben heled. Alle wee as shep erreden, eche in to his weie bowede doun, and the Lord putte in hym the wickidnesse of vs alle. He is offred, for he wolde, and he openede not his mouth; as a shep to sleyng he shal be lad, and as a lomb bifor the clippere itself he shal become doumb, and he opened not his mouth."

But as they opened the New Testament and came to what was Wycliffe's own work they must have been struck with the simplicity and homeliness of the gracious words of Christ and the Gospels. It was indeed a homely translation, for the homes of England, and the common people must have heard it gladly. And yet with all its simplicity and vigour, there was about it a beauty, a grace and dignity, which must have made them feel that they were not reading the words of man, but, as it was in truth, the Word of God. Think of the power

of the words of Jesus as they fell upon the toil-worn men and women of that day:

> "Alle ye that traueilen, and ben chargid, come to me, and I shal refreshe, or fufille you. Take ye my yok on you, and lerne ye of me, for I am mylde and meke in herte; and ye schulen fynde reste to youre soulis. For my yok is softe, and my charge ligt (i.e. burden or load is light). (Matthew xi, 28–30.)

Or those words that have come to the hearts of the mothers and fathers of all ages:

> "And thei offriden to him little children, that he schulde touche hem; sotheli disciplis thretenyden to men offringe. Whom whanne Jhesus hadde seyn, he baar heuye, or unworthili, and seith to hem, Suffre ye litle children for to come to me, and forbede ye hem not, forsoth of suche is the kyngdom of God. Treuli I seie to you, who euere schal not receyue (receive) the kyngdom of God as this litle child, he schal not entre in to it. And he biclippinge hem (embraced them in His arms), and puttinge hondis vpon hem (put His hands upon them), blesside hem." (Mark x, 13–17.)

And the message to the shepherds on the first Christmas morning:

> "And loo! the aungel of the Lord stood by sydis hem, and the clerenesse of God schynede aboute hem; and thei dredden with greet drede. And the aungel seide to hem, Nyle ye drede; lo! sothli I euangelise to you a grete ioye, that schal be to al peple." (Luke ii, 9–11.)

Or the greatest of all the great texts of the Bible:

> "Forsothe God so louede the world, that he gaf his oon bigetun sone, that ech man that bileueth in to him perische not, but haue euerlastynge lyf." (John iii, 16.)

Or

> "I am breed of lyf; he that cometh to me, schal not hungre; he that bileueth in me, schal neuere thirste." (John vi, 35–7.)

Or who could describe the effect of their reading for the first time in their own beloved tongue the fascinating story of the prodigal son who went in pilgrimage to a far countree and wasted his substance (substaunce) in lecherous living. And when he had come to the end of his money he went and cleved to one of the citizens of that countree. And now we take the words of Wycliffe's Bible. Luke xv, 15–24:

> " And he sente him in to his toun, that he schulde feede hoggis (swine). And he coueitide to fille his beli of the coddis (pods) whiche the hoggis eeten, and no man gaf to him. Sothli (truly) he turned agen in to him silf, seyde, Hou many hynen (hired men) in my fadir hous, han plente of looues (loaves); forsothe I perische here thurg hungir. I schal ryse vp, and I schal go to my fadir, and I schal seie to him, Fadir, I haue synned agens heuene, and bifore thee; now I am not worthi to be clepid (called) thi sone, make me as oon of thi hyrid men. And he rysinge cam to his fadir. Sothli whanne he was yit fer, his fadir syg him, and he was stirid by mercy. And he rennynge to, felde on his necke, and kiste him. And the sone seyde to him, Fadir, I haue synned agens heuene, and bifore thee; and now I am not worthi to be clepid thi sone. Forsoth the fadir seyde to his seruauntis, Soone bringe ye forth the firste stoole, and clothe ye him, and gyue ye a ring in his hond, and schoon in to the feet; and brynge ye a calf maad fat, and sle ye, and ete we, and plenteuously ete we. For this my sone was deed, and hath lyued agen, he perischide and is founden."

Or think of the charm of those words in the tenth chapter of St. John, so familiar now to all:

> " Therfore Jhesu seide to him eftsoone (again): Treuli, treuli, I seie to you, for I am the dore (door) of the scheep. . . . I am the dore. If ony mon schal entre by me, he schal be saued; and he schal go yn, and schal go out, and he schal fynde lesewis (pasture).
>
> " I am a good schepherde, and knowe my scheep, and

my scheep knowen me. As my fadir hath knowun me, and I knowe the fadir; and I putte my lyf for my scheep. And I haue othere scheep, that ben not of this folde, and it behoueth (behoveth) me for to leede hem to, and thei schulen (shall) heere my vois; and it schal be maad o fold and o schepherde."

And, as we pass on to the Epistles, one is impressed once more with the simple dignity of Paul's profound words in the Epistles, as in Romans viii, 35–9:

"Who therefore schal departe vs from the charite of God? tribulacioun, or angwisch, or hungur, or nakidnesse, or persecucioun, or perel, or swerd? As it is writun, For we ben slayn al day for thee; we ben gessid as scheep to slaugtir. But in alle thes thingis we ouercomen, for him that lovede vs. Sothli (truly) I am certeyn, for nether deeth, nether lyf, nether angels, nether pryncipatis, nether virtutes, (the Latin virtus: both have passed into English as virtue) nether potestatis, nether present thingis, nether thingis to comynge, nether strengthe, nether higthe, nether depnesse, nether othir creature schal may departe vs fro the charite of God, that is in Jhesu Crist oure Lord."

Or 1 Corinthians xiii:

"If I speke with tungis of men and aungels, sothli I haue not charite, I am maad as bras sownnynge, or a symbal tynkynge. And if I schal haue prophesye, and haue knowun alle mysteries, and al kunnynge, or science, and if I schal haue al feith, so that I bere ouere hillis fro o place to another, forsoth if I schal not haue charite, I am nogt. And if I schal departe alle my goodis into metis of pore men, and if I schal bytake my body, so that I brenne, forsothe if I schal not haue charite, it profitith to me no thing. Charite is pacient, it is benygne or of good will, charite enuyeth not, it doth not gyle, it is not inblowyn with pride, it is not ambicious, or coueitous of worschipis, it sekith not the thingis that ben her owne, it is not stirid to wraththe, it thenkith no yuel, it ioyeth not

in wickidnesse, forsoth it ioyeth togidere to treuthe; it suffrith alle thingis, it bileueth alle thingis, it hopith alle thingis, it susteyneth alle thingis. Charite fallith not down, where prophecyes schulen be voydid, ether langagis schulen ceesse, ether science schal be distroyed. Forsoth of party we han knowen, and of party we prophesien; forsothe whanne that schal come that is perfyt, that thing that is of party, schal be avoydid. Whanne I was a litil child, I spak as a litil child, I vndirstood as a litil child, I thouyte as a litil child; forsoth whanne I was maad man, I auoydide tho thingis that weren of a litil child. Forsoth we seen now by a myrour in a derknesse, thanne forsothe face to face; now I knowe of party, thanne forsoth I schal knowe, as and I am knowyn. Now forsothe dwellen feith, hope, and charite, thes thre; forsoth the mooste of thes is charite."

Or the sublime conclusion to the triumphant words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians xv, 54–8:

"Forsothe whanne this deedly thing schal clothe undeedlynesse (immortality), thanne schal be maad the word that is writun, Deeth is sopun vp in victorie. Deeth, wher is thi victorie? Deeth, wher is thi pricke (thy goad or sting)? Forsoth the pricke of deeth is synne; forsoth the vertu (strength) of synne is lawe. Forsoth thankingis to God, that gaf to vs victorie by oure Lord Jhesu Crist, that was deed for vs. And so, my dereworthe britheren, be ye stidefast and vnmouable, beynge plentenous in work of the Lord, euermore witynge (knowing) that youre trauel is not ydel in the Lord."

And the reading of Revelation xxi, 1–4:

"And I saw newe heuen and newe erthe; forsothe the first heuen and the first erthe wenten awey, and now is not the se. And I Joon saw the holy citee Jerusalem, newe, comynge doun fro heuen of God, maad redy as a wijf ourned (adorned) to hir husbonde. And I herde a greet voys of the trone, seiynge, Lo! the tabernacle of God with men, and he shal dwelle with

hem; and thei shulen be his puple, and he God with hem shal be her God. And God shal wijpe awey eche teer fro the eyen of hem; and deeth shal no more be, nether moornyng, nether criyng, nether sorowe shal be ouer; the whiche firste thinges wenten awey."

And Revelation xxii, 16–17:

"I Jhesus sente myn aungel, for to witnesse to you thes thinges in chirchis. I am the roote and kynde of Dauid, a shynyge morn sterre. And the husbonde and the spouse, or wijf (wife), seyn, Come thou. And he that herith, seith, Come thou; and he that thirstith, come; and he that wole, take freely the watir of lijf."

Surely they must have thrilled, these fourteenth century readers, as they thrill the hearts of any thankful reader to-day. And then, after the last words of the Revelation:

"I come soone. Amen. Come thou, Lord Jhesu. The grace of oure Lord Jhesu Crist with you alle. Amen."

he has these rather curious words:

"Heere endith the Apocalips, or Reuelacioun of Seynt Joon the euangelist, and so the Newe Testament. Blessid be the Holy Trinite. Amen."

A beautiful ending indeed to his great work, with the inscription of a grateful heart to the ever blessed Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who enabled him to finish the masterpiece of his life.

May we, as we conclude this vision of Wycliffe's Bible, summarize the whole matter briefly as follows: Wycliffe was undoubtedly the first man to grasp the sublime conception of the Bible in English, for Englishmen. It cannot be stated too clearly or too frequently that the first written Bible in English was Wycliffe's Bible, the first translation of the whole Bible that had ever been made in our land. Little portions here and there before

his time had been translated into the vulgar tongue, but, as Vaughan says:

> "A translation of the whole volume into the language spoken by the people, that the highest and the lowest might be alike readers of the Bible in their own tongue, and that men might everywhere appeal to it as their ultimate authority in respect of all questions of truth and duty,—that truly Protestant purpose, owes its origin in our ecclesiastical history, to the intelligence, the piety, and the intrepidity of Wycliffe." (Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises*, lvi.)

A translation of the whole Bible for the common good of the nation—this was the work and merit of Wycliffe. Wycliffe was the first to conceive the great idea, then entirely new, of a translation of the whole Bible and of the Bible for the use of the whole people. (Lechler I, pp. 331–3.) We dwell upon this because it has been the custom of some writers of the modern critical, as well as of the Roman Catholic school, to take away from John Wycliffe the credit and the glory of this great design.

In the next place, it cannot be too definitely stated that, while Wycliffe did not himself translate the whole of the Wycliffe Bible, it is evident that his was throughout the master mind and, as Burrows (p. 97) and Lechler (I, p. 346) state, if not the whole translation, the supervision of the whole translation was due to Wycliffe. It was Wycliffe's spirit, Wycliffe's mind and Wycliffe's forcible style that made the translation so simple and readable and stamped upon it the dignity and power of an English translation so entirely fitted for the requirement of the English readers of that day. Hereford and Purvey were the translating pens; Wycliffe was the dominating mind.

Another very remarkable thing with regard to this Wycliffe Bible was brought out by Sharon Turner (*History of England During the Middle Ages*, V, p. 425) and quoted by Lechler (I, p. 347), that is, that in his translation of the Bible, as compared with his other writings, sermons, tracts and treatises, the English style

of Wycliffe rises to a greater height of perspicuity, beauty and force. It is as if he felt inspired by the loftiness of the task that he was engaged in and by the greatness of the gift that he was about to give for the first time to the English nation. It certainly seemed as if God took his life-long training in language, logic and philosophy and, through His Holy Spirit, enabled him, because of his contacts with the common people, such as the citizens of London and the farm folk and peasantry of the shires, to employ a style of simple, yet scholarly and reverent English that he knew would not only touch the heart but win the thought of the masses, as well as the classes.

Another thing. Though this has been, to a certain extent, denied by some of the modern school, Wycliffe's translation of the Bible was an epoch-making work. "It marks," says Lechler, "an epoch in the development of the English language almost as much as Luther's translation does in the history of the German language. Luther's Bible headed the period of the new High German. Wycliffe's Bible stands at the head of the middle English." (I, p. 347.)

There has been a strong tendency on the part of some modern philologists to give the glory of the common English language to Chaucer and to represent Chaucer, not Wycliffe, as the proper representative of the middle English literature. But there has been also a reaction from this view, and a truer philology has tended to put Chaucer, not as the father of English prose, but as the father of English poetry. Chaucer's English represents rather the language of the court and of the upper classes and contains a considerable amount of French. As Professor Earle, formerly Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Oxford, said, Chaucer's English so far from being "the well of English undefiled," was highly Frenchified and many of his words were French of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Green, in his *History of the English People* (III, pp. 150–66), makes the same

statement, and adds that the clear homely English of Wycliffe is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it, and that Wycliffe's writings made English a literary tongue. And Professor Burrows, sometime Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, in his *Wiclif's Place in History*, says:

> "It is now a commonplace to recognize Wycliffe's translation of the English Bible to the nation as an era in the English language. It is not Chaucer to whom is assigned a solitary place of grandeur in the establishment of the English which we now speak."

It was quite as much the result of Wycliffe's life-long training in language, logic and philosophy. Chaucer's writings appealed to a literary class, but Wycliffe's Bible appealed to all (p. 98). I may say also that my life-long friend Professor David Keyes, sometime Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Toronto, corroborates Lechler's view, and says that he believes unquestionably that the statement that Wycliffe is the father of our early English prose is a true statement and confirmed by scholarship.

There are in Wycliffe's Bible remnants both of the Latin and the Romanesque. And there runs throughout the whole of his translation a curious strain of a north-country dialect, and also a Frenchiness which appears in his frequent use of French words in their Norman form. As everybody knows, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries the language of the upper classes in England was French, though it was gradually acquiring Anglicisms and, during the first half of the fourteenth century, was having a battle to keep its own with the native tongue which was trenching upon it. It was like the darker waters of the Ottawa River which flow into the St. Lawrence a few miles west of Montreal, the two streams being quite distinct for a while, but gradually blending, the darker waters disappearing. So the two

languages in England gradually blended. About 1350, after the Great Plague, French began to die out. In 1362 English was established as the language of the law courts and before the end of the thirteenth century, largely through Wycliffe's Bible and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a standard English language appeared in all the vigour of its national life and became triumphant by the end of the century.

Winn, in his *Wycliffe Selections*, says that

> "Wycliffe seems to have lost all trace of the northern speech, which he must have used as a boy. This is probably to be attributed to his long residence in the University of Oxford, and to his holding of parishes situated in districts employing Midland modes of speech. Lutterworth, it is to be noted, lies not very far from Oxford." (141–2.)

Winn, however, is probably mistaken in this, for as you read the text of Wycliffe's Bible you come across some curious specimens of Yorkshire or North England dialects, such, for instance, as Matthew iii, 1:

> "In thilke (those) days came *Joon* Baptist prechynge in the desert of Jude."

Or

> "And he wente forth, and bigan for to preche in Decapoly, (that is a *cuntree* of ten citees) hou manye thingis Jhesus hadde don to hym; and alle men wondriden." (Mark v, 20.)

In fact, Dr. Paterson Smyth, in his *How we got our Bible* (p. 72), says that at a meeting in Yorkshire some time ago a long passage of Wycliffe's Bible was read, and the Yorkshiremen there understood every word of it. It was the sound of the words so like their own dialect. I can quite believe that. For anyone reading a passage out of Wycliffe's Bible will be struck with the curious similarities of sound with that of the Yorkshire dialect. My friend, Professor Isherwood, of

Wycliffe College, Toronto, also pointed out to me that the country folk of Lancashire and Yorkshire still use some of the old plural forms of Wycliffe's Bible, such as childer for children (Is. xl, 30), birdis for birds (Matthew viii, 20). It is curious, too, to note the constant cropping up of French words. For instance, Mark iv, 17:

> "And thei han nat roote in hem silf, but thei ben temporal, that is, lasten a lityl tyme; afterward *tribulacioun* sprongen vp, and *persecucioun* for the word, anoon thei ben sclaundrid."

Of course, the words tribulacioun and persecucioun were just the French of the day. And in Matthew xxiv, 34–5:

> "Trewly I seie to yow, for this *generacioun* shal not passe, til that alle thingis be don; heuene and erthe shulen passe, but my wordis shulen nat passe."

The word passe being Romanesque.

It has been generally agreed that Wycliffe completed, with the aid of Hereford, his scholarly Oxford friend, and Purvey, his curate at Lutterworth, the translation of the whole Bible into English in 1382, though it is not known actually who the copyists were and how and where and when they did their work. There must have been scores, if not more, of men who eagerly went to work to copy the Bible. Dr. Wylie, in his *History of Protestantism*, says that the work of publishing was nearly as difficult as that of translating. The difficulty was to get the book into the hands of the people.

> "In those days there was no printing press to multiply copies by the thousand as in our times, and no publishing firm to circulate these thousands over the kingdom. The author himself had to see to all this. But the interest taken in Wycliffe and in his work enlisted a hundred expert hands who, though they toiled to multiply copies, could scarcely supply the many who were eager to buy. Some ordered complete copies to be made for them; others were content with portions; the same copy served several

families in many instances, and in a very short time Wycliffe's English Bible had obtained a wide circulation, and brought a new life into many an English home."

Very few, save the wealthiest of the wealthy, could have got copies of the whole Bible. But the King himself and the princes of the blood royal are said to have possessed them, and copies passed into the hands of all classes of the people. Many of them were most costly, being written upon vellum, by expert copyists.

"The multiplication of copies must have been rapid. Nearly one hundred and fifty manuscripts are in existence to-day. When we think of the vigilant efforts to suppress all copies of Wycliffe's Bible, to burn and destroy them as pernicious products of heretical depravity, and of the number of copies which, in the course of centuries have been lost through accident or negligence, it is not too much to suppose that we have now but a small portion of those which were originally written." (Preface, Forshall and Madden, *Wycliffe's Bible,* pp. xxxii-iii.)

The whole Bible was, of course, very costly, though it is difficult to put the price of it into modern money. Carrick, in his *Life of Wycliffe,* says that the cost of a Wycliffe Testament was about half the income required for a cleric, farmer or shopkeeper, which, in these days of comfort and luxury, would be equal to a thousand dollars or more. That a farmer would give a load of hay for a portion containing a few favourite chapters is one of the current traditions that show how eagerly the book was sought after and how the copies that the poor preachers carried and circulated must have been received like good news from a far country. God's Word indeed was running very swiftly, and Wycliffe doubtless prayed the prayer of the great Apostle that the Word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified; may spread rapidly and be extolled (Weymouth); may speed on and triumph (Moffatt).

One other aspect of Wycliffe's Bible deserves a reference. Wycliffe's Bible was not only the first complete translation of the whole Bible into English, but all, or almost all, the subsequent versions were indebted to it and guided by it. Carrick (*Wycliffe and the Lollards*, pp. 156–8) states that if we take a broad survey of the whole subject of the succession of our English Bibles, Wycliffe's stands out as the mother of them all. It was the parent of our present Authorized Version of all the various English Bibles. And he goes even farther. Still more striking, however, than even the fact that our English Bible had its birth at Lutterworth, is the stupendous thought that through this, the Bible has been given to the world in nearly a thousand translations. Neither the Roman nor the Greek branches of the Church have ever given any people the Scripture in the vulgar tongue of that people or tribe. The spreading abroad of Bible translations into Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, Hindustani, and all the chief tongues of man has been the almost exclusive work, triumph, glory, and crown of the great Bible Societies of Britain and the United States. And thus Wycliffe's Bible becomes the parent Bible of all the Bibles of the world, and his voice has gone through all the earth, and his words unto the end of the world.

As we review this last great work of Wycliffe, we must corroborate the view that Wycliffe's English Bible was a great gift of God to his age and to his land. It began a new era. It lifted the Bible from the obscurity of centuries. It gave to the Church and the world a new conception. It sounded the death-knell of the creed of obscurantism that it was wrong for the laity to read the Bible. It opened the eyes of Englishmen, and the coming of the Bible was like the shining in upon the age of the light of the glorious Gospel of God. It was indeed God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness that shined in man's heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. (2 Cor. iv, 4–6.) Only a daring man, conscious of the leading of the Holy Ghost,

would ever have dared, in the face of an angry Church and its powerful opposition, to declare that the only way and the real way to know God was, not by masses and pilgrimages and prayer to Mary and the saints, but

> "By learning to know God through His Word in their mother tongue, in which books they may learn to know God and His law and to fulfil it in word and deed, and so to kill sin in themselves by the knowledge of the word. It is because God's word and God's law is nigh forgotten in this land virtue is forsaken and vice is taken; truth is in despite, falsehood is in worship; peace and charity are exiled, sin and malice reign. There is no peace without the keeping of God's law."

And so the prayer of the writer of the Prologue in 1382, whether Wycliffe or Purvey, may well be repeated:

> "God for His mercy make our people to have and know and keep truly Holy Writ to life and death. God graunte to us alle grace to kunne wel, and kepe wel holi writ, and suffre joiefulli sum peyne for it at the laste. Amen." Or, as one would put it to-day, "May God in His mercy make our people to have and to know and to truly guard God's Holy Word to life and death. God grant to us all grace to know well and hold and keep well Holy Writ and to joyfully suffer some pain for it at the last. Amen." (Forshall and Madden I, 60.)

And the noble tribute to Wycliffe's Bible by Tennyson in his Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham:

> Not least art thou, thou little Bethlehem
> In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born;
> Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,
> Least, for in thee the word was born again.
> Heaven-sweet Evangel, ever-living word,
> Who whilome spakest to the South in Greek
> About the soft Mediterranean shores,
> And then in Latin to the Latin crowd,
> As good need was—thou hast come to talk our isle.

Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,
Must learn to use the tongues of all the world.
Yet art thou thine own witness that thou bringest
Not peace, a sword, a fire.

The extracts that I have taken from the Old and New Testaments are mostly from the Forshall and Madden four-volumed *Wycliffe Bible*. These valuable volumes were graciously given to Wycliffe College by Provost Cosgrave of Trinity College, Toronto, in March, 1934, and will remain in the College Library as a most valued possession. For one who has never seen these originals they are a revelation. There you see for the first time that Bible that came to an astonished England and was to have an effect like that of Erasmus's New Testament a century and a half later—a spiritual earthquake. (Froude's *Erasmus*, 120.)

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST YEARS

LITTLE is known of the last two or three years of Wycliffe's life. He seems to have known that his vital forces were almost exhausted and that his end was approaching. Perhaps, who knows, for of the inner life and daily work of this great Englishman little or nothing is known—he may often have breathed the old man's prayer of Psalm lxxi, 17–18: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." Or, perchance may have breathed the sublime words of St. Paul, 2 Timothy iv, 6–8: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." But, though we know so little, we may be sure of this, he was still instant in season and out of season, and steadfast in his zeal. His pen was still busy pouring forth, as strength permitted, tracts and treatises and messages of all kinds in the cause of Truth. Still his eye was clear to see the horrors of the lives of sinful friars, the falsities of erring and deceiving priests, the hollow fraud of the Papacy and the falsities of Antichrist the Pope. If his language was severe in its unmeasured denunciations, we must remem-

ber the state of the times and the character of the Church, as well as the temper of the man. He knew that his views were true and he held them with a tenacity that could not be shaken. When we think of the tremendous power of the priesthood, their wealth and great possessions, their power and dominion over the minds of millions, only a conviction that the fictions which he assailed were the forces of Antichrist could have led him like a little David, disdained by Goliath, to fling himself against the embattled forces of Romanism in his day. He seems to have been utterly devoid of fear.

> "Why should men fear?" he said. "Let a man stand in virtue and truth and all this world overcometh him not, for if they overcome him who standeth in these, then they overcome God and His angels."

And when the clouds were gathering and the thunders of maledictions and anathemas began to roar around him, he uttered these noble words:

> "To live, and to be silent, is, with me, impossible—the guilt of such treason against the Lord of heaven is more to be dreaded than many deaths. Let the blow therefore fall. Enough I know of the men whom I oppose, of the times on which I am thrown, and of the mysterious providence which relates to our sinful race, to believe that the stroke may ere long descend. But my purpose is unalterable. I wait its coming!" (Vaughan II, p. 223.)

It has been a matter of wonder to many that Wycliffe was neither imprisoned nor martyred. By far the most outstanding opponent of Rome, and, while on all sides and in all places his followers were being banned and persecuted, Wycliffe remained untouched. In vain did archbishops and bishops, chancellors and proctors of Oxford send out their condemnations and prohibitions and measures of systematic persecution. Wycliffe remained personally unmolested. They called him Antichrist. They spared no words in condemnation of his doctrines

and principles. They knew that he was working harder than ever and doing more than ever to propagate his opinions and, with that sharp pen of his, to undermine the very foundations of the Romish teachings and to destroy the Roman fabric. Yet, in spite of all, there in the quietness of his little Lutterworth parish vicarage, he continued almost to the last day of his life his wonderful mission. There can be no doubt that his life was in danger from day to day. In fact, even in his own age it was considered so great a marvel that the story was circulated that he had been banished from England or had gone into voluntary exile. (Lechler II, 286–7.)

No! It was nothing but the gracious hand of God upon him who delivered him from the hand of the enemy and kept him safe and made him strong until the very last day of his ministry.

> "It was indeed admirable," says Fuller in his *Church History*, "that a hare so often hunted with so many packs of dogs should die at last quietly sitting in his form."

Amazing and wonderful, indeed, it was for that is, of course, the old meaning of admirable.

Though many of his followers were imprisoned and hunted down (Arnold III, 230–1) it is generally thought that he owed his immunity in part to the protection of the Duke of Lancaster. (Workman II, 297. See the curious story of Wycliffe's loyalty to John of Gaunt, pp. 303–6.) Vaughan also suggests that the Papal Schism was at that time absorbing the attention of the popes, and that the resultant disquietude in England prevented the rival factions from taking any serious action through fear of the opinion of each other. Then, too, there was that very serious matter—Wycliffe's declining health. His weakness of body may have made his adversaries feel that it was not worth venting their vengeance upon a dying man. And so he was left unscathed. So far as we know, no steps were taken by the bishops to summon

him before their tribunal or to threaten him with excommunication. The Blackfriars' synod, which had laid so rough a hand on his disciples, omitted in most marked fashion to summon the leader before it. Courtenay contented himself with branding his teaching as heresy, condemning his books, and driving him from Oxford. Nor was any effort made by his Bishop or by the Archdeacon of Leicester. The Bishop was getting old, and the Archdeacon was an old fellow named Poncellus Orsini, Bishop of Aversa, an Italian, created a Cardinal by the Pope and given the Archdeaconry of Leicester, which apparently he never visited, to whom Wycliffe refused to pay any money on account of supposed visitation. Provided he kept away from the Oxford schools Wycliffe was left alone. All official records are silent regarding his further life, nor do they even notice his death. (Workman II, 294.)

During these years also he poured out tract after tract, edited many of his sermons, both in English and Latin, and, according to Workman, published the *Summa*, which was a compendium of his teachings in general in thirteen volumes. These latter day tracts were mostly polemic. They were, as we before stated, in two languages, some of them in Latin, some of them in English. The Latin ones were intended for circulation among the clerics and scholarly, as Latin was then the universal language of the clergy. Those in English were for the ordinary people, the common people. They must have been read with avidity by everybody, for they brimmed with sarcasm and an exposure of the sins of the popes, the bishops, the priests and the friars and, in fact, nearly every doctrine and practice of the Roman Church.

He has been charged in these latter days with an increased fanaticism in his charges upon the prelates and friars, and some have thought that it was either a sign of a man defeated or of a mind distorted by disease. But Matthew in his *English Works of Wycliffe*, (Early English Text Society—XL) says:

" Paradoxical as it may seem, I venture to say that one of Wyclif's most marked characteristics is his essential moderation. Even when his language is most vehement the thought and purpose beneath it are sane and reasonable. In the outlet for his fervid indignation, if we go down to the kernel of thought, we find no wildness."

" Long before his time there had been heated sectaries who had denounced the whole system of the Church, but Wyclif was the first to submit it to a searching proof, to examine the prevalent practices and ask how it was they bent away from the ideal at which they ought to aim. In his conclusions he forestalled in many points the judgments of the more modern reformers of the sixteenth century. The note of a fanatic is that he cannot see that there is some soul of goodness in things evil." (Matthew XLI.)

This shows very clearly that Wycliffe, when angered by a mischievous doctrine or evil practice was apt to express his indignation so freely that even his positive teachings seem to be tinged with polemic harshness. He was conscious of his defect and strove and prayed against it.

Two other things must be referred to before we come to the days of his death. The first is what is commonly called the Spencer Crusade in Flanders, a crusade which was carried on by Pope Urban VI. From beginning to end it was an utterly abominable thing, revealing the most hideous features of the Papacy or the Papal Schism. Pope Urban, on whose side England was, had declared war against Clement, the Pope at Avignon, who was on the side of France, and supported by France. Urban expected England to carry on his wars and, in Bulls (more than thirty in number) dispatched to England on the subject, he sentenced every Englishman who did not side with him to be deprived of everything he possessed or to be slain with the sword, and every prelate or priest to be deprived of everything he possessed! On the other hand, everyone who enlisted in this sacred war was

to be absolved from every fault and die happy! The crusade itself, which lasted only a short time and was led by Bishop Spencer and Sir Hugh Calverly, was wantonly disgraceful in its conduct and an utter failure. (Lechler II, 275–83.)

The anger of Wycliffe knew no bounds. As he mused his heart grew hot within him, and as the fire burned, like a true Englishman he delivered his soul. He sent out a tract called *Cruciata*, in which he said the war was not a war at all but contrary to the mind of Christ; a quarrel between contending popes for worldly power and mastery; that the idea of anyone aiding the crusade obtaining remission of sins was a lie and an abomination, and the clergy who collected money for it were only enemies of the Church.

> "I know of no writing of Wiclif," said Lechler, "in which with a greater absence of all reserve, and in more incisive language, he laid bare, and did battle against the anti-christianism which lay in the great Papal Schism in general, and particularly in the stirring up of an actual war for the purpose of annihilating one of the rival Popes by force of arms and the shedding of blood. The erection of the cross by Urban VI was a persecution of true Christians, an inversion of the faith, and a proof of the ascendency of the devil's party." (Lechler II, 280–1.)

Another incident that is found in nearly all his biographers was his famous letter to Pope Urban VI, who seems, in the year 1383 or thereabouts, to have summoned him to Rome at the instigation of the friars, whose bitter animosity was probably exasperated by the disgraceful fiasco of the Flanders crusade. (Sergeant, 330.) It was written in Latin and gives in a semi-humorous and quaintly ironical form the old man's reasons for not going to Rome or appearing before the Pope. There can be no doubt that Wycliffe was summoned by the Pope to Rome, for Wycliffe appears to have written a tract on the subject about that time entitled *About*

Frivolous Citations. In it he denounced the whole subject of papal citations, saying that

> "They are not from God but from Satan; that everyone who favours them is assisting Antichrist; that this interference of the Pope in secular matters may be in accordance with canon law but not with the rules of the Gospel; that all such secular administration of the Church is diabolical; that he could not go anyway because of his paralytic stroke."

And repeating his old objection to the perils of the journey Wycliffe adds a new personal note. Referring to his stroke, he claims that he is hindered by God from obeying,

> "And so a certain feeble and lame man cited to the curia replies that he is prevented by a royal prohibition, for the King of kings has willed it effectually that he should not go,"

ending with a curious battle cry:

> "Forward then, soldiers of Christ, against the Antichrist who claims to be supreme lord of all your actions, goods and lives!"

The letter in many respects is remarkable. In fact it is almost a compendium of Wycliffe's mind and creed, an epitome of his whole life's crusade against false doctrine, heresy and schism. So we give it in full, in its original form as given in the select English works by Arnold (Vol. III, 504), altering some of the words and explaining others. We are sure that the reader will peruse it with special interest. It might indeed have been called his last word to mankind, to Rome and to the Church.

> "I have joy fully to telle to all treue (true) men the belief that I hold, and algatis (always) to the pope. For I suppose, that if my fayth (faith) be rightful and gyven (given) of God, the pope will gladly conferme (confirm) it; and if my fayth be error, the pope will wisely amende it.

"I suppose over (in addition) this, that the Gospel of Christ be part of the corps (body) of God's law. For I believe that Jesus Christ, that gave in his owne persoun this Gospel, is very God and very man, and by this it passes all other laws.

"I suppose over this, that the pope be moste oblischid (obliged) to the keeping of the Gospel among all men that lyven (live) here. For the pope is hyeste (highest) vicar that Christ hath here in earth. For morenesse (greatness) of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly morenesse, but by this,—that this vicar sues (follows) more Christ by virtuous lyvyng (living); for this teaches the Gospel.

"That this the sentence of Christ and of his Gospel I take as belief; that Christ from time that he walkid (walked) here, was most pore (poor) man of all, both in spirit and in haveing; for Christ says that he had no thing for to rest his head on. And more pore might no man be, neither bodily nor in spirit. And thus Christ put from him all manner of worldly lordship. For the gospel of John tells that when they would have made Christ king he fled and hid him from them, for he would not such worldly hynesse (highness).

"And over this I take as belief, that no man schulde (should) sue (French, *suiver*—follow) the pope, nor no seynt (saint) that now is in heaven, but in als myche (inasmuch) as he sues Christ. For James and John erred, when they coveytid (coveted) worldly hynesse; and Peter and Paul sinned also when they denied and blasphemed in Christ; but men should not sue them in this for then they went from Jesus Christ. Of this I take as hoolsome (wholesome) counsel, that the pope leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ gave him, and move spedely (speedily) all his clerks to do so. Fur thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciples, till the fende (fiend) had blinded this world. And it seems to some men, that clerks that dwell lastandly (continuously) in this error against God's law, and flees to sue (fails to follow) in this, be open heretis.

"And if I err in this sentence, I will meekly be amended,

if by the death, it be skilful (right), for that I hope were good to me. And if I might travel in my own person, I would with God's will go to the pope. But Christ has needed me to the contrary, and taught me more obeche (obedience) to God, than to man. And I suppose of our pope that he will not be Antichrist, and reverse Christ in this working, to the contrary of Christ's will. For if he summon ageyns resoun (against reason), by him or by any of his, and pursue this unskilful summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful intent excused not Peter, that not Christ cleped (called) him Sathanas (Satan); so blind intent and wicked counsel excuses not the pope here; but if he asks of true priests that they travel more than they may, he is not excused by resoun of God that nor he is Antichrist. For our belief teaches us, that our blessed God suffers us not to be tempted more than we may; how should a man ask such service? And therefore pray we to God for our pope Urban the sex (Sixth), that his old holy intent be not quenched by his enemies. And Christ that may not lie, says that the enemies of a man be especially his homely emeinth (family), and that this is soth (truth) of men and fendis (fiends)." (See Lechler II, 283-6, and the note by Kerker, Article Wicliffe in the Roman Catholic Church, Lexicon, XI, p. 935: "Wicliffe excused himself in a hypocritical epistle, in which he read the Pope a lecture in courtly phrase upon his manner of life." (150, p. 295.)

At last the end came, and suddenly. Though one writer says 1385 was his death year and another 1387, there seems to be no doubt he died upon December 31, the last day of 1384. This record is official in the records of the Diocese of Lincoln. Two or three days before, while at the Mass in his own parish church at Lutterworth, he sustained a violent stroke, and from that hour remained speechless till his death. John Horn, who was his curate at the time says:

"As Wyclif was hearing mass in his church at Lutterworth, at the time of the elevation of the host, he

> fell down, smitten by a severe paralysis, especially in the tongue, so that neither then nor afterwards could he speak."

And three days later the old warrior finished his course and passed, to use his own beautiful words, "into the fatherland," to face the Master whom he had served so valiantly and to receive his crown. There lingers a tradition—and I love to think it is true—that, as he lay speechless in the vicarage chamber, one of his beloved followers, either Purvey or Horn, read to him his own translation of John xiv, 1–4:

> "Be not youre herte afraid, ne drede it; ye bileuen in God, and bileue ye in me. In the hous of my fadir ben many dwellyngis; if ony thing elsse, Y hadde seid to you, for Y go to make redi to you a place. And if Y go, and make redi to you a place, eftsoones (again) Y come and Y schal take you to my silf, that where Y am, ye be. And whidur Y go ye witen, and ye witen the weie (ye know the way)."

Of his death and burial, nothing is actually known, and all that is written is simply the outbreaking of fancy. We can well imagine that sympathetic devotion and tender love were poured out without stint; that prayers and praises, such as attended the dying bed of John Wesley, may well have been found; and that tears were poured out without restraint when the last breath was breathed. But whether he was buried in the chancel opposite the high altar or at the west door; whether he was buried, as was the Church custom of the day, in his surplice and chasuble, and how many wax candles and torches were burnt by his beloved people and his still more beloved poor priest preachers; whether there was a funeral feast or gifts to the poor; whether he left a will and how his clothing and books and other effects were divided; all this and a hundred other things can only be written by the pen of fancy or imagination.

But surely we would be justified in saying that no one

so great and good as he could have passed from this earth without the lamentations, not only of his people, but of that greater circle of admirers and followers who had, through his words and writings, been called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel. If one writer in the violence of his Roman Catholic fanaticism said:

> "On the Feast of the Passion of St. Thomas of Canterbury, John Wiclif—that organ of the devil, that enemy of the Church, that author of confusion to the common people, that idol of heretics, that image of hypocrites, that restorer of schism, that storehouse of lies, that sink of flattery—being struck by the horrible judgment of God, was struck with palsy, and continued to live in that condition until St. Sylvester's Day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness,"

on the other hand, John Purvey, in a fit of righteous anger, said:

> "By what boldness dare any blind prelate full much conform to the world deem blasphemous that such a man is the son of hell and damned without end. Therefore cease the blasphemous deeming of simonient prelates and uncunning in God's law to condemn a sovereign doctor whose books they cannot understand, nor read with worship without great stumbling and default."

And if tongues could have been given, thousands doubtless would have risen up to call him blessed. He needs no eulogy. "We crave not a memorial stone for those who fell at Marathon, their fame with every breeze is blent, the mountains are their monument, and the low plaining of the sea their everlasting threnody."

The thing that we call British liberty, the underlying and unquenchable spirit of Protestantism that pervades the English nation, the invincible passion for the rights of the common people and the ever-clamant pleadings of the poor and the needy, the down-trodden

and the unavenged; in one word, the passion for social righteousness, the purity of Evangelical religion, and the destruction of the age-long tyranny of the Pope and the downfall of his authority in England, with the overturning of priestism, superstition and the malignant falsities of mediævalism—these are his everlasting monuments. John Wycliffe could have truly said:

> "Exegi monumentum aere perennius, regalique situ pyramidum altius, non omnis moriar: usque ego postera crescam laude recens." (Horace, Lib. iii, Carmen, xxx.)

But if there were no monument erected to him, and priests and prelates denounced him with incredible invective, if his writings were burned and his bones exhumed; four and a half centuries later a monument was erected to his memory in Lutterworth Church, in 1833. And there it stands to-day with an inscription that is a tardy commemoration of his greatness:

> "Sacred to the memory of John Wiclif, the earliest champion of ecclesiastical reformation in England. He was born in Yorkshire about the year 1324. In the year 1375 he was presented to the rectory of Lutterworth: where he died on the 31st of December 1384. At Oxford he acquired not only the renown of a consummate schoolman, but the far more glorious title of the evangelic doctor. His whole life was one perpetual struggle against the corruptions and encroachments of the papal court, and the impostures of its devoted auxiliaries, the mendicant fraternities. His labours in the cause of scriptural truth were crowned by one immortal achievement, his translation of the Bible into the English tongue. This mighty work drew on him, indeed, the bitter hatred of all who were making merchandise of the popular credulity and ignorance, but he found an abundant reward in the blessings of his countrymen of every rank and age, to whom he unfolded the words of eternal life. His mortal remains were interred near

this spot; but they were not allowed to rest in peace. After the lapse of many years, his bones were dragged from the grave, and consigned to the flames; and his ashes were cast into the waters of the adjoining stream." (Carrick, 197–8.)

Sixty-four years later a majestic obelisk was reared in the town near the church, bearing the noble words:

"John Wycliffe, born 1324, died 1384. Rector of Lutterworth from 1374 to 1384. The morning star of the reformers, the first translator of the Bible into the English language. 'Search the Scriptures.' 'The entrance of thy word giveth light.' 'Be followers of them who thro' faith and patience inherit the promises.' 'Be thou faithful unto death.'" (Carrick, 198.)

But, as someone has finely said, these and all other monuments are not such truly redolent or expressive memorials as the rapid little stream below the church, the River Swift. Into this, after the decree of the Council of Constance, 1415, which condemned Wycliffe on two hundred and sixty different counts, his ashes were cast to the condemnation and destruction of his memory. So in the famous words of Fuller:

"This Brook hath conveyed his Ashes into Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow Seas; they into the main Ocean. And thus the Ashes of Wicliff are the Emblem of his Doctrine, which now is dispersed all the World over." (Fuller, *Church History*, II, 424.)

CHAPTER X

WYCLIFFE'S RESURGENT FAME

IT is only of recent years that the magnitude of Wycliffe's personality and the epochal importance of his labours have been intelligently appreciated. One of the singular phenomena of our age has been the resurgence of interest in Wycliffe as one of the greatest of his age and of the ages succeeding him in the Church. For centuries the greatness of Wycliffe's character and work was far more appreciated on the Continent than in England and his name and fame shone far more brightly in other lands than in his own. As it was said of his Master, a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house. (Matthew xiii, 57.) To one of the greatest of Englishmen, if not the greatest, his country, said Professor Shirley, has been singularly and painfully ungrateful. Perhaps no great figure in English history was so little remembered and so little honoured for centuries after his death. And Professor Burrows himself admits that it was in the year 1879 he realized it was high time that an effort should be made to restore this extraordinary man to his true position, and that the reason for the submergence of Wycliffe's fame was the resolute and persistent effort of the Church of Rome to brand his memory with a stigma and to destroy every vestige of his writings. And they were, alas, only too successful, for the name and fame of Wycliffe, if not wholly suppressed and overwhelmed, were at least buried in an oblivion of neglect. Nearly five centuries elapsed before England came to understand the magnitude of the personality and influence of her greatest son. John Foxe,

in his *Book of Martyrs*, gave him no small tribute of honour, and the Puritans also, but not to any extent. And curiously enough, neither the appreciation of the reformers nor the sympathy of the Puritans seems to have put Wycliffe into any place of prominence in the Church history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the Stuart régime the name of Wycliffe was almost as much misjudged and maligned by the Caroline divines, the Anglo-Catholics of the day, as it was by the Roman Catholics. (Burrows, 25–33; Workman I, 113.)

But in the early part of the eighteenth century a tardy tribute to Wycliffe was made in 1720 by the Rev. John Lewis, the value of whose *Life of Wycliffe*, says Workman, cannot be exaggerated. A hundred years passed, and then Dr. Robert Vaughan published two very valuable works on Wycliffe, to be followed by Professor Shirley in 1853. Ten years later Professor Lechler of the University of Leipsic happened, while he was studying in Cambridge in 1840, to come across a notice of Wycliffe in a somewhat obscure work, which led him to undertake his great literary campaign for Wycliffe and his work in order that he might freshen up again in true and vivid colours for the eyes of the present generation that great historical figure in pre-Reformation Churchmanship. He was perhaps the ablest of all the writers on Wycliffe, for never before, as Dr. Lorimer said, had the whole teaching of the reformer—philosophical, theological, ethical and ecclesiastical—been so copiously and accurately set forth; and never before had so large a mass of classified quotations from all his chief scientific writings been placed under the eyes of scholars. And then Mr. Matthew published *The English Works of Wycliffe*, to be followed by Arnold, *The Select English Works of Wycliffe*, in three volumes, and numberless writers who took up the torch and waved it so clearly and widely that if Professor Burrows were alive to-day his heart would glow with gladness at the thought that the man who had been described as the first of a long

line of kings had at last been given his well-deserved coronation, and that, after five hundred years had passed away, his own University, the University of Oxford, should have carried out a noble design in publishing in full the *Select Works of Wycliffe in English and Latin*, through the Oxford University Press.

But even to-day it is amazing to find how the venom of malignity still lingers. One fears that the average Roman Catholic opinion, though Lingard and Lord Bute and other liberal-minded Romanists are fine exceptions, might be exemplified in Father Stevenson's *Truth about John Wycliffe*. According to this Jesuit Father,

> "There was little intellectually to admire about Wycliffe. His writings simply embodied blasphemies, heresies, errors and absurdities; morally he does not command our respect and his life must have been a daily lie; the religious system which he succeeded in introducing among his countrymen was a collection of errors and heresies gleaned by him from that stock of falsehood of which believers had been warned by our Lord from the beginning." (Carrick, 191–6.)

But one is more astonished to find in the writings of some modern scholars equally venomous misrepresentations. It seems hardly possible, for instance, that a modern scholar, a Dean of the Church of England, such as Dr. Hutton, the Dean of Winchester, could write such words as these in *The Future of the Church of England* (Longmans, p. 6):

> "The crabbed scholasticism of Wycliffe's theology was perhaps the most unedifying and ineffective that the whole of the Middle Ages produced. Surely no one who has spent serious hours in the study of them can fail to see how utterly flat, stale and unprofitable, for the most part, they are. His theology seems to me to be essentially illiberal and perverse, and his followers, of course with notable exceptions, to have been not reformers before the Reformation, but in some cases Communists before the age of political

Communism, and in others lunatics before the age of asylums."

Talk of obscurantist Romanists! What shall we say of a modern Anglican who can write such words as these! Or still worse. What shall we say of such monstrous or incredible words as these of a university man, F. J. C. Hearnshaw, M.A., LL.D., Professor of Mediæval history in the University of London.

"Wycliffe seems to have had no religious experience. He seems to have had no sense of sin; no heart of love; no evident communion with God. He was an academic theologian, a scholastic philosopher, a thinker whose interest in his theme was purely moral and intellectual. He made no emotional appeal; he roused no spiritual response in the souls of those to whom his dry syllogisms were addressed. He was, indeed, a rationalist, born before his due season. His affinities were with the eighteenth century, and in the eighteenth century not with John Wesley but with David Hume. If he had lived in the nineteenth century he would have been the head, not of the Evangelical Alliance, but of the Rationalist Press. His definition of revelation would have satisfied the French Encyclopædists: revelation was to him merely a higher power of reason—*lumen supernaturale est forma perfectiva luminis naturalis.* The motive force behind the enormous activities of his closing decade was antagonism to Rome. He was anti-papal, anti-clerical, anti-monastic, anti-sacramental, all but anti-Christian. He was merely negative and destructive. His Bible was but a weapon of offence; his pamphlets were violent polemics; his Poor Priests were not evangelists but revolutionary agitators." (Hearnshaw's *Social and Political Ideas of the Middle Ages*, 222.)

As we read such words as these and think in this world even of the posthumous honour that comes in after centuries to men who have been ignored or trampled down, we feel like repeating the words of the poet: "Speak, history! Who are life's victors? Unroll thy

long annals and say—Are they those whom the world calls the victors, who won the success of a day? The martyrs or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermonylae's tryst, or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges, or Jesus? Pilate or Christ?"

In endeavouring to show in a more detailed manner the effect of the life and teaching upon the subsequent history of England, Europe and the Church of England, we would re-echo what Workman has said, that

> "One difficulty in any life of Wyclif is to know at what point to conclude. To end with Wyclif's death were absurd. No biographer has attempted it." (Workman, Preface, ix.)

It was really after his death that his life work began and, like the waters that issued out in Ezekiel's vision, bringing life and healing as they widely flowed, so the effects of his efforts and teaching moulded the thoughts and theories and character and career of England and the Church of England. Looking back from the vantage-point of this latest date in modern history, we are able to appraise with a truer valuation the effect upon men and Churches and countries of what he dared and did, and of the forces that he left working after his death in their dynamic and wide-embracing energy. But before we speak of his relation to Hus and the Bohemian and German reformation and the Lollards and his place as the precursor of the reformation of the Church of England, we think that first a word should be spoken with regard to the posthumous influence of Wycliffe's life and work as the precursor of British liberty and British freedom.

We think that this deserves a more important place than has generally been given to it by Wycliffe's biographers. If, as Edmund Burke in 1775, in his famous speech on conciliation with America, said that

> "A love of freedom and this fierce spirit of liberty is stronger in the English probably than in any other people of the earth; if England is ever the sanctuary

> of liberty, a sacred temple consecrated to our common faith; slavery they can have everywhere; it is a weed that grows in every soil, but freedom they can have from none but England—this is the commodity of price, of which England has the monopoly,"

it was largely because there was sown in the hearts and in the minds of the people of England four hundred years before those ideas and principles which have become the very life blood of our land by one man—and that one man John Wycliffe. It was not mainly Edward the Third. It was not Provisors and Præmunire with their defiance of papal interference. It was not Crecy and Poitiers, awakening in English breasts the pride of English nationalism. It was something deeper, grander far. It was the spirit of Wycliffe who had learned the meaning of those glorious words: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii, 32, 36), the words of his Master, and of His great Apostle: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v, 1.)

The highest liberty is spiritual liberty. It is a higher liberty than even British liberty. And if to-day this passion for personal religious and spiritual liberty is the peculiar characteristic of the Englishman and of the British Empire, it is in large measure owing to one man, and that one man an English Churchman, John Wycliffe. But as far as the word is used in its political sense, it may be truly said that the man who first gave Englishmen a feeling of national self-confidence in themselves and their rights was John Wycliffe, and if a people, in many respects rude and illiterate and esteemed of small account in the proud mind of France and Italy and Spain, had suddenly come to the front, it was in no small measure owing to the dissemination of the daring and bold ideas of the man in whom the national consciousness found not only a champion but an incarnation.

In our day it is almost impossible to realize the unchallenged empire of the Papacy, not only in its power and its splendour, but as a prodigious international and all-embracing force. It was a Papal kingdom of heaven on earth. Pope Innocent the Third claimed that the Lord committed not the Church universal only, but the whole world to Peter's rule. His was the extraordinary thesis that Pope to King is as sun to moon, and as the sun sways his planets the Pope is to control the kings of earth. It was surely a fulfilment, in part at any rate, of St. Paul's prophetic word in 2 Thessalonians ii, 4, of the man of sin in the apostasy who was to exalt himself above everything and sit as God in the temple of God. To doubt his authority was outrageous audacity. His prestige was based on authority divine, and disloyalty to the Pope was disloyalty to God. The Pope was the one Single Head, the one Sole Referee, the one Final Court of Appeal. It was the tremendous strength of its traditional force and the idea of the awful force which it was believed to control that was the strength of the Roman Church in mediævalism. It was a thing daring and bold beyond our conception for the greatest defiance of this mighty power to spring from a little and insignifican country like England and for one man and that one man an Englishman, John Wycliffe, to face this long-entrenched sacerdotal autocracy with dauntless defiance. It was his attitude of defiance that breathed into England his own glorious spirit of liberty and defiance of tryanny and imparted to his nation something of his own noble spirit. It needed supreme courage to decry and defy a power with such terrific authority, and it was Wycliffe and Wycliffe's work that shook the foundations of the Papal supremacy and led to the crash of the age-long tyranny of the Pope in England. As Sergeant very significantly says:

> "It is not possible to describe the magnitude, importance, and permanence of Wycliffe's achievement. He had not only embodied and vocalized the aspirations

for reform which he found at Oxford in his early days: he had infused into the movement so much of new energy and virility that the Reformation in England was virtually effected at the moment of his death, and there was nothing to come but the outward and political manifestations of its completeness. It was not Cranmer, nor Cromwell, nor Henry the Eighth and his two Protestant children (Edward VI and Elizabeth), who banished papal authority from the Anglican Church. They were the accidents, or at most the instruments of a victory already accomplished. For the true moment of victory, and for the effective Reformer, we must look back to the fourteenth century, that is, to John Wycliffe." (Sergeant, *John Wyclif*, 343–4.)

Wylie, the very able historian of Protestantism, put his hand upon the very pulse of the whole matter when he said:

"It was under Wycliffe that English liberty had its beginning. It is not the political constitution which has come out of the Magna Charta of King John and the barons, but the moral constitution which came out of the Divine Magna Charta, that Wycliffe gave her in the fourteenth century, which has been the sheet-anchor of England. The English Bible wrote, not merely upon the pages of the statute book, but upon the hearts of the people of England, the two great commandments: Fear God; honour the king. These two sum up the whole duty of nations, and on these two hang the prosperity of States. There is no mysterious or latent virtue in our political constitution which, as some seem to think, like a genius protects us, and with invisible hand guides past our shores the tempests that cover other countries with the memorials of their devastating fury. The real secret of England's greatness is her permeation, at the very dawn of her history, with the principles of order and liberty by means of the English Bible, and the capacity for freedom thereby created. This has permitted the development, by

equal stages, of our love for freedom and our submission to law; of our political constitution and our national genius; of our power and our self-control—the two sets of qualities fitting into one another, and growing into a well-compacted fabric of political and moral power unexampled on earth. If nowhere else is seen a similar structure, so stable and so lofty, it is because nowhere else has a similar basis been found for it. It was Wycliffe who laid that basis." (Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, i, 125.)

Or, as Trevelyan, from a somewhat different angle, has put it in the summarizing words of his work on *England and the Age of Wycliffe* (350):

"In England we have slowly but surely won the right of the individual to form and express a private judgment on speculative questions. During the last three centuries the battle of liberty has been fought against the State or against public opinion. But before the changes effected by Henry the Eighth, the struggle was against a power more impervious to reason and less subject to change—the power of the Mediæval Church in all the prestige of a thousand years' prescriptive right over man's mind. The martyrs who bore the first brunt of that terrific combat may be lightly esteemed to-day by priestly censure. But those who still believe that liberty of thought has proved not a curse but a blessing to England and to the peoples that have sprung from her, will regard with thankfulness and pride the work which the speculations of Wycliffe set on foot and the valour of his devoted successors accomplished."

CHAPTER XI

WYCLIFFE'S INFLUENCE UPON SCOTLAND AND THE CONTINENTAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

TREVELYAN, in his *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, said that he felt no call to enter into the second half of Wycliffe's work—his influence on continental affairs. But, he added, even from the point of English history, this was an omission, for his doctrines were adopted by Hussites of Bohemia. The Hussites, to a greater or less extent, affected Lutheranism, and Lutheranism reacted on England. Workman (I, 8) tell us of a man who had seen in a Bohemian psalter of 1572 a symbolical picture representing Wycliffe striking the spark, Huss kindling the coals, and Luther brandishing the lighted torch.

To some extent this truly represents the case. But the Bohemian might have gone farther. If he had gone more deeply into the matter, as we shall presently show, he might have depicted Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer waving Wycliffe's torch of English Church reformation. He might have shown how the influence of Wycliffe extended to a country that, in that time, in institutions and society, differed from England almost as much as from Bohemia, although so allied in race and character to the English—that is Scotland. For the path between Wycliffe and Knox and the teaching of Wycliffe and the Church of Scotland can be traced like an open road. John Knox was spiritually the son of George Wishart of Montrose, a Biblical scholar and one of the Bilney Cambridge Band. "Knox, who was the champion and leader of the reform movement in Scotland, was the

child of Wishart and carried forth the movements for civil and religious liberty to triumphant success." (Carrick, *Wicliff and the Lollards*, p. 281.) Now Wishart was the son of that Bible which was brought by Wycliffe's Scotch disciples into the north country. Another thing, too. Wycliffe was the Master of Balliol College, 1358–61 (Workman, pp. 77–9), founded by John Balliol, who was the father of the King of Scotland. During Wycliffe's mastership many Scottish young men of promise were attracted to Oxford and came within the reach of his influence, and the mesmeric spell of his personality seems to have operated upon them, as upon all his followers. They returned to Scotland Wycliffite enthusiasts and promulgated his teachings with incredible rapidity. Records remain to this day of statutes and laws put in operation to annihilate the arising Wycliffe heresy.

And yet again. Early in the fifteenth century, when the fires began to burn for the English Lollards, many of them crossed the border into Scotland with the writings of Wycliffe. One of them was called John or James Reseby, a most celebrated preacher who was burned as a martyr. Some of them rode up and down through the land preaching in the mother tongue Wycliffe's gospel. So wide was their influence and so many infected by the Lollard heresy that even Gerson, at the Council of Constance, said that those men who claim Scripture and Scripture only for their authority are not only in England but they have destroyed the University of Prague and have even reached Scotland. It was by these men and men like them who were faithful even unto death that the torch of Truth was handed on to the Scottish reformers. Thus, as Workman concludes, in Scotland, as well as in England and Bohemia, Wycliffe's life work was linked on with the larger reformation, of which he was in popular opinion the morning star. For Wycliffe's revolt was not the isolated movement without lasting effect which some historians have represented it to be. (Workman I, 10–12.)

But with regard to Wycliffe and the reformation in Bohemia, there can be no doubt that the works of the great Bohemian reformer, John Huss, were really the works of John Wycliffe, the Englishman. The link between England and Bohemia was primarily a marriage. The wife of Richard II was the Princess Anne of Bohemia, who, during her twelve years as Queen of England, seems to have been a most enthusiastic champion of John Wycliffe. She not only brought England and Bohemia into close association but also induced a number of the Prague University students to come over to Oxford. One of these, Jerome of Prague, took back with him to Bohemia Wycliffe's tracts and Wycliffe's Bible, and a painting of Wycliffe as the prince of philosophers. Jerome was an enthusiastic Wycliffite. He used to say that students who did not study the works of Wycliffe would never find the true root of knowledge. (Workman I, 17–18.) It was Jerome who introduced the works of Wycliffe to John Huss, or John of Husinec, the famous Churchman of Prague, Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, and Rector of its University. It is said—a curious thing it is if it is true—that Huss at first so abhorred Wycliffe's writings that he advised a student who possessed them to go and fling them into the river. But gradually truth triumphed over the prejudice of ignorance. Huss, too, became an enthusiastic Wycliffite, and his intrepid advocacy of the Protestant doctrines overspread the land and inaugurated a national reformation. Presently the ecclesiastical world was convulsed by the storm he raised and the great Council of Constance convened in 1414–15, one of the greatest of the mediæval world, with thirty Cardinals, twenty Archbishops, one hundred and fifty Bishops, eighteen hundred Priests, and a vast multitude of Abbots and Doctors.

In the Council of Constance there were three outstanding names: the Pope, John XXIII, as great a scoundrel as ever sat upon the Papal throne, proved guilty of all the mortal sins and a multitude of others

not fit to be named (Wylie, 146–51); Huss, the Bohemian reformer, with the safe conduct of Emperor Sigismund in his pocket, pledging the honour and power of the Austrian Empire for his safety; and John Wycliffe, the Englishman. And the salient subject of that magnificent Council of Constance, with its babel of voices, was the doctrine and the teaching and the works of the man who died in quiet Lutterworth. They condemned his writings on two hundred and sixty different counts. They commanded them to be burned, and then they ordered his body to be exhumed and his ashes to be scattered to the damnation and destruction of his memory upon the waters of the River Swift. Which thing was done by an apostate Lollard, Bishop Fleming, in the spring of 1428, by the decree of the Pope, Martin V. (Workman II, 320.)

Huss was not, by any means, as strong a man as Wycliffe. His views on the sacraments were not nearly as well defined as those of Wycliffe. Generally speaking, he was a star of the second magnitude and revolved around Wycliffe as a planet around the sun. His writings, which have made him a national hero in Austria, have been proved, by later researches, to be far from original. He was perhaps the most innocent plagiarist that ever acquired fame in the literary world. To us, in this critical age, it seems almost impossible that any man should have taken passage after passage, page after page of another man's compositions and allowed them to be published as his own writing. Huss must have had the innocence of a child. Professor Loserth, Professor of History in the Czernowitz University, Austria, in his most valuable work, *Wycliffe and Hus*, has shown that the writings of Huss were almost wholly a translation of the writings of Wycliffe, which he copied with much *naïveté* and verbal fidelity (pp. 182, 190, 194, 280). For instance, the most important of the writings of Huss of the Church, which was issued in Prague in 1414, his Doctrine concerning the Church, was simply taken word for word from Wycliffe's *de Ecclesia*. His writings, too, against the Papal

indulgences, are simply Wycliffe verbatim, and his well-known sermon De Pace (On Peace) is by far the greater part of it, word for word, Wycliffe's sermon. The prayer of the indignant Czech ecclesiastic, who was condemned to copy Wycliffe's Christ and Antichrist: "Oh, good God, don't let this man come into our beloved Bohemia," was not answered. For Wycliffe, in the power of his reforming convictions and writings, did enter Bohemia, and so permeated Bohemia and far beyond with his writings that Huss and Jerome of Prague became as full-fledged Wycliffites, the heralds of that movement which afterwards was to come forth in full flower, a century later, in the Reformation. (Workman I, 8.)

Carrick, in his work on Wycliffe, goes farther. He not only claims Wycliffe as the herald of ecclesiastical reform in Austria, but in the reforming movements of the Church in Spain and Italy. He traces in the mystics of Germany, Eckhart, Tauler, Gerson, those reforming movements within the Church which, in essence, were Wycliffism, and so leavened widespread areas of Church thought with their principles and ideas that the continental nations were prepared for a great spiritual awakening.

DID WYCLIFFE INFLUENCE LUTHER?

With regard to the oft-disputed question of Wycliffe's influence upon Martin Luther, it is well known that the Germans, through partiality to their great national reformer, have vehemently repudiated it. As in Austria the general tendency was to hide Wycliffe and exalt Huss, the tendency in Germany has been to glorify Luther and to put Wycliffe out of sight altogether. As a matter of fact, however, there is scarcely an idea or an argument used by Luther that was not anticipated in the mouth and pen of Wycliffe. Germany, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was honeycombed with Hussite societies. It is said that there is in Vienna one of Wycliffe's manuscripts with the name Doctor Martinus

Luter plainly inscribed upon it. Leland, who wrote about 1530, says that he saw in Germany quite a number of Wycliffe's writings in circulation. In fact, we may well summarize the marvellous extraneous influence of our great reformer by the words of Milton in his brilliant prose work, the *Areopagitica* :

> " Lords and Commons, of England," he cried in a burst of perfervid English nationalism, " consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors. A nation not slow and dull, but of a quick ingenious and piercing spirit ; acute to invent, subtile and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. Therefore, writers of good antiquity and able judgment have been persuaded that even the school of Pythagorus and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old philosophy of this Island, yet that was above all this the favour and love of heaven. Why else was this nation chosen before any other that out of her as out of Sion should be proclaimed and sounded forth *the first tidings* and *trumpet* of *reformation of all Europe.* And had it not been for the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wycliffe to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Hus and Jerome—no, *nor the names of Luther and Calvin*—had ever been known, the glory of reforming all our neighbours had been completely ours. But now, as our obdurate clergy have with violence demeaned the matter we are become hitherto the latest and backwardest scholars of whom God offered to have made us the teachers."

CHAPTER XII

WYCLIFFE AND THE PRESENT TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE question of the effect of the career and teaching of John Wycliffe upon the present-day teaching of the Church of England is a very large one; for it opens up the very important question of the relation of Wycliffe to the Reformation movement. As far as detail is concerned, it is certain that some of the sociological and sacramental views of Wycliffe, especially in the early part of his career, can in no measure be claimed to compile a system of dogmatic theology, or to formulate a series of doctrinal articles. It was not an age of the formulation of theological articles as was the early part of the sixteenth century. That time had not yet come. Nor must we think of finding in Wycliffe's writings a finished system of doctrine as in the Thirty-nine Articles or in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. But with regard to the main principles assumed by Wycliffe, it is certain that his cardinal doctrinal positions are the cardinal and distinctive principles of the reformed Churches and of the Church of England to-day. As Sergeant says:

> "Wycliffe infused into the world of religion so much new energy and virility that the Reformation in England was virtually effected before his death and nothing was necessary for its completeness but the outward and political manifestations."

Wycliffism was Church of England Protestantism in all its essential features. It was that Anglican Protestantism which won for England the open Bible and the

Prayer Book, which overthrew the monasteries and displaced the Roman priesthood and the Roman Mass. And when the Reformation came at last, a century and a half later, it was the day which Wycliffe so brilliantly heralded. (Burrows, 135.)

For, first and foremost of all, Wycliffe maintained, as the corner-stone of his doctrinal position, the supremacy of the authority of the Holy Scriptures. With him the infallible test of all doctrines was the Word of God. Nothing that anyone could teach, nothing that anyone could do, could be of equal authority with Holy Scripture. To this touchstone all human writings, human opinions, and human traditions, were to be unhesitatingly brought. The authority of Scripture infinitely surpasses the authority of any writings whatever, whether they be decrees of the popes, teachings of the fathers, or decisions of the councils.

It is difficult to say how early in his career Wycliffe came to this position. Lechler thinks that it was certainly as early as 1378. But little by little he became grounded upon it as upon a rock, and from that time the Bible as God's Law was the unconditional and absolutely binding authority. He ascribes to Holy Scripture, and to it alone, the precise idea of unlimited authority and recognizes the Scriptures as the all-sufficing source of Christian knowledge, the standard for everything else. In his great work *On the Truth of Scripture,* he said he laid down as the first and strongest plank of his theological position this proposition:

> "It is impossible that any word or any deed of the Christian could be of equal authority with the Scripture."

For Holy Scripture is the will of God which He willed to remain in the world, God's Book, God's Law, or, as the Church of England now describes it, God's Word Written, Holy Writ, the Word of God. (Articles XX, XXII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVIII, XXXIV.) (By the

way, it may be interesting to our readers to know that in the Canadian Prayer Book the third question to the deacons in their ordination is: "Do you believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God?" a question which is a splendid summary of the whole Bible as the authoritative revelation of the Most High.) He taught not only its infallibility but its perfect and entire sufficiency with evident thought in his mind of the great Magna Charta as the charter of the civil liberties of England. The Bible to Wycliffe was its fundamental law (*Carta a Deo scripta et nobis donata*), above all human traditions. For a pope to claim that what he decrees in matters of faith must be received as if it were the Gospel itself was, to his mind, blasphemy.

> "The law of God, and of reason, we should follow more than that of our popes and cardinals; so much so, that if we had a hundred popes, and if all the friars were cardinals, to the law of the gospel we should bow, more than to all this multitude." (Vaughan, 313.)

It was an audacious and extraordinary position for any man to take in that day; for, of course, it was in the Middle Ages an axiom almost that the decrees of popes were to be received because they were the decrees of popes and, as to the authority of the Bible, it was only on a par with the authority of Tradition. Tradition and Scripture were jumbled together as if they were of equal value and alike authorities. He came also to the almost revolutionary conclusion that Christ's men who were not in holy orders had the right to study and interpret and understand the Bible, and, just as Christ opened to the Apostles the meaning of Scripture, so the Holy Ghost teaches us the sense and meaning of the Bible. (Lechler II, 17–37.)

> "Forasmuch as the Bible contains Christ, that is, all that is necessary for salvation, it is necessary for all men, not for priests alone. It alone is the supreme

law that is to rule Church, State, and Christian life, without human traditions and statutes."

It was indeed a novel doctrine and must have greatly astonished the ecclesiastics of the day.

Now it is evident that what Wycliffe promulgated as his private opinion and his views is now the authorized faith of the Church of England, as set forth in the sixth of the Thirty-nine Articles:

> "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."
>
> "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written. . . . Although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet it ought not to decree any thing against the same."
>
> "The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Worshipping of Images, Invocation of Saints . . . is repugnant to the Word of God."
>
> "Using a tongue not understanded of the people is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God." (Articles VI, XX, XXII, XXIV.)

We say then without hesitation that Wycliffe's doctrine with regard to the canon of Scripture and the authority of Scripture is the doctrine of the Church of England and that the teaching of Cranmer and Ridley was simply, almost line for line and word for word, what John Wycliffe himself, the master builder, had laid down.

In the next place, it can be stated most emphatically that, as the result of his continuous and prayerful study of the Bible, he was led to exalt Christ as our Mediator, Redeemer and personal Saviour. As Lechler says (II, 68–9), the Christology of Wycliffe has one remarkable distinctive feature. Always and everywhere it lays the utmost possible emphasis upon the incomparable grandeur of Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and

man. Against the piebald variety of saint worships, Church authorities, foundations and institutions in which men sought salvation, we find ourselves in presence of a knowledge, a feeling and an action truly reformational. The dogmatic principle of his whole theological system was Christ as the only Mediator, the only Saviour. Listen to Wycliffe's voice :

> " Trust wholly in Christ ; Rely altogether on His sufferings ; Beware of seeking to be justified in any other way than by His righteousness. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation. There must be atonement made for sin, according to the righteousness of God. The Person to make this atonement must be God and man."

And this was not only a matter of dogmatic theology. It was his own personal consciousness of the fact that Christ's death was *for him.* Christ's reconciliation was accomplished *for him.* He felt that Christ was saying every day to every heart : I suffered this for thee. What dost thou suffer for me ?—the very words that led, centuries later, to the conversion of Count Zinzendorf and the subsequent founding or refounding of the Moravian Church. In fact, Wycliffe's whole idea of the soul's acceptance with God was the absolute antithesis of the mediæval system. Of course, you will remember that in those days the idea of man's acceptance with God centred in and around the power of the priesthood.

> " It was the universal conception of mediæval piety that the mediation of a priest was essential to salvation. Mediæval Christians believed with more or less distinctness that the supernatural life of the soul was created, nourished, and perfected through the Sacraments, and that the priests administering them possessed, in virtue of their ordination, miraculous powers. . . . It was this universally accepted power of a mediatorial priesthood which had enslaved Europe. . . . Everywhere the priesthood barred, or was

supposed to bar, the way to God." (Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, I, 438–48.)

Or, as Bishop Browne summarized it :

> " It was the general belief that man could merit God's favour by good deeds of his own, and that works of mercy, charity, and self-denial, procured (through the intercession of Christ or perhaps of the Virgin Mary) pardon for sin and acceptance with God." (Browne on the Articles, p. 282.)

But Wycliffe realized and set forth the great idea, afterwards expressed in more logical order and dogmatic form by the Reformation theologians in the Articles of the Reformed Churches, that a man is justified by faith alone, and it is the faith-look to Christ that saves.

> " For as a right looking on the adder of brass saved the people from the venom of serpents, so a right looking by full belief on Christ saveth His people. It follows, therefore, that Christ died not for His own sins as thieves die for theirs, but as our Brother who Himself might not sin but died for the sins that others had done. The righteousness of God, therefore, and His grace and the salvation of men, all thus moved Christ to die."

Surely the man who could write such words as these had grasped the glorious truth that " there is life in a look at the Crucified One," and that it was vain to think that through the channel of ecclesiastical confession and saint intercession and the sacraments of penance and works of supererogation, vigilance, pardon, fasts and pilgrimages the soul could be made worthy of and fit for the favour of God, and build up by merits and work-righteousness a superstructure high enough to qualify it for salvation.

We are quite willing to grant that Wycliffe did not hold with Luther's clearness the doctrine of Justification by faith. Nor did he express it in any dogmatic formula. But we agree with Wylie absolutely that both Melancthon

and Dorner were inexcusably mistaken when they say that Wycliffe was ignorant of the righteousness of faith and did not know the free grace of God (*History of Protestantism*, 128), and Lechler also who makes the same mistake. But Le Bas is equally positive, and, in disposing of the censure of Melancthon and some other Protestant divines that Wycliffe's theology was tinctured with Pelagianism and contains no recognition whatever of the grand doctrine of justification by faith, says:

> "The doctrine of justification by faith was in truth the vital principle of Wycliffe's theology. The merit of Christ is sufficient to redeem mankind; faith in Him is sufficient for salvation: they who truly follow Christ are justified by His justice, and made righteous by participation in His righteousness. That he rejected all Pharisaic and Pelagian confidence in human merit is clear and undeniable. 'Heal us, Lord,' he exclaims, 'for nought; not for our merits, but for Thy mercy. Lord not to our merits but to Thy mercy give the joy.'" (*Life of Wycliffe*, Le Bas, 320–2.)

Vaughan also says:

> "It is plain that Melancthon could have known little of Wycliffe's theological productions, when describing him as 'ignorant of the righteousness of faith.' If by that doctrine he meant a reliance on the atonement of Christ as the only and the certain medium of acceptance for the guilty, it is unquestionable that this truth was the favourite, and the most efficient article in the faith of the English, as well as in that of the German reformer. It was not more distinctly apprehended by the Professor of Wittenburg, than by the rector of Lutterworth; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent or delightful confidence with Luther than with Wycliffe."

Wycliffe got hold of the fact rather than the dogma of justification by faith. He grasped the reality of salvation by the merit and righteousness of grace alone. He

both experienced and taught the doctrine of God's grace and of man's justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ. And this Lechler, too, admits, though apparently grudgingly and of necessity. (Lechler II, 79–88.)

But what is more to our point, the teaching of Wycliffe is practically identical with what is now the distinctive teaching of the Articles of the Church of England.

"Men become righteous through the participation of Christ's righteousness. We are justified by His justice (that is, righteousness) and made righteous by a participation in His righteousness," said Wycliffe.

"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," is the distinctive teaching of the Church of England. (Article XI.)

"Seek not to be justified in any other way than by His righteousness," said Wycliffe. "It is altogether a vain imagination that man can of his moral behaviour induce God to give him the grace of the Holy Spirit needful for conversion. It is not good for us to trust in our merits, in our virtues, in our righteousness."

"Marvellous is it that any sinful being dare grant anything to another on the merit of the saints, for without the grace and the power of Christ's passion all that any saint ever did may not bring a soul to heaven."

"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our works or deservings," is the teaching of the Church. (Article XI. Of the Justification of Man.)

"We cannot perform a good work unless it be properly His good work. I do not see how any sin whatever can be done away by means of merit or works that deserved grace of congruity, since infinite grace is required (*gratia infinita specialis*) for the satisfaction for sin," said Wycliffe.

"We have no power to do good works pleasant and

acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will," is the teaching of the Church. (Article X.)

" Unbelievers, though they might perform works apparently good in their matter, still were not to be accounted righteous men," said Wycliffe.

" Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God . . . neither do they make men meet to receive grace," is the teaching of the Church of England. (Article XIII.)

Wycliffe rejects, says Lechler, with the utmost decision, clearly and roundly, as a vain imagination the idea that a man, before his conversion, can contribute anything by his moral behaviour towards the object that God should give him the grace of the Holy Spirit needful to conversion. In fact, the five Articles of the Church of England, from Article X to Article XIV, could almost *ipsissima verba* be taken from Wycliffe's writings and the great truth of our eighteenth Article, so sadly needed in this age of apostatizing professors of Christianity, that eternal salvation is to be obtained only by the Name of Christ, is set forth in all his later writings where Christ is continuously exalted as our Mediator, our Redeemer, our kingly Priest, whose satisfaction for God and man is sufficient for all sinners, our Founder, Beginner and Author (*Christus noster principium*), our ever-conquering Leader, the divine Centre of the Church, and its one incomparable Head. (Lechler II, 91.)

When we come to Wycliffe's teaching on the Church and the Sacraments there is scarcely an Article, from the nineteenth to the thirty-second of the Articles of the Church of England, which was not found substantially in the teaching of Wycliffe. In his teaching with regard to the nature of the Church, Wycliffe stands in bold defiance to all the so-called Roman Catholic Church teaching on the subject. He blazed a path of definite

revolt against the universal ideas of the day with regard to the Church. In those days the Church, the ecclesia, was the Roman Church and, practically speaking, the Roman Church only. Wycliffe declared that the Church was made up of the whole body of the faithful, that is, true believers, and that the clergy alone are not the Church. He repudiated the current idea that Holy Church meant merely prelates and priests, with monks and canons and friars. As he said:

> "When men speak of holy church they understand thereby prelates and priests, monks, and canons and friars (chanouns and freres) and all men that have crowns (that is, all men who have the tonsure) although they live ever so cursedly against God's Law and do not call (clepen) nor hold secular men to belong to holy church, although they live ever so truly after God's Law and end in perfect charity. Nevertheless all who shall be saved in heaven's bliss (blisse of hevene) are members of holy church and no more." (Arnold, *Select English Works*, III, 447.)
>
> "Christian men, taught in God's law, call Holy Church *the congregation of just men*, for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood, and not mere stones and timber and earthly dross, which the clerks of Antichrist magnify more than the righteousness of God and the souls of men."

It is evident from words like these surely that Wycliffe's teaching is the teaching of the Church of England to-day, which teaches in Article XIX that the visible Church is a congregation of faithful men. This was Wycliffe's idea precisely. There was a Church visible and a Church invisible, membership in the former by no means implying (as in the Romish system) membership in the latter. The Pope and Bishops, if "of the world," were no members of the Holy Church. The True Church, the Real Church, or, as Hooker used to call it, the Church Mystical, consisted of the elect only, those who from eternity were predestinated to salvation. "Not every

one who is *in* the Church is *of* the Church." In one word, Wycliffe deliberately opposed the idea that the Church means the Visible Catholic Church, or the organized communion of the Roman hierarchy. He clearly anticipated the teaching of the bishop reformers that the true Catholic Church is the blessed company of all faithful people in its mystical, or invisible, and visible aspects.

> " Wycliffe at times makes use of language which shows that he distinguished within the circle of the Church between true members and only apparent members, which is an approximation to the distinction made by the reformers of the sixteenth century between the visible and the invisible Church. In his sermon on John x, 26, ' You are My Sheep,' he says there are two flocks in the militant Church—the flock of Christ and the flock of Antichrist. And two kinds of shepherds, too—those who belong to the true Body of Christ, and those who are of the simulated or mixed body, the true members of the Church being mixed with the unconverted, as wheat and chaff are mixed."

As Lechler says, as he sums up the whole matter (II, 105) :

> " Wycliffe's view as a whole coincides with the Reformation doctrine, that the Church in the proper sense of the word is the congregation of believers."

In another thing with regard to the Church, Wycliffe was far in advance of his age. In fact, he held a very radical view.

> " I boldly assert one thing, namely, that in the primitive Church or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm that in the time of Paul the presbyter and bishop were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus." (Wylie, 128.)

It was indeed a radical view for his day ! But this view,

however startling it may have seemed to the ears of the fourteenth century, was simply a revival of the views of Jerome who said, "Among the ancients, bishops and presbyters are the same," and also Hilary, Chrysostom, Theodore and Theodoret, and many others. Bishop Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Philippians* (95–9), in his masterly and convincing summary of the question says:

> "It is a fact now generally recognized by theologians of all shades of opinion, that in the language of the New Testament the same officer in the Church is called indifferently bishop and elder or presbyter."

Before we leave this section of the subject—the doctrinal opinions or views of Wycliffe—there were two points that should be carefully held in mind by the reader.

The first is this. That Wycliffe passed through more than one stage in the development of his spiritual discernment. But it was an ascending scale. In later days he abandoned very definitely many of the doctrinal views that he held, and his views were constantly clearing in Evangelical light. In more than one place he makes the frankest acknowledgment that on more than one question he formerly defended with tenacity the opposite of what he afterwards maintained.

> "Statements which, at one time, appeared strange to me, now appear to be sound and true, and I defend them in the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii, 11). At last, however, the Lord, by the power of His grace, opened my mind to understand the Scriptures."

As I said before, it was a parallel case to Cranmer's. Both Vaughan and Lechler agree on this. When writers, such as Lingard, claim for Wycliffe that he taught the doctrine of Purgatory and strenuously maintained the efficacy of the Mass for the souls in Purgatory, it is evident that before his death Wycliffe had come to much clearer light. I think the same might be said with regard to that much misunderstood sentence of his: "For each

man that shall be damned is damned for his own guilt (dampned is dampned for his owne gilt), and each man that shall be saved is saved by his own merit." (*Wycliffe's Select English Writings*, Winn, p. 95.) Wycliffe at that time was evidently not thinking of the doctrine of justification by faith at all. What he had in mind was St. Paul's teaching in Romans ii, 6–13, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Vaughan makes this clear when he says that Wycliffe said that the only sense in which men might be said to deserve the felicities of heaven is that all the good which men have is of God, and when God rewardeth a good work of man He crowneth His own gift. God's goodness is the first cause why He confers any good on man. And so it may not be that God doeth good to men but freely by His own grace; and with this understanding we shall grant that men deserve of God.

A curious fact, too, has been pointed out by Pennington in his *John Wiclif* (p. 275), that whereas Wycliffe towards the end of his life was constantly advancing in spiritual knowledge and power, Luther, on the other hand, during the last part of his life was retrogressive in doctrine. With regard to the doctrine, for instance, of the Lord's Supper Luther held the doctrine of Consubstantiation, a doctrine that, in some ways, differs very little from that of Transubstantiation. The marvel is that in that age and without the floods of light that came to men in the age of the Reformation from so many sources and so many lands, not that Wycliffe should have set forth some evangelical principles, but that by himself alone, he should have risen to so high a state of spiritual attainment, and have so clearly, not only discerned the fallacy and falsity of the leading articles of the Roman Catholic faith, but set forth, so long before the Reformation, the leading positive faith affirmations of the reformers. We can unhesitatingly say that in originality he surpassed all the reformers of the sixteenth

century. He laboured under disadvantages that Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza and Knox, to say nothing of Cranmer and Ridley, never knew. He had none of their auxiliaries, even if Bradwardine might have given suggestions. The genius of the Renaissance and the impetus given to the religious life of the century by Erasmus's Greek Testament, 1516, was long after his day. It only makes his greatness greater.

CHAPTER XIII

WYCLIFFE'S EXPOSURE OF ROMAN FALSITIES

WITH regard to those false doctrines and unscriptural practices of the Church of Rome that the Church of England so vehemently denounced in Cranmer's day, it may be said that every one of them was exposed and denounced by John Wycliffe long before the Reformation. His clear eye saw their falsity and, in the light of the Holy Spirit, he attacked and condemned. Long before Luther shook the Church in his day with his denunciation of indulgences, Wycliffe with trumpet voice denounced them. It was the authoritatively taught and commonly believed doctrine of the Church that the saints had done more good works than were required for their own justification—a curious idea, by the way, in the face of Romans iii, 20–8; iv, 5–16; Galatians iii, 6–11—and the surplus, known as works of supererogation, was deposited with the Pope as Peter's successor, who could, by his own right, transfer any amount of this superabundant merit to anybody on payment of a sum of money. This was called an indulgence. These indulgences not only conveyed pardon of sins here but were good for a release for anyone enduring the pains of Purgatory.

> " Prelates deceive foully Christian men (foule Christene) by their pretended indulgences or pardons and rob them wickedly (cursedly) of their money. For they teach men that for saying masses in the staciones of Rome and for giving of alms afterwards sinful men will have thousands of years of pardon and pardons without number beyond man's understanding. (In

> the Santa Scala Caeli Church it was said that whoso singeth mass in that chapel for any friend he looseth him from hell.)" (Matthew, 80, 504.)

And then Wycliffe goes on to say:

> "These men be great fools that buy these bulls of pardon so dear, for God's pardon is a heavenly gift and spiritual (gostly) and should be given freely as Christ teacheth in the Gospel and not for money, nor worldly goods or fleshly favour."

He laughs to scorn the idea that a rich man, though he be cursed of God for his sinful life, may buy a thousand years of pardon, but that a poor man who has not got any money and cannot travel to Rome will have no pardon of the Pope though he be holy and full of charity.

This Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory and pardons had an extraordinary hold upon the people of the Roman Church then, as it has now. The control of the dead by the priest and his masses was implicitly believed.

> "If the priest say a certain mass for a soul it shall be brought out of Purgatory."

It never seemed to enter into anybody's head that if the Pope or the priest had the power to deliver souls in Purgatory by the saying of a mass that the Pope was surely wanting in true love of souls "if there dwell any soul in Purgatory, for he may without any other costs deliver them out of Purgatory, but he does not do it."

Vaughan very truly suggests in this connection that if Luther was greatly admired by his contemporaries and followers for his boldness in questioning this plentitude of the Papal power, how much greater was the boldness of Wycliffe in much less favourable times and with far greater courage in exposing the assumptions of the popes in his day.

"Great falseness it is so much to magnify the power of the Pope in Purgatory, for no man here can show it to be real either by Holy Writ or reason. The doctrine is one never taught in all the Gospels and never used, neither by Paul nor Peter nor any other Apostle of Christ. But they were so full of charity or love that they certainly would have taught this pardon and used it, if there had been any such, for Christ's charity and good doctrine were most abundant in His Apostles. Christ discovered all that was needful and profitable, but He never taught this pardon. It follows, therefore (what a fine touch of logic!), that this pardon is neither needful nor profitable."

Long before the reformers exposed in their articles the worthlessness and practical idolatry of worshipping and adoring images and relics, Wycliffe denounced it as superstition and diabolical deception. In speaking of the worship of images he says:

"There is poison under the honey. The idolatrous worship of the image instead of the Divine. The people must be warned faithfully in the present day of feeding their senses to excess in religion, their eyes with the Church's ornaments, their ears with bells and organs, not to mention many other sensuous preparation by which their other senses are moved altogether irreligiously." (Lechler II, 111–13.)

Wycliffe has a word to say about the veneration of relics, too.

"It would be to the honour of the saints, and the benefit of the Church, if the costly ornaments so foolishly lavished upon their graves were divided among the poor." And he bravely adds: "I am well aware, however, that the man who would sharply and fully expose this error would be held for a manifest heretic by the image worshippers, and the greedy people who make gain of such graves; for in the adoration of the eucharist, and such worshipping of dead bodies

and images, the Church is seduced by an adulterous generation." (Lechler II, 117–18.)

With regard to saint worship and especially the worship of the Virgin Mary, it is evident that as he approached his end Wycliffe became, step by step, more clear and decided in his repudiation of saint worship. At one period of his life he speaks of the blessed Virgin Mary in terms that would satisfy the most ardent Romanist or Anglo-Catholic as one who cares for our needs and has attained to so high an honour that she might become the refuge of sinners, and that men cannot obtain the eternal reward without the help of Mary. In later years Wycliffe's judgment was entirely different. Christ, and Christ alone, became the only Mediator between God and man. In his famous tract on *The Ave Maria*, Wycliffe says nothing about invoking the help of the Virgin, but only imitating her beautiful character. (Matthew, *The Ave Maria*, pp 203–8.) As to the blasphemous teaching of the Church of Rome and its Mariolatry, where the worship paid to her exceeds that of the honour paid to her Divine Son and His Almighty Father, there is not a trace of it in the later writing of John Wycliffe. As everybody knows, the popular devotion of the Rosary is made up of one hundred and sixty-six beads, on which are recited one creed, fifteen paternosters (the Lord's Prayer) and one hundred and fifty Hail Marys, with its petition : " Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of death. Amen." (Littledale, *Plain Reasons Against Joining the Church of Rome*, S.P.C.K., 53–60.)

Wycliffe came to have very clear ideas with regard to the evils of the confessional and the horrible abuses of the confessional box.

No modern Evangelical in our age could speak on the subject with greater clearness. His tract on Confession, printed in Matthew's *English Works of Wyclif*, (325–45), exposes all the evils and anticipates nearly all the objections that are taken against the whole system by

modern writers. (See my *Protestantism of the Prayer Book*, 113–39, especially Bishop Hopkins's summary on page 138.) These are some of his words on the subject :

> " It is not confession to man but confession to God, who is the true Priest of souls, that is the great need of sinful man. Private confession and the whole system of mediæval confession was not ordered by Christ and was not used by the Apostles, for of the three thousand who were turned to Christ's Law on the Day of Pentecost, not one (noon) of them was confessed to a priest. Christian men will be saved without such confession, as they were before Pope Innocent. It is just a device of Antichrist. Lord, where is freedom of Christ, when men be caught in such bondage, for Christ made His servants free, but Antichrist hath made them slaves again (bonde ageyne) ? This law of confession that each man must needs be forgiven only in confession to his own priest is against reason, for it is God who is the forgiver and this practice of confession has given occasion to much sin, and the Pope makes men absolve men from their sins when they themselves are sinful and gabble with blasphemous words as if they were the very fellows of God (Goddis felow) and that God and he forgive together (God and he assoile togidre). It is just the devil who tries to keep in the power of Popes and prelates this forgiving and penance. In the old law and in the new, confession was a public matter and it would be much better if the Pope were to order two priests to hear confession instead of one. One might as well confess to the devil, as to a leprous simonical priest." (Workman II, 42.) (Arnold III, 255–356.)

And so on, and so on. Wycliffe evidently grasped the great truth that is set forth in our Absolution in Morning and Evening Prayer, that the priest in pronouncing the absolution, or remission of sins, is simply, as he said, absolving as a minister or messenger and simply " witnessing to the people that, on their contrition, God

absolveth them." It is the exact teaching of our Church one hundred and seventy years later.

> "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe."

It is no doubt whatever that Wycliffe held very strong views with regard to the need of simplicity and reality in Church worship. He never seems to have arrived at the clearness of Cranmer's convictions with regard to the idolatry of the whole Mass ritual, its superstition and unscripturalness. But he did protest most strongly against the abuses of worshipping images and the worthlessness of mere ceremonial. Workman says that in his latter days Wycliffe departed much from the sacramentarianism he had earlier held. In spite of his high view of the sacraments, he said:

> "The Church lives not in sacraments invented by the satraps of Antichrist (this is what he generally called the Pope and the priests of Rome), but in definite faith in the Lord Jesus."
>
> "As for the consecration and benediction of wax, bread, palms, lights, salt (the salt used in baptism), wallets, staves, arms, and the like, they have nothing to do with the substance of Christian faith. It would, therefore, be more commendable if bishops would teach and preach the catholic belief instead of *dispensing these sacraments* or consecrating churches."

His soul evidently rebelled against the monotony of the singing of the prayers in the Mass and Hour Services, saying that this great crying and high song of prayers was not what was good for the soul and that it would be much better to have the still manner of Christ (an evident reference to Matthew vi, 5–7) and His Apostles, which will enable us to understand what we sing. (Workman II, 312). Hear his words:

> "God forbid that any Christian man should understand that this here singing and crying that men use now

(that is, the system of loud intoning, and apparently with a whining voice) to be the best service of a priest and most profitable to the souls of men (mannes soule). For Jesus Christ and His Apostles used it not (useden), nor charged priests to do it, but they prayed devoutly and quietly (stilly, stilleliche). For as Augustine and Gregory witness, prayer is better done by compunction and weeping and holy desire of right witness than by great crying and *blowing* of man's voice." (Arnold, *Select English Works*, 203.)

With regard to the ceremonial of Baptism and Confirmation, he certainly held very advanced views for his day. He said that it does not matter in baptism whether the persons baptized are dipped three times or only have water poured on their head, the mode of baptism being a matter indifferent. The great matter in baptism was not baptism with water but baptism of the spirit, for baptism is a figure showing how a man's soul should be baptized from sin, the idea of 1 Peter iii, 21 evidently being in his mind. The bodily washing of a child is not the end of baptism. (Vaughan II, 306–7.)

And so with regard to Confirmation.

"The oil with which prelates anoint children at such times and the linen hood or veil put over their head are a ceremony of little worth and one having no foundation in Scripture." (*Ibid.*, 308.)

He was referring to the words of the Bishop in the Roman rite, "Confirmo te chrismate salutis," (I confirm thee with the oil of salvation) and the teaching of the Church that the power of salvation was in the oil which was hallowed by the priest. He held also that

"Confirmation should not be reserved to Cæsarean prelacy (by which he meant the Roman Catholic bishops) and that it would be more scriptural to deny that the bishops give the Holy Spirit or confirm the giving of it."

And then he adds with a note that is truly like John Wycliffe :

> " that the brief and trivial confirmation of the prelates and the ceremonies added to it for the sake of pomp were introduced at the suggestion of Satan, that the people may be deceived as to the faith of the Church, and that the state and necessity of bishops may be the more acknowledged." (*Trialogus*, IV, 14.)

In all these things Wycliffe demonstrated himself to be a Protestant of the Protestants, the first real and definite Protestant before the Reformation.

Now with regard to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We have already seen how clearly Wycliffe came out upon the subject of Transubstantiation. Whatever his views may have been in the earlier part of his Church career, it is evident that, as far back as 1367, he began to waver with regard to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, for in a sermon preached at that time he exposes various errors relating to the Host and says that it is enough for the Christian to believe that the body of Christ is in some spiritual and sacramental manner at every point of the consecrated Host (Matthew, *English Works of Wyclif*, XXII), the whole sermon showing a disposition, even then, to dwell upon the spiritual side of the sacrament. After passing through various stages that were natural in such an inquisitive and logical mind as his, and many a battle with the doctrine of the schools, he slowly arrived at the conclusion that since the bread was said to be Christ's body, the Host was both bread and the body of Christ, and boldly said that those who held the doctrine of Transubstantiation denied the Host to be either bread or Christ's body. From that he passed on to open and bold denunciation of Transubstantiation as the most dangerous of all the heresies that ever sprang up in the Church. In the *Trialogus* he declared : " It robs the people. It makes them commit idolatry. It denies the faith of Scripture and, in consequence, through

unbelief, in manifold and various manners, it provokes the Truth to anger."

In answer to the objection, "This is My body," he says, as we have seen, with his accustomed English common sense, that that is simply used in figurative language. When Christ said of John the Baptist he was Elias, John was not transubstantiated into Elias. When Christ said, "I am the true Vine," Christ was not transubstantiated into a corporeal vine. Slowly but surely and finally Wycliffe came to the view that the real presence of Christ is the presence of Christ in the soul, the view so clearly set forth by the great Hooker (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, 67):

> "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament."

As an Athanasius against the whole word, he held that the consecrated bread was not Christ. It was a sign, an effectual sign of Christ. The bread still continues to be bread. Substantially it is bread. Sacramentally it is the body of Christ. He held, in fact, explicitly and implicitly the language of the twenty-fifth and twenty-eighth Articles:

> "The sacraments are effectual signs of grace." (Article XXV.) "Transubstantiation (or the change of substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner." (Article XXVIII.)

He also condemned all adoration of the sacrament as explicitly as do the twenty-fifth and twenty-eighth Articles. The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about.

> " The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped."

In order to grasp Wycliffe's more matured views on the subject you must read and reread that extraordinary tract that we have referred to before, the Wyckett. It was Wycliffe's definition of the words, *Hoc est Corpus meum* (This is My Body), in which he gives his final views on this subject and denounces the idea that ever Christ or any of His disciples taught any man to worship the sacred Host, the consecrated wafer in the sacrament. It is monstrous for these hypocrites to take on them to make our Lord's body, for if it were Christ's body before His passion, then Christ is yet to die, and if it is the glorified body in heaven, that is impossible. For Christ was not speaking of His spiritual body, for the spiritual body of Christ ascended up to heaven. Wycliffe's whole argument is as unanswerable as that of Cranmer in his famous reply to Gardiner; though, of course, it is not in the set or dogmatic form of a theological argument.

Dr. Workman in his discussion of Wycliffe's relation to the meaning of the sacraments gives a very admirable analysis of the dogma of Transubstantiation and its place in the mediæval Church and a careful study of Wycliffe's relation to the doctrine and the various stages of his transition from darkness to light. (Workman II, 30–42.) As one reads it one realizes how difficult it was for an ecclesiastic like Wycliffe to emerge from the cerements of the past and how still more difficult it must have been for him to overcome the subtleties of the scholastic maze. But ultimately he did emerge from this apparently almost hopeless tangle of hair-splitting distinctions, figments, inconsistencies and facilities for explaining away texts and authorities (Workman II, 40), and definitely came to his final position in his defiance of Transubstantiation.

But we must differ strongly from Dr. Workman in his statements that

(1) "Wycliffe, even in the extreme statements of his old age, never had any doubt with regard to the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar."

And that

(2) "In the course of his argument Wycliffe was driven from position to position, until finally he put forth a theory permeated with Platonic realism, practically identical with that taken at a later date by Luther. In other words, Wycliffe fell back upon a belief in Consubstantiation." (Workman II, 30–7.)

I think that Workman entirely fails to grasp the true Anglican doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the soul as Hooker explained it, and not the Real Presence of Christ in the Roman or Anglo-Catholic sense—a doctrine which Wycliffe declared to be the offspring of Satan. (Vaughan II, 110.) For the Church of England distinctly teaches in the last Post-Communion rubric that no adoration is intended or ought to be done unto any corporal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood. I think that Vaughan's position is much sounder. Vaughan makes it quite clear that Wycliffe did not teach Consubstantiation. In his Oxford Conclusions, 1381, he denounced, not only Transubstantiation but Identification and Impanation. In the eighth chapter of the last Book of the *Trialogus* he says that he understands by Identification

"The uniting of two things previously distinct, as though by an act of Omnipotence Peter and Paul should cease to be two persons and become one. But he has adduced many reasons to show that such an Identification is impossible."

And then he adds:

"I am certain that the doctrine of Impanation is impossible and heretical." (Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, II, 310.)

(The Lutheran doctrine of Consubstantiation or Impanation is extremely subtle and difficult to explain. It means that, after consecration, the real body and blood of Christ is united in a mystic manner with the bread and wine and received by the communicant in the Sacrament. They thus consubstantiate Christ with elements sacramental, but they do not hold that thereby the substance of bread is abolished and miraculously changed into the real body and blood of Christ. The Anglo-Catholic doctrine is apparently identical with that of the Lutheran Church. A curious anomaly!)

But whether we stand with Vaughan or take our position with Workman, we will all agree that the man took, for one of his day, a very definite Evangelical and Protestant position. He was very definite, for instance, that fasting was not necessary. In his sermon on the Gospel on Ascencioun Day, he said that

> "Christ gave them the Sacrament after their common meal and the men who say that the Host is not bread (the ost is not breed) should note this, for they say that he should not break his fast, eating the Host when it is sacred (etinge the oost whanne it is sacrid), that is consecrated, and he should not afterwards take God's blood (Goddis blood). Lord," he exclaimed, "why do not these fools know that these accidents (that is, the bread and the wine) make men drunk, as Paul (Poul) witnesseth (1 Cor. xi, 20–2). How can a man be drunken of an accident. (What he meant was that if the wine is not wine but Christ's blood and the bread is not bread but Christ's body, how could anyone eat it or by drinking it get drunk.) Men should have the freedom of Christ and it is no sin to ask anyone to eat with moderation before he partakes of the Eucharist (etten in mesure bifore the Masse)." (Arnold, *Select English Works*, I, 360.)

Canon Meyrick, Bishop Wordsworth and Bishop Doane, in protesting against the requirement of fasting as a condition of receiving Holy Communion as those

who set themselves against the authority of the Church of England, could hardly have more clearly set forth the case against fasting communion than John Wycliffe. (Meyrick, *Doctrine of the Holy Communion*, 183–92.)

He took the position, too, apparently of the Church of England that a man who did not receive the bread could communicate spiritually, which is, of course, the teaching of the Church of England to-day in the Communion of the Sick.

> "But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood: the Curate shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed his Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefor; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth." (Workman II, 42; Canadian Prayer Book, 367.)

He even seems to have gone as far as to say that, under certain circumstances, the Eucharist might be consecrated even by a layman and, if laymen may lawfully baptize children, why not confirm them? (Arnold III, "The Grete Sentence of Curs Expouned"—*Curse Expounded*; Cap. VI, 285.)

But, above all, and this seems to me the point where John Wycliffe comes nearest to the position of Cranmer and the teaching of the Church of England, he declared that:

> "The Eucharist can only profit in so far as it helps to the spiritual acceptance of Christ. He warns his readers against mistaking the sign for the thing signi-

> fied, and maintains that the whole fitness to receive the host lies in sincere and grateful love of Christ and God." (Workman II, 35.)

That is, by the grace of God and the illumination of His Holy Spirit, John Wycliffe, in those dark ages of the Church, was led, in the light of the Holy Spirit to see that the qualification for receiving the Sacrament was neither preliminary confession nor priestly absolution, but a heart that is sincere and filled with gratitude to God. Or, as it is so finely summarized in our Catechism:

> "The requirement of those who come to the Lord's Supper is true repentance, living faith, grateful remembrance, universal love."

At the same time, as we conclude this whole matter, we must say that it is hard for us in these days to understand how it was that John Wycliffe as a student of the New Testament and familiar with the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the Gospels and I Corinthians xi, at a table not an altar, in the evening, not fasting, without a trace of anything like altar sacrifice or of an offering by a vested priest upon an altar, does not appear to have discerned, or if he did discern did not express the disparity between this simple Supper of the Lord and the idolatry of the Mass service of the Anglo-Roman Church of his day, with all its elements of ritual magnificence, with its vestments, and crossings, and incense, as a reoffering of the transubstantiated body of Christ as a sacrifice to God for the living and for the dead. There are only two possible explanations.

The first is this, that in the providence of God the time for the perception of the falsity and unscripturalness of it all was apparently not yet ripe. It was to be the work of the Anglican reformers of generations later. Or, second, inasmuch as only a part or segments of the writings of Wycliffe have come down to us, and many of his expressed

opinions may have been lost, it is possible that in some of his writings, or in one of his writings, he may have formulated a protest, not only against the doctrine of the mass but the service and its dangers.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOLLARDS

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high.

THESE fine words, engraven at the base of the great Gothic Memorial Tower on the University grounds, to the north-east of University College, Toronto, seem to me to set forth very aptly what Wycliffe might have said to that remarkable body of his followers and unknown disciples who became widely known by the name of Lollards. There has been no little discussion with regard to the original meaning of the word Lollard. Some say it meant a loafer (Workman I, 327); others an idle babbler, a nickname of scorn and contempt. But Mosheim's careful study of the origin of the name is worth quotation.

> "The lollhard, or lullhard, or, as the ancient Germans write it, lollert, is compounded of the old German word lullen, lollen, lallen, and the well-known termination hard, with which many of the old High Dutch words end. Lollen, or lullen, signifies to sing with a low voice. A Lollhard, therefore, is a singer, or one who frequently sings, and signifies in its most limited sense to sing a hymn, a sacred song. Lollhard, in the vulgar tongue of the new Germans denotes a person who is continually praising God with a song or singing hymns to His honour. People who are more frequently occupied in singing hymns of praise to God than others were, in the common popular language, called Lollhards." (Mosheim III, 355.)

Reading between the lines of Mosheim's definition we would infer then that these Lollards were a kind of happy singing Christians more like the Salvationists of to-day, or the early Wesleyan Methodists of the eighteenth century. Their religion was such a reality to them that they could not but sing. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." (Ephesians v, 19.) "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with praise in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. iii, 16.)

And so these singers of joyous songs went on their homely ways in countryside and cottage, in towns and villages, in fairs and market places, in churchyards and cottage meetings, in woods and fields and meadows, in pastures, groves and caves of the ground, letting their light shine—the newly discovered light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, which shined in their hearts—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv, 6). They were a brotherhood of known men, just men, marked men, men desperately in earnest for the truths they knew and held. Sometimes they were called the lay party or Bible men. (*Our Lollard Ancestors*, Summers, p. 82.) And it is amazing to think how the movement spread. In every shire in England almost, with the exception of two or three, the Lollard doctrines were maintained, especially in Oxford.

And they must have been very numerous. For, according to the statement of a contemporary, Knighton, the Leicester monk, even in the year 1382 every second man you met in the kingdom was of that sect, a Wycliffite. (Vaughan II, 150–5 and Trevelyan, *In the Age of Wycliffe*, 319.) He states, too, that their number very much increased, they were multiplied and filled every place within the compass of the land. In fact, they had so far prevailed to bring over to their sect the greater part of the people. Vaughan thinks that Knighton was probably mistaken in his estimate, but that, if by the

term Lollard he meant the people who sympathized with the political complaints as well as the religious principles of the Lollardites, he was probably correct. They certainly were very bold. For they actually sent a letter to Archbishop Arundel himself, the greatest of English Romanists, in which they said:

> "We poor little priests, on the authority of the Gospel, pre-emptorily (peremptorily) cite you to appear before the King of kings for the blood shed by you at Bristol and elsewhere." (Workman II, 367.)

In the letter they stated there were over one hundred thousand Lollards in England, of whom seventy were knights, two hundred squires, and five hundred priests. But Workman calls them "wild figures." Still they were a great number that no man could number, and some of them were of the highest of the realm. Great lords and knights, such as Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir John Pecche, Sir Lewis Clifford and, greatest of them all, Sir John Montague, afterwards Earl of Salisbury, at one time the most influential champion of Lollardry among the gentry. (Workman I, 381–403.) Lord Salisbury, who was beheaded in 1400 for conspiracy, was both execrated and praised. The Romanists called him the friend of Lollards, the derider of images, the scoffer at sacraments. But one who knew him and lived in his home said:

> "He was humble, sweet, and courteous in all his ways, loyal in all places and right prudent. He was brave and fierce as a lion. Though but a layman his deeds were all so gracious that never, I think of his country shall be a man in whom God put so much of good." (Workman II, 403.)

The majority of them probably were socially insignificant, academically unknown. For once more in this great pre-Reformation movement:

> "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called. God chose the foolish things of the world to confound and shame its wise

> men. And God chose the weak things of the world to confound and shame the things that are mighty and strong. And God chose mean and despised things in the world, things that are as indeed nothing to bring to nothing things that are." (1 Cor. i, 26–8.)

But not all of them, by any means, were insignificant and unlearned. Many of them were scholars of no mean repute, and many of them, too, powerful preachers. Nothing so strikingly shows their rapid and increasing influence than their power in preaching. In his *Church of England History*, (105–6) Hole shows that they had a tremendous advantage in the fact that preaching was, at that time in England, an unknown quantity. A sermon on the mediæval Roman Church was practically worthless, and what we call a sermon was rarely, if ever, heard. The Wycliffe preachers and the Lollards, therefore, had the ground all to themselves, and wherever they preached they were eagerly listened to. No doubt, too, the new-found joy gave to their sermons an evangelistic flavour and fervour that was magnetic and came as cold water to a thirsty soul and as good news from a far country.

But, as far as the Church and the clergy and the mass of obscurantist opinion were concerned, it might have been said of them what was said of the first Christians as a sect, "We know that everywhere it is spoken against." They were hated with a deadly hatred. They were reviled. They were execrated. It is hard to believe with what venomous malevolence they were looked on and talked of. And soon the thunders of the hierarchy were heard and denunciation became imprecation and banns of excommunication gathered around them with the menace of death. Their teaching was deplored under the new and damnable name of "Lollardie." It was poison defiling the fountain once so pure of the Church's teaching and worship. One writer of the day said:

> "A greater pestilence never existed in the Church. This pest reigns in England without remedy, and in no

> other nation. O Land now pestiferous, you were formerly the mother of all sound knowledge, free from the stain of heresy, without any share in error or fallacy. Now you stand forth our standard bearer of schism, discord, error and madness. You are the faithful patron of every nefarious sect, of every varying doctrine; seducers of the laity; corruptors of the faith. For you allow them who by their depraved doctrine have deeply infected the whole realm." (From a petition of Parliament to the King, 1382, to depress the heretical Wycliffites.)

To men of the world they were, as many earnest Christians are to-day, just abominable hypocrites, their convictions ridiculous opinions, and their ostentatious piety simply a mask secretly concealing all kinds of sin and addiction to all sorts of vices. It was the old, old prediction of Christ, so curiously and frequently verified throughout the centuries, the Beatitude of the Persecuted:

> "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. v, 10–12.)

Doubtless there were hypocrites among them. Every religious revival has its frauds. A Judas, a Simon Magus, and a Demas by the score, if not by the hundred, will be found in every religious movement—Puritan, Wesleyan, or in the Plymouth Brethren—the counterfeit coins only proving the value of the true. Workman shows that there was a political Lollardry that doubtless had many in its following that were far from being spiritually minded and consecrated Christians. Doubtless, too, many of them were over-violent and over-extravagant in their zeal. Their words, like acid, bit deep and their invectives were ofttimes even more violent than those of

Wycliffe himself. (Workman II, 366.) It is possible, too, that the sanguinary persecutions may have had the effect of driving them into an increase of bitterness and coarseness.

With regard to their opinions, they were, in the main, the fundamental principles of Wycliffe.

(1) That Holy Scripture, or God's Law, is the final authority for all truth and nothing is to be accepted as a law of God unless it is founded on Scripture.
(2) The denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation.
(3) The rejection of the worship of images, pilgrimages, relics.
(4) The Church is the Body of Christ, the number of the saved, Christ being the head.

In 1395 the Lollards tried to get a hearing in open Parliament, but, having failed, they nailed to the doors of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey a paper setting forth twelve conclusions, one in Latin for the Parliament, the other in English, which Workman thinks was possibly the original. The English version began with a curious preamble:

> "We, poor men, tresoreris (treasurers) of Christ and His Apostles, denounce to the lords and the commons of the parliament certain conclusions and truths for the reformation of Holy Church of England, the which has been blind and leprous many years by maintenance of the proud prelacy, borne up with flattering of private religion the which is multiplied to a great charge and onerous to people here in England." (Workman II, 391.)

It then went on to say that the Church of England, after she began to follow Rome, had declined in faith, hope and love and surrendered to pride and deadly sin: that the forms of priestly ordination were human inventions and celibacy the parent of the worst of crimes: that the doctrine of Transubstantiation leads to idolatry: that prayer for the dead and absolution and auricular

confession are the great stimulant to priestly domination: that pilgrimages, images and relics are nearly allied to idolatry: that the chief tendency of the customs of the Church was to continue the people in delusion and ignorance and to swell the affluence of the indolent among the clergy. (Vaughan, 351–4.) It was this petition and the increasing boldness of the Lollard leaders that brought things to a head. Something must be done. The Bishops, as the guardians of the Church's truth and order, must take action. Convocation woke up and addressed to the King a petition urging them to do something to suppress the crafty and daring sect who call themselves "the poor men of Christ's treasury," but whom the common people better designate by the title of Lollards, being a dry tare (*lolium aridum*), men subversive of all ecclesiastical authority. Arundel, who became Archbishop of Canterbury the next year, did all in his power to extirpate Lollardism. He was a bold and implacable Churchman and it was through him that that infamous statute for the burning of heretics, the "De Haeretico Comburendo," was passed in 1401.

Then came the martyrs of Lollardism. The protomartyr was William Sawtrey or Sautre, a converted priest who was burned by royal writ in 1401 on the charge of denying Transubstantiation. The next was John Badby, a layman who was chained in a cask and burned on a heap of wood in Smithfield, 1410, for asserting that the bread remained bread after consecration. Wylie gives a very touching account of the appeal of the Prince Royal, afterwards Henry the Fifth, who happened to be in the crowd and was touched with pity for the man, and ordered the officers to put out the fires and told the man that, if he would recant and return to the bosom of the Church, he would not only save him from the flames but give him a yearly stipend all the days of his life. But Badby would not turn back. No, not for all the gold of England, for he was to sup that night with a greater Prince. Thus did this valiant champion of Christ, neglecting the Prince's

fair word, perfect his martyrdom in the fire. (Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, i, 353–6.) The third was William Thorpe, whose Lollard Protestantism was a grasp of the simple truths of the Bible and of the Gospel. But the greatest martyr of them all was Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, a most gallant soldier and a friend of the young Prince, afterwards Henry the Fifth, who honoured him for his character, his shrewd sense and his knightly bearing as a soldier. Though a man of unblemished reputation, he was perhaps more hated by the clergy than any man in England because of his outspoken advocacy in public and private of Lollardism. His famous confession before his judges is worth repeating:

> "I confess myself here unto thee, my eternal living God, that in my frail youth I offended thee, O Lord! most grievously, in pride, wrath, and gluttony, in covetousness, and in lechery. Many men have I injured in mine anger, and done many other horrible sins; good Lord, of thee I ask mercy.
>
> "My belief is, as I said before, that all the scriptures of the sacred books are true. All that is grounded upon them I believe thoroughly, for I know it is God's pleasure that I should do so. But in your lordly laws and idle determinations have I no belief. For ye are no part of Christ's holy church, as your open deeds do shew; but ye are very Antichrist, obstinately set against his holy law and will."

And when a Carmelite monk named Walden accused him of rash judgment as a scholar of Wycliffe, Lord Cobham replied:

> "Well, indeed, have ye sophistered. Preposterous evermore are your judgments. For as the prophet Isaiah saith, ye judge evil good, and good evil, and therefore the same prophecy concludeth that your ways are not God's ways. And as for that virtuous man Wycliffe, before God and man, I here profess, that until I knew him and his doctrine, that ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but since I have

> learnt from him to fear my God, I trust it has been otherwise with me. So much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions."

Sometime later Lord Cobham was sentenced to die according to the penalties of that frightful statute which exacted burning for heresy. He was hanged in chains as a traitor and his body was slowly consumed to ashes as a heretic. Perhaps nothing in that century so shook the heart of England as the public execution of a man whom England knew to be a good man. It was the beginning of that sullen undertone of national indignation against the ferocity nurtured by superstition that finally drove Rome and the Roman Church from England. The men and women of England who saw one of the saintliest of the saintly and the most noble of the noble burned to death as he was interceding for the salvation of his persecutors and praising the name of the Lord so long as his life lasted, naturally imbibed, as Vaughan well said, a deeper and holier hatred of the power which such atrocities were employed to preserve. (Vaughan II, 363–377.)

It is well known that history has dealt very unfairly with the figure of Sir John Oldcastle. He was handed down in Roman tradition as a braggart, a debauchee, and a poltroon. In Shakespeare's *Henry the Fourth*, that contemptible bluffer, braggart and buffoon, Sir John Falstaff, was identified with Sir John Oldcastle. But in the Epilogue to the Second Part of *King Henry the Fourth*, Shakespeare makes this noble confession—and I have always thought it was one of the finest things Shakespeare ever said—showing him to be a true Englishman and a just man:

> "One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France: where, for any thing I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat,

unless already a'be killed with your hard opinions. *For Oldcastle died a martyr and this is not the man.*"

It is generally admitted that, after the death of Sir John Oldcastle, the prestige of the Lollards seriously declined, just as, after the death of Montague, all hope of success for political Lollardry perished and the movement among the gentry seemed to wither away. Green says that Lollardism ceased to be in any sense an organized movement and crumbled into a general spirit of revolt, and quite a number of authorities write as if it fell to pieces or evaporated into a kind of fanatical communistic socialism. But they were wrong, entirely wrong. For its realities and fundamentals made it penetrate through every section of English life and still hold its strength among the middle classes and, like the Hugenot movement later on, it found its power in the lower middle and working and peasant classes. The martyrs were generally of the common people. But, like the early Christians in dens and catacombs, it slowly but surely undermined the stately fabric of mighty Rome. They were poor and ignorant people and unknown in the society lists and civic records of the day (Summers, 88–105), the lords and knights who had been the former strength of Lollardry having apparently practically disappeared when persecution began. It was the old prediction of the Master verified:

> "They continue for a while, but when suffering or tribulation or persecution arise because of the Word, their feelings change into repugnance and they turn against it."

Few of the gentry were courageous enough to come out on the side of the sorry sect of Lollardry.

> "Although many of the upper classes had been influenced by the doctrines of the sect . . . there were found but few gentlemen ready to share during the fifteenth century the lot of a proscribed and rebel party. The religion became almost exclusively one

> for the lower classes of the country and the tradesmen of the towns. The lords, courtiers, and knights gradually withdrew their patronage, partly because they so seldom found, among the ministers of the sect, any one who was socially their equal or educationally their superior." (Trevelyan, 338–9.)

But, without learning, rank, wealth or influence, the movement spread and held its own. Persecution only stirred it into stronger life, and the faith spread wide, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword, and an ever increasing number of Lollard martyrs was ample proof of its hold upon the mass of the people. Thus, as Capes well says, though there was little mention of it in high places: formal history ignored it: it had long ceased to have in any sense an organized party or to be a visible power in England: though poets and chroniclers defamed it and statesmen and ecclesiastics coerced it, Wycliffism or Lollardry was, by no means, a passing eccentricity of religious sentiment. (Capes, *History of the English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 195–6.) In that dark and gloomy age, the Reformation days before yesterday, if they had but little strength they kept God's Word and did not deny His name. (Revelation viii, 8.)

In fact we may summarize the whole matter by stating that the Lollards were the sentinels of God's army in the Holy War against bigotry, superstition and spiritual darkness. As Fuller said (quoted by Burrows, 129), "These men were sentinels against an army of enemies till God sent Luther to relieve them." In lonely places, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, they were empowered to take their stand in the evil day and maintain their stand to the end.

They were the leaven, as Vaughan calls them (II, 155). They kept on spreading the doctrines of reform, not always with Wycliffe's purity or moderation, but still, as the leaven to which Christ likened the kingdom of heaven, efficaciously, and with far wider effect than will probably

ever be known, until the whole of the Church was leavened doctrinally and liturgically in the reign of Edward the Sixth. In a thousand hearts, thoughts and desires were being awakened in the minds of men who began to know the Truth—the Truth that was to make them free, free indeed in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. They were the sowers, as Pennington says (302), exciting strong predispositions in the minds of multitudes and, by the circulation of Wycliffe's tracts and writings and portions of Wycliffe's Bible, planting the seeds of Truth that were afterwards to have such lasting fruitage in the character of Englishmen and English Churchmen. "And herein is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." (John iv, 37–8.) They were the apostolical succession continuing in an unbroken line to the dawning of the day of Anglican liberty a century later, not only in a metaphorical but in an actual ecclesiastical sense. It is stated by Walsingham that the Lollard priests actually claimed the power of ordination and thus kept up their succession with an illegal and non-conformist ministry, however valid it might have been in the sight of God. (Hole, 100.) Thus they kept the faith and carried on, ofttimes in silence and obscurity, the propagation of the principles of the Gospel till the day of England's evangel should dawn and the shadows flee away. They were the subterranean stream, flowing underground indeed, but in its course disrupting the stately fabric of mediæval autocratic Papalism and Romish falsity.

> "Thus like the fabled river of old, the stream rolled, as it were, in a subterraneous course, until at length, it burst forth into the full light of day, and poured its fertilizing tide over a parched and barren soil, so as to clothe it with rich vegetation." (Pennington, 283.)

And so we conclude the Lollards were, in every sense of the word, with their leader and inspirer, John Wycliffe,

the precursors of the Reformation. As John the Baptist, who was the Elias who was for to come, a wilderness voice to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in the desert a highway for our God, so these men, though little they knew it and never could have foreseen the marvellous results of their courageous witness, were preparing the principles of the Reformation in the heart of England and unconsciously advancing those principles of the Protestant Reformation which were, within a century and a half, to gain the victory in the English Church. Their very political ideals, which were impregnated with the spirit of Wycliffe, embodied an earnestness of moral purpose and social endeavour far in advance of the fifteenth century, rough and extravagant as they oft-times were. They were the pioneers of the ideas of British liberty which emancipated England and England's Church from the supremacy of Rome and inoculated in the body politic those ideas which became, in the seventeenth century, the speciality of Puritanism and, in the twentieth century the ground work of the social service gospel.

As Trevelyan said:

> "The importance of Lollardry cannot be estimated merely by the number of ready recruits for the battle of the Reformation which it supplied from its own ranks, or be determined by historical analysis. Their ideas penetrated into all sorts and shades of English opinion, and so leavened the great mass of Englishmen that the ideas of Luther and Latimer did not come to Englishmen in all the shocking violence of novelty, since here the doctrines of Lollardry had been common talk ever since 1380. The doctrinal and ritual reformation of religion in England was not a word of the sixteenth century alone. It began with Wycliffe. England was not converted from Germany. She had begun that process long before. If we take a general view of our religious history, we must hold that English Protestantism had a gradual and mainly regular growth. Apart from questions of doctrine

and ritual, the importance of Lollardry was great in formulating the rebellion of the laity."

"If Wycliffe began the doctrinal and ritual revolution, even he did not begin this wider movement. Lollardry was but one of the many channels along which flowed the tide of lay revolt. Chaucer, Langland, Gower, John of Gaunt, the 1381 rebels, the rioting townsmen, the appealling parliament men were all striving in the same direction. Lollardry offered a new religious basis to all, and, under Henry the Eighth, all these forces rose together and swept away the mediæval system. The Lollards asserted that ecclesiastical evils were not necessarily sacred. The triumph of that view was the downfall of the governing Church, and it preceded by thirty years the Elizabethan adjustment of doctrine and ritual. Before the changes effected by Henry the Eighth, the struggle was against a power more impervious to reason and less subject to change—the power of the Mediæval Church in all the prestige of a thousand years' prescriptive right over man's mind. The martyrs (that is, the Lollards of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) who bore the first brunt of that terrific combat may be lightly esteemed to-day by priestly censure. But those who still believe that liberty of thought has proved not a curse but a blessing to England and to the peoples who have sprung from her, will regard with thankfulness and pride the work which the speculations of Wycliffe set on foot and the valour of his devoted successors accomplished." (Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, 350–2.)

It is to them, through Wycliffe and as the echoes of Wycliffe, that we really owe the thing called Protestant liberty in its initiation and the glory of our reformed religion in the Church of England. To the Lollards, the England of to-day and the English Church of to-day owes a debt of gratitude that can never be sufficiently understood and certainly never can be repaid.

The trial and martyrdom of Sir John Oldcastle is

given at great length in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and also in Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, Book i, Chapter V, pp. 370–7, and throws a very fine light, not only upon the nobility of his character as a Christian man, but upon the clearness of his grasp of Evangelical truth.

CHAPTER XV

A SUMMARY—RETROSPECT AND REVIEW

IT is a pleasant thing to praise men who have never praised themselves. It is a pleasant thing to give honour to a man who never sought it while he lived. I confess that, after an intensive study of almost every available volume upon Wycliffe I have been amazed at the unanimous judgment of so many differing men with regard to the greatness of Wycliffe. They all, with varying forms of expression, sum up his character and career with the same conclusive adjectives and comparisons: he was great; greater than others; the greatest of all. When Professor Burrows, Chichele Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, says that John Wycliffe stands at the very summit of the eminence which has been climbed through the ages by Englishmen and English Churchmen, he is joined by Baldwin Brown, the Non-Conformist, who said that

> "Wycliffe was the greatest Englishman of his time and amongst the greatest of all times."

Or Jowett, of Balliol College, who said that

> "Oxford may justly regard Wycliffe as the greatest of her sons. He was the greatest of English churchmen."

Or Boyd Carpenter, the Bishop of Ripon, who said:

> "Wycliffe made men think. He gave the Bible into the hands of his countrymen. He moved the heart of England." (*History of the Church of England*, p. 151.)

Or Parkes Cadman, of New York, who said:

> "In the long night preceding the Reformation the succession of the truly apostolic order had never been entirely broken, and, in that succession, always supreme because nearest to God's right hand, John Wycliffe stood first and greatest, its noblest and most serviceable member." (*The Three Religious Leaders of Oxford*, p. 170.)

And a long line of historians and biographers: Trevelyan, D'Aubigné, Vaughan, Workman, Carrick, Pennington, Lechler, Matthew, Burrows, Sergeant, Geikie, Deane, Capes, and many others, echo and re-echo their conviction that if he were not the greatest of his age, or of subsequent time, he was assuredly a most extraordinary man.

Unfortunately, however, in England's history, as we have shown, the name Wycliffe was a name that was almost lost in the century after his day, or only remembered in connection with what was thought to be a nationally discreditable movement, the Lollardite socialism, with all the discredit that was attached to it. The fanaticism of some of the more fiery Lollards was fastened with cunning skill by his Romanist opponents upon Wycliffe. They made him responsible for the levelling and socialistic doctrines, and even so honoured an author as Dean Hook in his *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, spoke of the republicanism of Wycliffe and the extreme revolutionary principles which he maintained and propagated one hundred and forty-one years after his death. His career was not only almost obscured, forgotten, and obliterated for three hundred years, but his name and work, if mentioned, were mentioned generally with calumny and the stigma of discredit. And now, after five and a half centuries, in many quarters, his character is still distorted by Roman Catholic misrepresentation and unjustifiable criticism, as it was misrepresented by the Jacobite Anglicans, Wood, and Heylin, and Collier. (Burrows, 33.)

It was an Oxford man, Dr. James, in 1608, who really started the effort to bring Wycliffe to his true place in English Church history. But, in spite of the efforts of this enthusiastic Churchman, Wycliffe's memory was most unfairly treated in the seventeenth century until the Reverend John Lewis was roused, in 1720, to write his celebrated *History of the Reverend and Learned John Wycliffe, D.D.* He was followed a century later by Dr. Vaughan, whose valuable volumes started a new campaign of enthusiasm to place the name of Wycliffe and his work fairly before the English public.

Vaughan was followed by Shirley, Matthew, and Montague Burrows, Chichele Professor of Modern History in Oxford University, and, above all, by two foreigners, Professor Lechler of the University of Leipsic, and Loserth, Professor of History in the University of Czernowitz, Austria. And last, but not by any means least of all, in this century, Dr. Workman, who gave twelve or fourteen years of his valuable life to a study of Wycliffe's work and writings. Yet, in spite of all that has been written, and the literature is voluminous beyond conception to one who never has investigated it, we are hardly yet enabled to form a distinct idea of Wycliffe's greatness. While we would not think of him as the writer pictured Napoleon, grand, gloomy and peculiar, a spectred hermit wrapped in the solitude of his own originality, he still stands, as Pennington said, like a rock in the desert waste of ocean, in a grand and mysterious loneliness, so great from so many angles of greatness that it is difficult to grasp his grandeur as a whole.

There was, first of all, *his intellectual greatness.* Whatever man may think of him to-day, in the light of twentieth-century scholarship, there can be no doubt that, in his own day, Wycliffe's intellectual pre-eminence was his most distinctive greatness. Both Lechler and Workman dwell upon this. He was the brains of the anti-Papal political parliamentary party, as well as of the Church.

> "Not only his adherents but even his opponents looked upon him as having no living equal in learning and scientific ability—to all eyes he shone as a star of the first magnitude."

His contemporary in Leicester, Knighton the Chronicler, said of him that he was by far the most eminent doctor in theology in his day (*eminentissimus*). In philosophy he was considered to be second to no one, and in scholarship of the schoolmen, without a peer (*incomparabilis*). Oxford, his own University, spoke of the profundity of his philosophic ideas and said that in logical, theological and moral philosophy and investigation, he wrote without a rival. If it is objected that this was merely scholastic learning and deserved little recognition in this day, it may suffice to answer, with Lechler (II, p. 299):

> "The extraordinary acuteness of his dialect, the intellectual force of his criticism, and the concentrated unity of the principles which form the immutable basis of his thinking, are worthy of a more unreserved recognition than is now usually accorded him."

And with Workman that an outline of some of his lectures at Oxford

> "amazes the reader by its accumulated stores of learning from every field of human knowledge, and the mastery displayed of the entire Bible. In all these aspects—schoolman, politician, preacher, reformer—Wycliffe was the foremost man of his age."

And with John Fiske:

> "Wycliffe's mighty and astonishing style of scholarship —which will never be seen again." (Cadman, 45.)

As Master of Balliol College, as a doctor of divinity, a professor of theology, a brilliant lecturer, he stood before his age as a man whose position in the greatest university in England warranted the highest considera-

tion, his enemies themselves being the judges. "In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus; in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis."

When we think, too, of his literary output it amazes us. When we picture his declining health and the shadow of death that was not far away, it seems incredible that within the last six or seven years of his life he not only wrote all his English works, about sixty-five in number; revised or completed most of his Latin works, which were ninety-six in number, according to Dr. Shirley's catalogue, but, on top of that, carried on his work in translating the Bible, and added to these herculean tasks his Tracts for the People. (Cadman, 76.) Think of it! Think of it! It only shows the outstanding power of a man whose works are considered of such value as to command the investigating industry and toil of outstanding scholars five hundred or more years after his death.

Vaughan, too, says, in season and out of season, in Oxford and his quiet rectory, he poured forth volume after volume, the amount of which, even after five centuries, causes a great surprise.

But it was not his intellectual greatness alone that made him such a commanding personality in England. It was *his moral greatness*. He was neither the first to discern nor the first to speak out against the Papal encroachments and falsities, but in moral earnestness he was a marvel; as brave as Knox and as vigorous as Latimer. It was his startling boldness that made him the most marked man in England, and won for him the confidence, not only of the masses but of many of the greatest of his day. He was absolutely fearless. In the fearlessness of his courage he is the equal of Luther without, however, Luther's supreme opportunity at Worms. In the highest moral courage he was the superior of Luther. (Workman II, 322.) As Geikie says, he was far in advance of him in the clearness and depth of many of his views. (*The English Reformation*, 48.) There was throughout his career a fine disdain of numbers and time-honoured

claims. He was entirely unimpressed by titles, dignities, and the grandeur of the great in the State and in the Church. He treated with scorn a thousand voices that had overawed the world. He accounted as lighter than vanity itself the world—recognized sovereignties, the clamours of divine right, dynastic authority, indisputable supremacy, the empire on the part of popes, the dictatorships of councils and synodical courts. These things were nothing to him. His appeal was to a higher court and to a higher Authority than any on earth.

Think of the daring of a village parson in the interior of the little isle of England who would venture to brave the Pope on his imperial throne and call him "potissimus Antichristus," and would dare to defy cardinals and bishops as minions of Satan and no followers of Jesus. (Winn, *Wycliffe's Selections*, 72–4.)

> "Forward then, soldiers of Christ, against the Antichrist who claims to be supreme Lord of your actions, goods and lives." (Workman II, 314.)

Think of that appeal of his against Courtenay in 1382 to the King and the Parliament. Wycliffe felt that the rights of all Englishmen, of all Churchmen, were at stake and, with no mass of public opinion behind him, no body of applauding colleagues to cheer him on, he made his splendid appeal.

> "I appeal to the Church of the first thousand years after our Lord's time. I challenge the existing Church to dispute these questions with me. You reply that the Church has settled the matter; and have, in fact, condemned me beforehand. I expect to be silenced and, according to your new ordinance, imprisoned. I demand, therefore, that the lay voice shall be heard. I have appealed to the King against the University; I now appeal to the King and Parliament against the Synod which is about to use the secular arm—the arm of Parliament. If I am to be tried, let me have a fair trial, and argue my case before the world. If that is not to be, I will at least take care that

> Parliament shall understand the essential points at issue, and the use that is to be made of its power, and I will also do my best to secure that the ecclesiastics shall be forced to consider some things as open questions which they now count it heresy on my part to attack." (Burrows, 125.)

It was the spirit of England that spoke there, the voice of an English Hampden in the fourteenth century. As Wylie finely says:

> "It is not the political constitution which has come out of the Magna Charta of King John and the barons, but the moral constitution which came out of that Divine Magna Charta, that Wicliffe gave her in the fourteenth century, which has been the sheet-anchor of England. The real secret of England's greatness is her permeation, at the very dawn of her history, with the principles of order and liberty by means of the English Bible, and the capacity for freedom thereby created. It was Wicliffe who laid that basis." (p. 125.)

Then, too, the greatness of his soul is seen in the courage and daring with which he grappled with the wrongs and evils of the day. His sense of truth and righteousness sprang from his intimacy with the Word of God and the mind of Christ. The sins and wrongs of the day aroused in him an indignation like that of the Psalmist: "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law." (Psalm cxix, 53.) As he witnessed the falsity and felt the wrongs in the Church his heart was stirred in him, as Paul's at Athens, when he saw the land wholly given to idolatry. He could not be silenced. His heart became hot within him and while he was thus musing the fire burned, and he had to speak with his tongue.

Surely it might be said of him what was said of the Scotch reformer, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man." Or, of the noble Englishman, John Lawrence, upon whose monument in Westminster Abbey are

engraved the words: "He feared man so little because he feared God so much." Lechler said in speaking of his energetic moral earnestness:

> "It wells up from the conscience and depth of the soul. Hence the concentrated moral force which Wycliffe always throws into the scale. Whether he is defending himself or speaking to the consciences of Bible students or addressing moral warnings to young men, he invariably comes forward with a fulness of moral earnestness, with arresting force, with marrowy pith and power." (Lechler II, 306.)

It is fine, too, to be told that at times in the very middle of an earnest disputation he would break out into joyful praise and thanksgiving to God. All through his career as a reformer there is a boldness that is Pauline, the very spirit of Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior."

We think, too, of his *greatness as a man*—a many-sided man in whom the intellect predominated with an intensity of moral conviction—and yet a man of warmth and feeling. His magic was not far to seek—he was so human. Matthew in his adjudication of Wycliffe's character throws a rather new light upon him. A natural curiosity, he says, leads us to ask what the man really was like, but all we know is he was thin and worn, most innocent of conversation, and that he had a charm of manner which led men of the highest rank to delight in his society. (Matthew, xlv.) Judging from his works, it is difficult to discern in what the charm consisted. Of his own feelings, his inward struggles, his doubts and hesitations, we learn nothing. But there was occasionally a rich vein of wit and humour. His sense of humour often came out in a diverting play of cheerful banter. He loved to poke fun at the silly sophistries of the ecclesiastics, and the ridiculous arguments of the priests and friars. One day he said: "The only text in Scripture which has any reference to the friars is that word of Christ, 'I know you not!'" It is true that his wit and humour

sometimes passed into mockery and sarcasm, and that he used expressions that nowadays would be considered extravagant, if not unpardonable. He was passionate, ofttimes to an inordinate degree. " When angered by a mischievous doctrine or an evil practice, he is apt to express and justify his indignation so freely that even his positive teaching seems to be tinged with polemic harshness. He was conscious of this defect and strove and prayed against it. Yet, whatever were his faults of temper, he must have possessed a singular attractiveness." (Matthew, Introduction, xlvi.) It was no time for honeyed words and rose water. Strong diseases need strong treatment. If he had not been passionate he would not have been Wycliffe, as Jeremiah would not have been Jeremiah, or Paul Paul. It was the righteous anger of a righteous man. When he lashed with scorn the whole mediæval conception of the Church and its characteristic institutions, he felt that the souls of men were being sacrificed

> " to an overgrown sacramental system, at the roots of which he struck by his attack on the fundamental doctrine of transubstantiation." (Workman I, 6.)

But there was no protrusion of self. There was no noisy advertising of John Wycliffe. There was no demagogic yearning for the limelight. In his most passionate invective, in his most violent diatribe, there is seen the man whose soul is stirred with the spirit of a Paul, a Peter, a John, or rather of the Remonstrant Christ.

> " Let God be my witness," he cried, " that before everything I have God's glory in my eye, and the good of the Church, which springs out of reverence of holy Scripture, and following the law of Christ." (Lechler II, 312.)

It was the cause of God and the Gospel that he was fighting for. In fact, the words of his father to young C. P. Scott, the famous editor of the *Manchester Guardian*,

when five hundred years later as a young man he was about to enter the University of Oxford, might have been accepted by John Wycliffe as the guiding words of his great career:

> "Let no fear of the world's opinion or even of the world's scorn, no deference to a majority, no shadow of influence from consideration of what may be most conducive to your own interest, your own advancement, or even to your own opportunities of being useful, either consciously or unconsciously determine your convictions."

But last of all, and greatest of all, was *Wycliffe's spiritual greatness*. To him Christ was all, and Christ was in all. To him to live was Christ. In one of his sermons he said that the Apostles "lived homely with Jesus Christ." That was the essence and secret of Wycliffe's career. He lived homely with Christ in adoring reverence, in loving intimacy, walking with Him as Enoch walked with God. As his life advanced and the end drew near, he seems to have grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, more loving and beloved. His private life was singularly pure. Not a breath of slander ever impugned the sanctity of his character. In an age when the ministry was fouled almost universally by impurity and immorality, Wycliffe lived as a man, unspotted from the world, blameless and sincere, as one of God's sons in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. For this, after all, was the secret of his extraordinary attraction. He had a simple, personal faith in his Saviour. He was a good man. William Thorpe, one of his warmest friends, who lived in the same house with him in intimacy said of him that he was considered the most learned man then living, and also an exceedingly strict or regular ("passing ruly") man and innocent in his living; in fact, in a word, "Master John Wicliffe was the most godly wise man that I ever heard of or knew." (Holt, 147. Quoted

from Foxe, 3, 258.) His life was a living demonstration of the Invisible Realities. As a modern biographer has said of John Wesley it would be said of John Wycliffe :

> " The faith and works of the saint, the evangelist, the statesman, the theologian and the builder of the Church were derived directly from his risen Lord."

In a day when most Churchmen seemed to live only for this life, and their god was their belly, their glory their shame, and their minds set on the grovelling earthly things, he sought neither wealth nor preferment, and preferred the path of privation. There is good reason to believe that when the poet Chaucer drew his famous picture of the English parson, in his Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, he was just painting a word-portrait of John Wycliffe.

A good man was there of religion,
And was a poor parson of a town.
He was also a learned man—a clerk,
But rich he was of holy thought and work ;
That Christes gospel truely would preach,
His parishens devoutly would he teach ;
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patient.

Wide was his parish, and houses far asonder,
But he ne lefte nought for rain and thunder,
In sickness, nor in mischief, to visit
The farthest in his parish, moche and lite (great and small).
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf (gave),
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught.

He was a shepherd and no mercenarie,
To draw folk to heaven by fairnesse
By good example was his busynesse—
Christ's lore, and His apostles twelve,
He taught, and first he followed it himself.

Never, says a modern writer, does the great Doctor Wycliffe, first scholar of the day, and the keenest logician of Oxford, seem so truly great as when we trace his footsteps in the hovels of Lutterworth. Or, to alter a word in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*,

> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him that England might stand up
> And say to all the world "This was a man!"

EPILOGUE

"WHAT, after all," said the great Bishop Lightfoot, "what, after all, is the individual life in the history of the Church? Men may come and men may go —individual lives float down like straws on the surface of the waters till they are lost in the ocean of eternity—but the broad, mighty rolling stream of the Church itself —the cleansing, purifying, fertilizing tide of the River of God—flows on for ever and ever." True, very true. But in that mighty, rolling stream from time to time there have been men raised up by God beyond all others in their day for the cleansing and purifying of that fertilizing tide. If we believe with one of England's greatest voices that God fits the man for the place and the place for the man, that there is an hour for the voice and a voice for the hour, we may surely know that in the fourteenth century and to England's Church there was a man sent from God whose name was John Wycliffe. His day was not our day. His methods and language and instruments were not ours. God cast him in his own individual mould as a man born out of due time with the instincts and ideals of the sixteenth century in the curious environment of the thirteenth century. He was just himself—plain John Wycliffe—but to himself and to the Truth as God showed it to him he was nobly true.

Unlike Cranmer, Wycliffe had no penchant for liturgiology, nor did he ever seem to have any desire for compiling an Anglican liturgy as opposed to the Roman Mass. Unlike Calvin, that internationally minded man, as Professor Besselaar says, whose interests embraced the whole of known Europe, who had his finger on the

pulse of Church life in all quarters of Europe and expressed his readiness to cross ten seas in order to plead and promote the sacred cause of Reformation, Wycliffe's life was confined to the precincts of an English university, and latterly to the limits of an unfamed English parish and the almost exclusive interests of England's people and the English Church. Unlike Luther and Huss, he was never called upon to face the pomp and power of the Church rulers of the age in one of the greatest scenes in modern history, and declare that while human infirmity had marred many of his writings he would never recant what stood on sound truth and the Word of God. But he did what he could; not in the limelight of Diets and international councils, but in the narrowness of his college and parochial limitations. And, like St. Paul in the few square feet of space allowed him in the Roman prison, he erected a fulcrum with which he has moved the modern Church world, and by his words and works has swayed and is swaying countless minds. For we believe that every social peril, every moral evil, every Romish error of Wycliffe's day is found in this our twentieth century in Church and State, in civic and ecclesiastical life, in different guise but with equally subtle force. Every man to-day who in pulpit, press, parliament or preceptor's chair would stand for God's truth and the rights of man, for an unadulterated Gospel and an unimpaired Bible will find in John Wycliffe a leader in thought and a spur to action.

It is said that on a Sunday a half-century ago a number of Cambridge men were gathered at an afternoon tea when someone remarked: "I hear that a College bearing the name of Wycliffe has been founded in Canada!" Among those present was Bishop Westcott, at that time Regius Professor in the University. He looked up and said, "That is a great name to live up to! That is a great name to live up to!" Curiously enough, some years afterwards, our Dr. O'Meara of Wycliffe was introduced to Sir George Williams as the Principal of

Wycliffe College, Toronto. Sir George said: "Wycliffe College, Dr. O'Meara? What a glorious name to live up to."

A great name to live up to, indeed. A glorious name to live up to, indeed. For the supreme task of every real Anglican Churchman is to fight the good fight of faith against Romanism, infidelity and atheistic communism as fearlessly and perseveringly as good John Wycliffe; to stand like Wycliffe the Protestant, a witness for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the Bible and the Gospel; and to stand up, stand up for Jesus like Wycliffe the Antitestant with high moral indignation and outspoken earnestness againt all false doctrine, hypocrisy and wrong.

As I conclude this volume with a thanks to God for enabling me to place this unworthy tribute to the greatest of the Christians and Churchmen of a bygone England, I heartily confess that I have been a eulogist. I admit frankly that I have used adjectives that might seem to some too laudatory. But I can honestly say that throughout it all I have said nothing that I do not believe, and for which I have not found historical authority. And further, that the adjectives I have used and the phrases of commendation I have employed, in many cases, have been exceeded by the language of scholars most eminent in the literary and biographical field. And I would close all by recasting the words of a recent writer in the *Evangelical Quarterly*, October, 1934:

> "While we admire with a great admiration this great man of God we set him up on no pedestal above human failings. He himself would not have sanctioned such an act for a moment. There are minor matters also in which we would dissent from Wycliffe's findings, Wycliffe's diatribes, Wycliffe's actions. But these are as the small dust of the balance when weighed against the admiration we cherish for that unsullied escutcheon, which he bore so bravely to the last; for that unfaltering hold of Evangelical truth

which he displayed through good and evil report; and for the wholeheartedness of his devotion to his exalted Lord, for whose sake he breathed and toiled incessantly, and in whose encircling arms he sank to rest after spending his last ounce of ebbing strength in the service of Immanuel. God be praised for John Wycliffe."