

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WYCLIFFE TRANSLATION

According to Gail Riplinger, the Wycliffe Bible was not translated from the Latin Vulgate and the title page which states “Made from the Latin Vulgate” was added 500 years after its original publication:

“The verse comparison charts in this book dispel the myth that Wycliffe and his followers used a corrupt Bible translated from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate...

“The myth that the Wycliffe bible came from this ‘Latin Vulgate’ arose from the misleading statement – ‘made from the Latin Vulgate’ – added to the frontice page of an 1850 printed edition of Wycliffe’s Bible, edited by Frederic Madden and Josiah Forshall.” (*Awe*, pp. 788-790)

A chapter on “Wycliffe’s Views” features spliced excerpts from the writings of John Wycliffe (1324-1384) and others as the basis for many false assertions to support her false premise that Wycliffe and his Lollard followers “polished” English scriptures which were already in popular use and that were “in complete agreement with the Traditional Text”:

“The English scriptures had been passed down through the hands and hearts of faithful men. He and his associates merely ‘polished’ the spelling and idiom and Anglicized the word order of the scriptures already existing in his time (i.e. Bede, Alfred, Athelstane, Richard Rolle et al.). In the last half of the 1300s, others, like John Trevisa, produced an English edition of ‘the entire Bible,’ through the patronage of Lord Thomas de Berkeley...

“Wycliffe’s Epistles, Acts, and Revelation were ‘polished’ versions of already existing texts...

“There is no doubt that Wycliffe was involved with ‘polishing’ the English Bible...

“...actual examination of the 200 or so extant editions makes it evident that the polishing was progressive, with mixed texts seen in numerous editions.” (*Awe*, p. 774, 776-7)

The Translators of the 1611 King James Bible do not mention John Wycliffe or the Lollards as translators but simply state that John Trevisa (1342-1402) “translated” the Scripture into English during the reign of King Richard II.

“THE TRANSLATING OF THE SCRIPTURE INTO THE VULGAR TONGUES...

“...Much about that time, even in our King Richard the second’s days, **John Trevisa** translated them into English, and many English Bibles in written hand are yet to be seen with divers, translated as it is very probable, in that age.” (“The Translators to the Reader”)

Richard II was the king of England from 1377 to 1399 and the royal patron of John Wycliffe and his Lollard reform movement, so it seems quite extraordinary that the 1611 Translators’ made no mention of John Wycliffe as a translator of the English Bible “even in our King Richard the second’s days,” or as the scholar who, as Gail avers, “polished” and “Anglicized” the English scriptures already in existence. The reason for this omission is that the manuscript evidence shows that a team of five Oxford scholars who were inspired by Wycliffe “translated” the Latin Vulgate into English. Margaret Deansely, as Emeritus Professor of History of the University of London and the author of *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions*, elaborated on the internal evidence of the Wycliffite-Lollard Bible in a 1951 lecture:

“‘Lollard Bible’ seems a fair name to apply to the Wycliffite translations, because manuscript evidence forbids us to believe that they were the work of Master John Wycliffe personally, and shows that they were the work of his followers. ‘Lollard Bible’ does not imply that the English text itself had any partisan verbal translations, quite the contrary: it was a very good English translation of the Vulgate. Between the years 1380 and 1384 then, a notable academic feat was accomplished at Oxford, at the inspiration of Master John Wycliffe, and by the hands apparently of five of his followers. We have the original manuscript of the first part of the Wycliffite translation, down to Baruch iii. 20; written in five hands: and an early copy attributing it to Nicholas Hereford. The translators began at the beginning of Genesis and worked their way through the whole Bible, which to them, of course, included the Apocrypha. This complete translation of the [p.4] Vulgate was a great undertaking and no one had done such a thing before in England...

“...Nicholas Hereford, his most prominent follower, was responsible for one complete translation... And...the rights of authorship were not at the time associated with the making of a translation, and the name of any translator was not usually given in the manuscript. An explicit will run ‘Here endeth the gospels in Romance’ (*i.e.*, Old French): ‘Here endeth Vegetius’ Art of War in English’, without any mention of a translator’s name, more often than not.” (“The Significance of the Lollard Bible”)

Evidence that Nicholas Hereford and other Lollards “translated” the Wycliffe bible is available in Malcolm Lambert’s *Medieval Heresy* which presents an illustration of a page from the Book of Baruch in the Early Version of the Lollard Bible as photographed by the Cambridge University Library. The caption states: “‘The Lollard Bible’ the Early Version breaking off at Baruch 3, 20 (cf. p. 234, n. 3 with the note of the break, ‘Here endeth...’ 7 lines from the bottom in the right hand column in the illustration.)” Historian Lambert explained the break off as the point where the translation of Nicholas Hereford ended and translation by others began:

“Hereford, a man of academic caliber, an Oxford master of arts, was believed by Knighton to have been the first leader of Lollardy, and there is evidence that he played a significant part in the writing of the first Bible.³ ...

“fn. Certain mss. Of EV break off at Baruch 3.20; Bodl. Ms. Douce 369, part 1 gives Hereford as translator to that point; Cambr. Univ. Lib. Ms Ec. i.10 (overleaf) notes, ‘Here endeth the translacioun of Her. And now bigynneth the translacioun of J. and of othere men’ (spelling slightly modernized)...” (*Medieval Heresy*, pp. 234-35)

There were two translations of the so-called Wycliffe Bible, the first being the Early Version of 1384, a very literal translation of the Latin Vulgate which preserved the Latin construction and even the word order of the Vulgate. Malcolm Lambert wrote of this translation:

“The first translation...was a painfully literal crib of the Vulgate, with past participles rendered direct into English and a Latin word-order imposed rigidly on the English sentence. It was not intended for indiscriminate dissemination; one purpose may well have been to aid preachers who, basing themselves on the Scriptural text on Wycliffite principles, would need to read out translations in their sermons. A translation of the whole Bible would give them a work of reference. Elements of Latin they might already possess; a crib to the Vulgate would be an ideal aid for them. More ambitiously, the translation could serve in a lord’s household, where the newly literate upper-class might read the text and expound it to their subordinates. The literalness of the version expressed a continuing reverence for the Vulgate; if the written Scripture expressed God’s Word, then it might be dangerous to make free with the word sequence. Moreover, a rigid

following of the Latin word-order facilitated the insertion of glosses phrase by phrase...”
(*Medieval Heresies*, p. 231)

The Later Version (c. 1394) was not a word-for-word, but “meaning for meaning” or *dynamic equivalence* translation of the Vulgate. Although modern scholars attribute the Later Version to John Purvey, an Oxford scholar and follower of Wycliffe, the evidence of Purvey being the translator is weak. According to H.J. Wilkins, a former Vicar of Westbury on Trim, Wycliffe’s church in Bristol, the Later Version of the misnamed Wycliffe Bible was translated by another of Wycliffe’s followers, John Trevisa, as the 1611 Translators stated in their Preface. In his 1915 book, *John De Trevisa: His Life & Work*, Wilkins documented other historical records which credited Trevisa with the translation:

“Caxton in his Prohemye to his edition [printed in July 1482] of Trevisa’s translation [1387] of Higden’s [c. 1299-1363] Polychronicon, asserts: ‘Ranulphus monke of Chestre’ to be the original author of the Polychronicon and that Trevisa ‘atte request of lord barkley translated this sayd book | the byble and bartylmew de proprietaribus reru out of latyn into englissh|.’

“From Caxton s time till the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was generally accepted by most writers, including Bale [1495-1563], Pits [1663-1735], Usher [1580-1656], Carew [1602], Fuller [1608-1661], that Trevisa did translate the Bible.

“Bale [1495 - 1563]¹ delivers the learned labours of Trevisa more largely thus: ‘John Trevisa, a gentleman of Cornwall, was a priest and vicar of Berkeley, a man most famous for learning and eloquence, who especially above others laboured to adorn the English tongue, and to remove the old harshness thereof, whereby he became very dear unto many nobles of the land, but especially to his excellent Lord Thomas of Berkeley, and amongst other studies, which much delight the minds of men, histories and antiquities best pleased him, as from whence the best councils and examples of life might be drawn ; wherein he studiously laboured, he shewed himself harsh and biting towards monks and their professions, taxing their pride, riot and hypocrisy: as he saith, We read that Christ instituted Apostles and Priests, but never ordained Monks and begging Friars, with many other like taunts. Into the English tongue he likewise, at the request of the said Lord, translated the whole Bible, as well as the Old and the New Testament.’¹ Balau de Scriptor. Angl. Centur. 7, No. 18.” (*John De Trevisa: His Life & Work*, 1915, pp. 101-102)

Given that John Trevisa translated the Later Version, why was the Bible named after John Wycliffe; and why have John Trevisa, as well as Nicholas Hereford, been largely ignored by modern historians? The answer seems to lie in the fact that both Trevisa and Hereford became disaffected with John Wycliffe and his ultra-radical and even violent Lollard movement, of which more will be said later. Both translators separated from the Lollard movement and Malcolm Lambert adds that Hereford “not only recanted, but spoke against it.” (*Medieval Heresies*, p. 235) To address the questions above, H.J. Wilkins expressed the following opinion, which suggests that the Lollards hijacked the translations of Hereford and Trevisa and named them after Wycliffe in order to associate the translation with their radical movement.

“When did Trevisa break away from his support of Wycliffe? The answer may probably be thus given: At the time Wycliffe fell into heresy, generally supposed to be shortly after he proceeded to the degree of Doctor of Divinity at Oxford.

“Therein probably lurks the solution of the question as to the lack of knowledge of, or at any rate as to the failure to mention Trevisa’s translation of the Bible by Wycliffe or Hereford.

“It is also quite certain that so devout and liberal a supporter of the Church as proved by his benefactions recorded by Smyth as Thomas, Lord Berkeley, would be little inclined to aid in the unauthorized circulation of the Scriptures, and especially considering the purpose they were, in part, put to: although he was glad to have a translation for pious use within Berkeley Castle.

“Therein, too, lies probably the answer to Dibdin’s question (p. 104): ‘If he [Caxton] saw such a translation [by Trevisa], why did he not think it at least as deserving of publication as the Polychronicon?’ The unauthorized publication of the Scriptures at that time was fraught with great danger, arising, not from under-valuation of the Scriptures for portions of them were undoubtedly in circulation in the vernacular from the earliest times but from the ‘practical politics’ of those times: and Caxton (even if Trevisa and his Patron had been willing, which admits of very little doubt was not the case, for him to print Trevisa’s translation) would have no wish to become involved in the hostility and odium shown to the heretical Wycliffe and his followers.” (*John De Trevisa: His Life & Work*, 1915, pp. 110-11)

In her largely fictional book, *In Awe of Thy Word*, Gail Riplinger identified Nicholas Hereford as mere “editor of part of the Old Testament,” whereas the manuscript evidence confirms “the translation of the...greater part of the Old Testament being the work of Nicholas Hereford” (ISBE) as documented above. Riplinger also claims that there were not two editions of the Wycliffe translation, but only one, and that no Later Version was undertaken.

Having suppressed important manuscript evidence that Oxford scholars other than Wycliffe in fact did “translate” the Bible credited to Wycliffe, Gail Riplinger based her deceptive history of the translation on undocumented statements found in current books whose common agenda seems to be historical revisionism. On this foundation of sand, Riplinger argued that Wycliffe’s name and the date of publication were expunged from all Wycliffe bibles due to widespread fear of persecution. This fabrication allows Riplinger to promote a fictitious history of the translation:

“Because of such ordinances, many Bible owners ‘erased his name from their pages out of fear’ (Bobrick, p. 69) Dates on Bibles were omitted or removed because it was illegal to have a Bible with Wycliffe’s name on it or one written with a date that might imply Wycliffe’s involvement. His earliest editions are given dates between 1380 and 1384; the later editions are given dates between 1388 and 1395. These, however, may not be entirely accurate. Wycliffe’s Bible evolved between 1380 and 1395. Some writers have tried to assign the changes to two separate ‘events,’ but actual examination of the 200 or so extant editions makes it evident that polishing was progressive, with mixed texts seen in numerous editions. This somewhat thwarts the theory that John Purvey, Wycliffe’s secretary, did the entire second edition after Wycliffe’s death (see De Hamel or *The Cambridge History of the Bible*).” (*In Awe of Thy Word*, pp. 776-77)

The first book cited as evidence for Gail’s revised history of the Wycliffe bible was Benson Bobrick’s *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired*. Bobrick, who treats the English Bible as an instrument of political revolution, is also the author of *Angel in the Whirlwind* and other books which glorify “revolution”— as if the Bible instructs Christians to overthrow secular governments. The very opposite is true for the Bible condemns those who “resist the higher powers” and commands Christians to obey their secular rulers:

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For

rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:1-5)

In his first Inaugural speech, Pres. George W. Bush alluded to Benson Bobrick’s *Angel in the Whirlwind* as the “Angel” who directed the “Storm” of the American Revolution—a revolution that is not over, said Bush, but continues under his administration:

“After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson: ‘We know the Race is not to the swift nor the Battle to the Strong. Do you not think an Angel rides in the Whirlwind and directs this Storm?’... This work continues. The story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.” (Bush Inaugural Speech)

Benson Bobrick also wrote *The Fated Sky: Astrology in History* which promotes astrology, another evil condemned by God.

“MADE FROM THE LATIN VULGATE”

Louis Israel Newman noted in *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* that the Lollard translators did not have access to the Hebrew manuscripts and therefore made no corrections within the text, but rather placed glosses in marginal notes. Moreover, they used the (pagan) commentaries of Jewish rabbis (who were Kabbalists):

“...Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos, two great Hebraists of the fourteenth and fifteenth [centuries], are said to have visited England during their lifetime... The several translations of the Bible into English which appeared during this period [the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] contributed to the spread of Hebrew scholarship. To a discussion of them we may for a moment give our attention, viewing them particularly in the light of their dependence on the Hebrew original, the aid of Jewish teachers, and their employment of Rabbinical commentaries.

“...John Wycliffe...did not seem, with his collaborators, Hereford and Purvey, to have had access to the Hebrew original of the Old Testament. The translators were aware that the Vulgate did not faithfully represent the Hebrew, but this information was gathered secondhand, chiefly from the commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra. They did not therefore venture to correct the errors, but contented themselves with notes in the margin; Purvey, the curate, an intimate and friend of Wycliffe and a leader of the Lollards, remarked in the Prologue to the work which he completed (about 1388-90), after Wycliffe’s death:

““Where the Ebrue, by witness of Jerome, or Lire and other expositouris discourdeth from our Latyn biblis, I have set in the margin, bi maner of a glose, what the Ebrue hath, and how it is understood in the same place; and I dide this most in the Sauter, that of all oure bokis discourdith most fro Ebru.” (NY: Columbia University Press, 1925, p. 92)

That neither Wycliffe nor his Lollard colleagues had access to the Hebrew manuscripts is generally understood by Bible scholars. Notwithstanding the irrefutable fact that the translation was of the Latin

Vulgate, Chapter 22 of *In Awe of Thy Word*, titled “Wycliffe’s Views,” claims that John Wycliffe had the Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts which, along with the Greek exemplar, he used to “correct the Vulgate”, which brought his “translation” into “complete agreement with the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts”:

“The myth that Wycliffe had no access to the original languages is discounted by Wycliffe himself who said that he had access to Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts which were in complete agreement with the Old Latin text he followed. He adds,

“[T]he Jews were dispersed among the nations, taking with them their Hebrew manuscripts. Now this happened...that we might have recourse to their manuscripts as witnesses to the fact that there is no difference in the sense found in our Latin books and those Hebrew ones.” (*Truth*, p. 157)

“He also makes reference to manuscripts being ‘corrected according to the Greek exemplar.’ Once Jerome’s text was *corrected*, there was ‘complete agreement of his translation [Wycliffe’s] with the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.’ (*Truth*, pp. 143, 157 et al.)” (*Awe*, p. 788)

For the record, here is what Wycliffe really wrote on page 157 of his book, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*:

“Regarding Jerome’s translation, it seems fitting that it be approved as much by the sanctity of his life, which Augustine recounts in his letter *On the Holiness of Jerome*, as by his expertise in the Hebrew language and the complete agreement of his translation with the Hebrew and the Greek manuscripts.” (*On the Truth of Holy Scripture*)

And so, according to John Wycliffe, it was Jerome’s Vulgate that was in “complete agreement with the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.” However, Gail Ripplinger inserted “[Wycliffe’s]” into this partial citation to make it mean something else entirely, namely, that *Wycliffe’s* translation was in complete agreement with the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts after he corrected Jerome’s Vulgate!

In his very Catholic book, Wycliffe continued to praise “St. Jerome”:

“For as he recounts in the prologue to Chronicles, the New Testament cites many Scriptures from the Old which are lacking in the Septuagint translation, inasmuch as they hid many mysteries of their faith from the Egyptian infidels. As such, it is no wonder if St. Jerome suffered the reproach of those filled with envy. Yet his efforts in toiling for the sake of the Church’s edification only brought him glory, as Augustine testifies, though he too had once piously grappled with him in scholarly matters.”

Gail’s quotation from Wycliffe’s book, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, is from a translation by Ian Christopher Levy who is Assistant Professor of Theology at the Episcopal Lexington Theological Seminary. Levy is a life-long member of the Episcopal Church and also a member of the Lollard Society.

1. Gail distanced herself from this translator because his Advisory Board was comprised of Roman Catholic priests. To shield herself from criticism (her carefully selected sentences and fragments crafted to say what Gail wanted them to say, not what Wycliffe said), the following disclaimer is made:

“Levy’s translation...*misrepresents* Wycliffe’s words on page after page. It omits entirely some 800 pages of the original which defy distortion. Only those snippets of Levy’s translation which are entirely accurate are cited in this book.” (*Awe*, p. 794)

If “Levy’s translation misrepresents Wycliffe’s words on page after page,” why did Gail use it? How did she separate truth from error in this “highly distorted” translation? It seems that only those words and phrases which could be lifted out of context and used to support her fraudulent case were deemed “entirely accurate,” while those that contradicted her case were “distortions.” Obviously Gail must distance herself from Levy’s translation because it presents a far different picture of John Wycliffe than the rabidly anti-Catholic reformer she portrays. Throughout *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, written in 1378, only six years before his death, it is apparent that John Wycliffe was a devoted student of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) whose principles “on the truth of Holy Scripture” informed Wycliffe’s views and were the basis of his book. In fact, *De Verite Sacrae Scripturae* is virtually a defense of St. Augustine’s theological writings. Also evident is Wycliffe’s great admiration of St. Jerome. At the outset of his work Wycliffe declared his veneration of these and other Catholic theologians:

“We ought to accept the statements of Augustine on these three counts especially: first, due to the testimony of Scripture; second, the strength of his reason; and third his reputation for sanctity attested by the church.

“(38) [...] With one voice the Church sings his praises. For here in St. Augustine God has provided his Church with a catholic doctor to elucidate the mysteries of Holy Scripture...

“(39) [...] In every case I am in conformity with both the logic and the metaphysics of Augustine, which are all the more excellent for belonging to Holy Scripture, the very first rule of all human perfection. Hence, it surely seems to me the height of presumption and blind pride for children such as ourselves, ignorant as we are in logic and metaphysics, to condemn or repudiate the knowledge of such a saint without affirmative evidence.

“The same applies, to a certain extent, when considering Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory, Bernard and other similar saints, especially in matters of logic and the meaning of Scripture. For we ought to listen to those who so assiduously beseeched God that they might come to comprehend his sense.” (*On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, pp. 62-3)

A Catholic priest to the end of his life, Wycliffe repeatedly referred to the “Catholic faith,” “Holy Catholic Church” and “Holy Mother Church” as well as to the pope as the “Vicar of Christ” and “Vicar of St. Peter” in the most reverent terms. Wycliffe believed that “every decretal letter is the creation of some pope, the Vicar of Christ together with his subordinates... for the sake of correcting the errors which might arise in the Church.” (*On the Truth*, p. 209) He often referenced the works of Pope Gregory the Great, calling him “St. Gregory” and “the Vicar of Christ.” Throughout *On The Truth of Holy Scripture*, Wycliffe repeatedly referred to the writings of the “Four Holy Doctors” of the Church: St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Gregory. (*Truth*, pp. 206, 221, 247-8 et al)

Wycliffe also believed in Catholic doctrines such as “the repose of those asleep in purgatory” (*Truth*, p. 323), “mortal sin” (Ibid. p. 357), the “sacerdotal offices” of prelates and priests (p. 293), most “canon law” is “divine law” (p. 304) and “there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.” (p. 164) Wycliffe never repudiated the Catholic Church per se or its doctrines, except for transubstantiation which he believed to be ‘consubstantiation,’ i.e. the “Real Presence of Christ” without the mediation of a priest. The fact is that Wycliffe was ever a devout Catholic:

“Hence, it is not sufficient for someone to believe every truth in general, though he must not disbelieve any article of the Catholic faith in the particular, but should instead believe in the first article. For those other adults, just as some Christians, to whom God has given inspiration and the light of understanding for this purpose, it is appropriate for them to believe explicitly in God at the very least, and together with this, to believe in the Holy

Catholic Church, and thirdly, that they would hope they were members of the Church. Yet if, along with these gifts, a person dies before acquiring the three theological virtues, these articles of faith, and all the others, then he will not find salvation in the ark. (244)”
(*On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, p. 164)

Wycliffe’s career as a reformer consisted of a steady stream of criticism of ecclesiastical benefices (stipends) and clerical negligence, yet throughout this period Wycliffe himself was provided multiple benefices by the Catholic popes. In his book, *Was John Wycliffe a Negligent Pluralist?*, H.J. Wilkins listed Wycliffe’s clerical positions in various Catholic churches:

“This outstanding fact is clear : that Wycliffe was a pluralist. His record is :
“1361. Incumbent of Fillingham Prebendary of Aust . 1362
[1365. Warden of Canterbury Hall, Oxford]
“1368. Incumbent of Ludgershall Held it undoubtedly till 1375
“1374. Rector of Lutterworth \ And most probably till
“1384. Died at Lutterworth / his death in 1384” (p. 40)

Having received these clerical endowments and prebends (administrative posts), Wycliffe was found to be negligent in fulfilling his duties to these churches. From the Vatican Archives:

“1362, 24 November, Avignon. Petitions to Urban V from the University of Oxford for provision to be made to John de Wyclif, priest, M.A., of a canonry and prebend and a dignity of York, notwithstanding that he holds the church of Filingham, 1 value thirty marks. Granted in Westbury, 2 Reg. Supplic. (Urban V), xxxiv, f. 207.” (*Was John Wycliffe a Negligent Pluralist?*, H.J. Wilkins, D.D., p. 4)

“1373; 26 December, Avignon. Grant by Gregory XI to John Wiclif, M.A., S.T.M., rector of Ludgersale, 3 that he may retain his canonry and prebend of [Aust in] Westburi, even after he obtains possession of a canonry and prebend of Lincoln ; notwithstanding the clause to the contrary in the provision lately made by the pope of a canonry of Lincoln, with expectation of a prebend, soon after which provision he became licenciate and then master of theology. Reg. Vat. (Greg. XI) cclxxxiv, f....” (*Was John Wycliffe a Negligent Pluralist?*, H.J. Wilkins, D.D., p. 5)

“Therefore, on the 6th November, 1375, Wycliffe obtained from the King a ratification of the prebend of Aust, to which he had been ‘provided’ by the Pope in December, 1362, and to which he was personally inducted by the Dean of Westbury, and which prebend the Pope gave him permission to retain in 1373...

“From the 6th November, 1375 (the day on which Wycliffe secured the ratification of his prebend of Aust) till the 31st December, 1384 (the day of Wycliffe’s death), there are but two recorded changes among the five canons and prebendaries of Westbury, and those are in connection with the prebend of Hembury viz. Hulton succeeded Hunt on 15 November, 1375 [Reg: Wakefield, f. 2], and Baddeby succeeds Hunt on 22 June, 1380 [ibid., f. 2id].” (*Was John Wycliffe a Negligent Pluralist?*, H.J. Wilkins, D.D., p. 37)

Rev. H.J. Wilkins properly noted Wycliffe’s double standard in accepting a plurality of churches with endowments during the years he was loudly condemning clerical endowments:

“Men can only be judged fairly by the standard of their own times; but it is the fact that Wycliffe denounced abuses, that make so many anxious to clear his fair fame of the charge of pluralism. Waddington wrote: Wycliffe ‘objected to the possession of any fixed

property by the clergy and maintained' [but erroneously] 'that the ecclesiastical endowments were in their origin, eleemosynary and that they remained at the disposal of the secular government'... yet 'Wyclif held the Divinity Professorship at Oxford, a prebendal stall, and the Rectory of Lutterworth. He thought it was excusable, no doubt, to conform to the system, which he found established, and his enemies at the time thought it no crime in him that he did so; yet he would have stood higher with posterity had he disdained the plausible excuse and placed the unequivocal seal of private disinterestedness and generosity upon his public principles.'" (*Was John Wycliffe a Negligent Pluralist?*, H.J. Wilkins, D.D., pp. 49-50)

Returning to the Bible named after John Wycliffe, Gail *edited* portions of the Prologue to the Later Version, which was not written by Wycliffe (who was by then deceased), which she then presented as "evidence" that Wycliffe rejected the Latin Vulgate in preference for the Old Latin. Gail wrote:

"The true original Prologue to the 'Wycliffe Bible' warns of such corrupt Latin bibles, which themselves needed correction and were not used by true Christians.

"...he shall find full many bibles in Latin full false, if he look many, namely new; and the common Latin bible has more need to be corrected, as many as I have seen in my life, than the English bible late translated...' (*Prologue*, p. 58)

"Therefore, Wycliffe and his associates relied, not on the Latin as a final authority, but on copies of it, corrected by the Greek, Hebrew, and English. The Prologue adds,

'...[T]he church readeth not the Psalms by the last translation of Jerome out of Hebrew into Latin, but another translation of other men...'

"The Prologue says further that in 'few' places, good Bibles read as the 'originals of Jerome.'

'Jerome was not so holy as the apostles and evangelists...neither had he so high gifts of the Holy Ghost as they had; and much more the LXX translators were not so holy as Moses and the prophets...[There were] heretics, that did away many mysteries of Jesus Christ by guileful [lying] translations...' (*Prologue*, p. 58)" (*Awe*, p. 789-90)

What was actually stated in the Prologue is precisely the opposite of this amalgamation of excerpts, key portions of which were excised ✂ by Gail Riplinger. The relevant section of the Prologue is reprinted below followed by an updated version in modern English. The reader will see that the author did not use the singular "common Latin bible" (meaning the Vulgate) but the *plural* "common Latin bibles" (which would refer to the Old Latin bibles) as those which "have more need to be corrected." Riplinger also omitted the author's high praise of Jerome for his knowledge and holiness, (instead she has Wycliffe naming Jerome one of the "heretics" who produced "guileful translations"):

"At the bigynnyng I purposide, with Goddis helpe, to make the sentence as trewe and open in English as it is in Latyn, either more trewe and more open than it is in Latyn; and I preie, for charite and for comoun profyt of cristene soulis, that if ony wys man fynde ony defaute of the truthe of translacioun, let him sette in the trewe

sentence and opin of holi writ, but loke that he examyne truli his Latyn bible, for no doute he shal fynde ful manye biblis in Latyn ful false, if he loke manie, nameli newe; and the comune Latyn biblis han more nede to be correctid, as manie as I haue seen in my lif, than hath the English bible late translatid; and where the Ebru, bi witnesse of Jerom, of Lire, and othere expositouris discordith fro oure Latyn biblis, I haue set in the margyn, bi maner of a glose, what the Ebru hath, and hou it is vndurstondu in sum place; and I dide this most in the Sauter, that of alle oure bokis discordith most fro Ebru; for the chirche redith not the Sauter bi the laste translacioun of Jerom out of Ebru into Latyn, but another translacioun of othere men, that hadden myche lasse kunnyng and holynesse than Jerom hadde; and in ful fewe bokis the chirche redith the translacioun of Jerom, as it mai be preuid bi the propre origynals of Jerom, whiche he gloside...

“...Ferthermore holi chirche appreueth, not oneli the trewe translacioun of meene cristene men, stidefast in cristene feith, but also of open eretikis, that diden awei manie mysteries of Jhesu Crist bi gileful translacioun, as Jerom witnessith in oo prolog on Job, and in the prolog of Daniel.”

“At the beginning I resolved, with God's help, to make the meaning as accurate and plain in English as it is in Latin, or more accurate and more plain than the Latin; and I ask, for the sake of love and the common benefit of Christian souls, that if any learned man find any fault in the translation, let him substitute a better interpretation of the Latin himself. But he should first of all see to it that his Latin text is correct, for he will find that many of the Latin copies are often incorrect if he examine many of them, especially the newer ones. The Latin Bibles commonly in use (of which I have examined many) have even more need of correction than the English Bible set forth here. Our Latin Bibles often disagree with the Hebrew of the Old Testament, as one may see from the commentaries of Jerome and Nicolas of Lyra and other expositors. In such places I have made a note in the margin, giving the true sense of the Hebrew, and how it is interpreted by these commentators. This is most necessary in the Psalter, which of all our books discords most from the Hebrew, because the church does not use the Psalter as it was accurately translated from the Hebrew by Jerome, but it uses another translation made by men who had much less knowledge (and holiness) than Jerome...

“...Furthermore, the church has in the past approved not only the true translations done by humble Christian men who were steadfast in the faith, but also those done by heretics, who by clever translations obscured many mysteries of Christ, as Jerome testifies in his prologues to Job and Daniel.” (*Prologue*)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia identifies the “other translation of other men” used by the Catholic Church as the Septuagint.

“Jerome was involved in violent quarrels with the clergy, the more so because he was unpopular in higher ecclesiastical quarters; he also had to blame his sharp tongue. The mass of church people, who were suspicious of innovations, naturally preferred the ancient text. When one reads the introductions written by Jerome for the various books, one can guess from his own words into what kind of a whirlwind he sent his version. Trouble even occurred in the churches when the new version was used liturgically...

“Jerome’s version met with difficulties also among learned circles... The most frequent charge was the version’s unlawful innovation, even sacrilege, in daring to degrade the LXX. Augustine expressed what was troubling many: that Jerome, by choosing the Hebrew OT as the basis of the version, cast doubts upon the divine

inspiration of the LXX, which had been the accepted Bible of Christendom from the beginning...” (ISBE, p. 973)

Thus the opposition of the Catholic churches to Jerome’s translation of the Psalms was due to his rejection, not of the Old Latin, but of the corrupt Septuagint (LXX), which the Catholic Church believed to be “divinely inspired”!

EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS

The misnamed Wycliffe translation followed the Vulgate in its inclusion of the Apocrypha. A modern edition of the Wycliffe translation edited by W.R. Cooper is titled *The Wycliffe New Testament (1388), an edition in modern spelling*. Cooper's edition omits the Apocrypha but includes “The Epistle of the Laodiceans,” a *psuedoepigraphical* book, that is, a falsely attributed book whose claimed authorship is unfounded but gives it legitimacy. Cooper maintains that this epistle is the letter mentioned by Paul in Colossians 4:16: “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”

“In...the Lollard Bible...among the disordered books will be seen an interloper in the form of the supposed letter of Paul of the Laodiceans that is common to several copies of the Later Version, but which is entirely unknown in modern translations and versions. The Lollards commonly regarded the Epistle as genuine, even though fully aware that it was omitted from the canon and certainly from some of the Latin manuscripts of their day.” (Introduction, *Wycliffe New Testament (1388), an edition in modern spelling with an introduction, the original prologues and the Epistle to the Laodiceans*, edited by the Tyndale Society by W.R. Cooper, p. xiii)

Jerome wrote of the epistles in *Lives of Illustrious Men*, “Some read one also to the Laodiceans, but it is rejected by everyone.” Jerome was referring to scholars who rejected it because it appeared in no Greek texts. Undeterred by this detail, translators of many Old Latin versions included it.

“The text was almost unanimously considered pseudopigraphal when Biblical canon was decided upon, and does not appear in any Greek copies of the Bible at all, nor is it known in Syriac or other versions. Jerome wrote in the 4th century, ‘it is rejected by everyone.’ [Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, Chap. 5] However, it evidently gained a certain degree of respect. It appeared in over 100 surviving early Latin copies of the Bible.” (Wikipedia)

In his Commentary on Colossians, J.B. Lightfoot called the Epistle to the Laodiceans “quite harmless,” but is it? The text is obviously not the “epistle from Laodicea” mentioned by Paul in Col. 4:16, but a forged epistle from Paul “to Laodicea.” Furthermore, this counterfeit epistle praises the lukewarm Church which Jesus Christ severely admonished and warned of eternal damnation should the members not repent. Contrast Paul’s words of praise in the pseudopigraphal Epistle to the Laodiceans with Jesus’ harsh criticism of this church in the Book of Revelation:

“Paul, an apostle not of men and not through man, but through Jesus Christ, to the brethren who are in Laodicea: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank Christ in all my prayer that you are steadfast in him and persevering in his works, in expectation of the promise for the day of judgment... For it is God who works in you. And do without hesitation what you do...” (“Epistle to the Laodiceans”)

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that

thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Revelation 3:14-19)

Importantly, the pseudopigraphal Epistle to the Laodicean had no Greek original, but was known only in Latin, specifically the Old Latin translations used by the heretical sects before the Vulgate and the Lollard translation included it. An analysis of the content and transmission of the Epistle of the Laodiceans was written by Glenn Davis, who found the forged epistle in Albigensian, Bohemian and Anglo-Saxon versions:

“Composed perhaps at the close of the 3rd century, by the 4th century Jerome reports that ‘some read the Epistle to the Laodiceans, but it is rejected by everyone’ (*De viris ill.* 5). Of all the spurious pieces produced in the early Church, this is one of the most feeble. It is mystifying how it could have commanded so much respect in the Western Church for period of 1000 years. Comprising only 20 verses, the epistle is a pedestrian patchwork of phrases and sentences plagiarized from the genuine Pauline Epistles, particularly Philippians. After the author has expressed his joy at the faith and virtue of the Laodiceans, he warns them against heretics, and exhorts them to remain faithful to Christian doctrines and the Christian pattern of life. The epistle purports to have been written from prison.

“There is no evidence of a Greek text. The epistle appears in more than 100 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate (including the oldest, the celebrated codex Fuldensis, 546 CE), as well as in manuscripts of early Albigensian, Bohemian, English, and Flemish versions. At the close of the 10th century Aelfric, a monk in Dorset, wrote a treatise in Anglo-Saxon on the Old and New Testaments, in which he states that the apostle Paul wrote 15 Epistles. In his enumeration of them he place Laodiceans after Philemon. About 1165 CE John of Salisbury, writing about the canon to Henry count of Champagne (*Epist.* 209), acknowledges that ‘it is the common, indeed almost universal, opinion that there are only 14 Epistles of Paul ... But the 15th is that which is written to the church of the Laodiceans’.” (“Development of the Canon of the New Testament”)

W.R. Cooper’s *Wycliffe New Testament (1388)* is “an edition in modern spelling with an introduction, the original prologues and the Epistle to the Laodiceans, edited for the Tyndale Society.” One wonder what purpose would be served by publishing a modern spelling of Wycliffe’s translation. It makes little sense, for anyone interested enough in an old English Bible would prefer the original language and spelling of the text. One explanation for popularizing this *modern spelling* Wycliffe New Testament would be that the editor and publisher wished to introduce the pseudopigraphal “Epistle to the Laodiceans” to the present Laodicean church which prefers smooth words that improve self-esteem rather than calls to repentance. Such exposure could lead to granting this pseudopigraphical epistle the validity it held among the Gnostic sects, which have been reimaged as the “true Christians.” W.R. Cooper even seems to think the Epistle to the Laodiceans should be given another chance for inclusion in the canon of Scripture.

“At best we can say that it is possible that the letter to the Laodiceans, as preserved in the Wycliffe New Testament and the Latin Vulgate, is a translation, twice removed, of the letter referred to by Paul, and would, if it could be proven, be a most intriguing and valuable document of the apostolic era.” (Introduction, *Wycliffe New Testament (1388)*, p. xiv)

Interestingly, an “Epistle to the Laodiceans” was contained in the Biblical canon approved by the arch heretic Marcion, whose Manichean teachings were the doctrine of the Paulicians, Bogomils and Cathars, whose Old Latin versions also contained the pseudopigraphal Epistle to the Laodiceans.

“Marcion...restor[ed] the Pauline conception of the gospel, — Paul being, according to Marcion, the only apostle who had rightly understood the new message of salvation as delivered by Christ. Some ideas of Marcion's reappeared with Manichaeic developments among the Bulgarian Bogomils of the 10th century and their Cathar heirs of southern France in the 13th century.” ([Wikipedia](#))

CHAPTER XIX

THE LOLLARD MOVEMENT

NOTES

1. The website of the Lollard Society is revealing: the first recommendation on the “Helpful Websites for Lollard Studies” page is the “The Bogomilism Web Page,” a Cathar website which features articles expounding upon the dualistic themes found in John Wycliffe’s translation. There is also an interesting article on the dualistic parallels between the Bogomil-Cathar heresy and Lollardism. On the “Bogomilism Web Page,” there are many links to Cathar websites, such as:
 - The best site on Internet about Catharism created by Dr Jean Duvernoy jean.duvernoy.free.fr Here are his newest publications and rare Dualistic sources. The University "Bishop Constantine of Preslav", Shumen, Bulgaria, awarded Mr. Jean Duvernoy, Toulouse, France, with the title **Doctor honoris causa** MMII for his outstanding scientific researches.
 - Centre d'études cathares "René Nelli" en Carcassonne www.cathares.org/cec
 - "Heresis" Revue semestrielle d'histoire des dissidences medievales, edition du Centre d'etudes cathares www.cathares.org/heresis/index.html
 - Voyage virtuel en terres cathares <http://www.cathares.org/catharisme.html> also imaginarium.cathares.org
 - "The Bogomils of Bulgaria and Bosnia (The Early Protestants of the East)" by L.P. Brockett, MD <http://www.reformedreader.org/history/brockett/bogomils.htm>
 - Bogomil's memorial (Bosnia) www.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/9892/bogomil.html
 - Cathar's sites in English supported by James McDonald: <http://www.renneslechateaubooks.info/languedocdualism/> and <http://www.cathar.info/dualism.htm>

All of these Cathar sites are recommended by the Bogomil-Cathar website, which is recommended by the Lollard Society, whose membership includes Ian Christopher Levy, who translated Wycliffe’s book, which Gail Riplinger referenced as evidence that the Wycliffe Bible was translated, not from the Vulgate, but from the Hebrew originals which were in “complete agreement with the Old Latin.” Gail Riplinger says, “Levy’s translation...misrepresents Wycliffe’s words on page after page” however, Gail herself has “misrepresented Wycliffe’s words on page after page” in her book, *In Awe of Thy Word*.

CONTEND FOR THE FAITH: THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

<http://watch-unto-prayer.org/TR-0-intro.html>

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