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WYCLIFFE AND THE EARLY LOLLAARDS

In his essay, "Hérésies savantes et hérésies populaires au moyen âge," Herbert Grundmann argues that historians ought to distinguish not so much between learned and popular heresies as between the original heresiarch, whether learned or not, and his later followers. In particular, he mentions John Wycliffe as an example of one who "n'est devenu hérétique qu'après une longue vie de professeur, sans avoir voulu créer une secte hérétique." Furthermore, Grundmann states flatly that "c'est après sa /Wycliffe's/ mort seulement que les Lollards sont devenus ses sectateurs."¹ Since, however, Grundmann in this essay is simply recording his thoughts and conclusions without developing or proving his arguments (he even eschews footnotes), his comment regarding Wycliffe leads one to wonder how other historians have viewed the relationship between Wycliffe and the Lollards and what kind of evidence they have used in their investigations. It is the purpose of this essay to answer those questions.

However, before undertaking our survey of historians' arguments and sources, it is important to be clear regarding the parameters of our discussion and the nature of the accompanying bibliography. To begin with, we must recognize that either Wycliffe or Lollardy is a large subject all by itself and well beyond the scope of this paper. Wycliffe was a major political figure in the late fourteenth century as well as an important scholastic thinker; and the Lollards survived as a movement for about a century and a half after Wycliffe's death. Therefore, we are restricting our attention to just one aspect of the broad subject of Wycliffe and the Lollards, viz., the

connection between the two, i.e., how did the ideas of an Oxford cleric create and/or influence a popular religious movement?

By "early" Lollards, I mean those who were active in the last years of Wycliffe's life and in the first generation after his death, i.e., from approximately 1380-1410. By thus confining ourselves to these Lollards, we are considering those whose possible access to Wycliffe's ideas included not only the written word but also the spoken one - if not with the heretic personally, then with those who were his closest associates. If, however, we go much beyond that first generation of Lollards, the connection between Wycliffe and the Lollards is necessarily attenuated by the lack of any possible personal contact with the heresiarch and by the development of additional Lollard leaders and literature.

The essay, therefore, examines the main lines of argument brought forward by historians to demonstrate the extent to which Wycliffe's own thought and activities influenced the early Lollard movement. The accompanying bibliography, however, is a bit broader than the essay in that it attempts to include all the items relating to early Lollardy as a religious movement whether those items discuss Wycliffe's significance for the movement or not. On the other hand, I have not attempted to include in the bibliography any citations dealing with Wycliffe's thought or career, the Bible translations, or Lollard literature generally unless they also treat in some way or other the beliefs and activities of the early Lollards. For those desiring a more comprehensive bibliography of either Wycliffe or Lollardy, I suggest one of the more recent monographs, e.g., J.A.F. Thomson's The Later Lollards; a recent dissertation like C. Kightly's "The Early Lollards"; the pertinent sections in Berkhout and Russell's Medieval Heresies: a Bibliography, 1960-1979; and the article by Talbert and Harrison

in volume two of A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500.

Studies in Wycliffe received a great impetus in the second half of the nineteenth century with the publication of Wycliffe's Bible in 1850 and with the first of the publications of his Latin works by the Wycliffe Society in 1882. Accordingly, our survey of historians who treat the connection between Wycliffe and Lollardy commences in the mid-nineteenth century with the German scholar Gotthard V. Lechler, one of the first to treat Wycliffe's career objectively on the basis of primary sources. His John Wycliffe and His English Precursors in the bibliography is an English translation of his 1873 Wicilf und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation. In this work, Lechler maintains that John Wycliffe was the leader and inspiration of the early Lollards. He states, for example, that Wycliffe trained and sent missionary priests to convert the countryside, that it was Wycliffe's idea to translate the Bible and that he himself worked on it, and that William Swinderby, perhaps the most successful of the itinerant preachers, was a priest whom Wycliffe himself designated for missionary activity.

Lechler's sources for such an interpretation are primarily literary, in particular, the chroniclers Henry Knighton (or his continuator) and Thomas Walsingham as well as the account of Wycliff's activities and collection of documents called the Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif. He also relies on Foxe's Acts and Monuments from the sixteenth century and, of course, Wycliffe's own writings.

The view of Lollardy as a reform movement which Wycliffe himself planned and instigated is present also in English historians of the next generation: J. C. Carrick, G. M. Trevelyan, and James Gairdner. Carrick's treatment particularly is much like Lechler's in that he calls the Lollards "the disciples of Wycliffe" and depicts Wycliffe as organizing a reform

movement. Thus, Carrick tells us that Wycliffe "instituted an order of 'poor preachers.'... These were chiefly Oxford graduates trained by Wycliffe himself, and sent by him all over the land to preach a plain and simple Christian faith....their influence stretched all over England."³ The picture Carrick presents is practically that of a Methodist revival: open-air Bible-preaching, revival tracts, and national organization.⁴ Like Lechler, he depends on chroniclers such as Knighton and secondary sources like Foxe, defending his use of the latter on the grounds that Foxe quotes directly from episcopal registers of Wycliffe's era.⁵

G.M. Trevelyan presents a less romanticized view of the movement and resorts to additional sources, including D. Wilkins Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae and Archbishop William Courtenay's episcopal register. Thus, for example, he is a bit more restrained regarding the Lollard preachers: "Preachers of his Wycliffe's school, if not actually with his commission, had been for some time perambulating the country." In fact, he recognizes that many itinerant preachers had nothing to do with Wycliffe at all.⁶

Still, however, Trevelyan comments on those preachers who "hastened to take their marching orders from the Rector of Lutterworth," and argues that Leicester became a Lollard center because it was only twelve miles from Lutterworth, where Wycliffe spent his last years in exile from Oxford. The Leicester circle of Wycliffe's supporters were responsible, according to Trevelyan, for modifying Wycliffe's views, e.g., his concern for idolatry became iconoclasm. So, too, with respect to the vernacular Scriptures, Trevelyan maintains that Wycliffe, "or his disciples at his instigation, translated the Scriptures into English for the laity."⁷

Writing about the same time as Trevelyan and using the same kind of sources, James Gairdner attempts to take the story of the Lollards from Wycliffe

to the Reformation. For our purposes, it suffices to note that he follows the others in our survey in crediting Wycliffe with sending out missionaries and with the English Bible.⁸

One other early writer deserves mention on account of his special attention to a facet of early Lollardy discussed only briefly by the others. Whereas Trevelyan and Gairdner discuss at length the Oxford Lollards and the Leicester popular preachers, W. T. Waugh writes about the Lollard knights and their political activities, which culminated in Oldcastle's rebellion in 1414. Starting with Knighton's and Walsingham's chronicles which mention by name members of the ruling classes who were Lollards, Waugh investigates these individuals and tries to piece together their various life stories. In so doing, he consults a wide array of sources: (1) additional chroniclers, e.g., Froissart; (2) state papers; and (3) episcopal registers. Whereas Trevelyan and Gairdner were content to follow Knighton and Walsingham ("A considerable body of influential knights took up the cause of Wycliffite clergy in a way that showed that they believed in their principles most sincerely."⁹), Waugh concludes that the chroniclers "were mistaken in ascribing to the knights any persistent desire for reform of the church in practice, organisation, and doctrine on the lines advocated by the Lollards."¹⁰ They may have been anti-clerical and irreverent, but they weren't Lollards. However, in another article, Waugh does affirm the Lollard convictions and connections of John Oldcastle.¹¹

Waugh's skepticism regarding the Lollardy of the knights so accused by Knighton and Walsingham was pretty widely accepted by the historical community until K. B. McFarlane urged a revisionist position in the late 1950's and 1960's. Thus, for example, H. B. Workman in his standard biography of Wycliffe suggests that the Lollard gentry "neither understood nor cared for

the religious controversies to which Wyclif attached importance, except in so far as they were weapons in their struggle with clerical opponents"; and May McKisack in her volume on the fourteenth century in the Oxford History of England states that "among the parliamentary knights, there were always some anti-clericals attracted by schemes of disendowment. Yet it is not easy to be sure which, or how many, of the knight class had fully committed themselves to Wycliffite opinions" before adding, "except for Latimer, the careers of most of the knights named /by Knighton and Walsingham/ are hard to reconcile with open adherence to heresy."¹²

McFarlane himself in his early work on Wycliffe and religious non-conformity, accepts Waugh's conclusions about the lack of Lollardy among the knights, "Their lives, their connections and, above all, their recorded support of practices the Lollards savagely denounced make it absurd to believe that they were thorough-going heretics for long, if indeed, at all."¹³ It is a major about-face, therefore, when some years later, he writes: "I will try to show how hopelessly this tradition of interpretation underrates the importance of Lollardy in high places throughout the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV." Basically, McFarlane reviews the same evidence as Waugh but interprets it more boldly. For example, wills are extant belonging to three of the ten knights mentioned by Walsingham and Knighton. They are peculiar for their use of English, their emphasis upon the unworthiness of the testator, and their contempt of the body and of worldly pomp. To Waugh these wills are "a sign that they had some special load on their souls"; but to McFarlane they "enbody...the attitude of believing rather than repentant Lollards."¹⁴

In taking this revisionist view, McFarlane also attempts to redefine Lollardy, no longer as the popular version of Wycliffe's views, but rather

as an exaggerated version of a large religious revival in late fourteenth century England, similar in nature to the devotio moderna on the continent. Besides the "Lollard" wills which, in fact, turn out to have in common with the wills of Archbishop Arundel and Henry IV, among others, a repugnance for the flesh and a sense of exaggerated repentance, McFarlane also relies on a treatise by Sir Richard Clanvow, which he describes as a "farrago of pulpit commonplaces," devoid of Wycliffite views; and yet, in it, Clanvow admits to the charge of "Lollardy" - not as a heretic but as one scorned by the wealthy, riotous, and proud.¹⁶ In other words, McFarlane is trying to establish that Lollardy - at least at the level of piety - was widespread in ruling class circles throughout our period. However, the Wycliffe connection is not very prominent, evident, or even necessary in McFarlane's revision.

Although with respect to the Lollard knights, McFarlane's Lancastrian King's represents a sharp departure from his earlier John Wycliffe, there is a sense in which the former only extends the argument of the latter, for a basic theme in all McFarlane's work is that Lollardy, while it may have been partially inspired by Wycliffe, was hardly led by him. Obviously, this represents a departure from the earlier historiography which we have considered. Although McFarlane does make use of new sources for his John Wycliffe, viz., additional episcopal registers and records from the civil courts, his questioning of Wycliffe's connection to Lollardy stems largely from his skepticism regarding the chroniclers and a corresponding re-interpretation of Wycliffe's own writings.

Thus, for example, contrary to the chronicles, McFarlane suggests that Wycliffe never did send out Lollard missionaries nor did he organize a reform movement in his rectory at Lutterworth, "since by 1382, when there

is indisputable evidence of unlicensed Lollard preaching, he was no longer at Oxford; and there is nothing then or later to connect his refuge at Lutterworth with the movement." Furthermore, McFarlane contends that Wycliffe's references to his "Poor Priests" in his writings are misreadings of the text: "The possessive pronoun and the capital letters had no contemporary warrant." Finally, McFarlane questions whether Wycliffe's vernacular sermons could ever have been preached in a non-academic setting on account of their difficult style and content. Accordingly, McFarlane concludes about Wycliffe that "the discoverable links between him and the more popular side of the movement he inspired are extraordinarily flimsy."¹⁷

The key word for McFarlane's interpretation, then is "inspired," since he argues that it is Wycliffe's Oxford disciples who popularized Wycliffe's doctrinal views. It is here that McFarlane's new sources enable him to tell the Lollard story more completely than his predecessors, for the episcopal register of Bishop Buckingham of Lincoln permits McFarlane to trace the missionary careers of Philip Repton, William Swynderby, and others with greater accuracy and completeness than Trevelyan or Gairdner.

Although McFarlane was obviously departing from earlier historians like Lechler and Carrick, he was also rejecting the historiography of the 1920's, in particular that of H. B. Workman, the author of a comprehensive, scholarly two-volume biography of Wycliffe. Workman insists on the "Poor Priests" and Wycliffe's leadership of the Lollard movement but does grant a large measure of responsibility for its development to others, perhaps in this way only laying the groundwork for McFarlane. Workman says, "Wyclif was the master, the source of inspiration and doctrine, but he had many able co-workers." The reason for Workman's generosity is his contention that a close examination of Wycliffite writings reveals the labors of others besides

Wycliffe: "The variety of styles, subject matter, and method show us how large a band of competent writers Wycliffe had gathered round him." Accordingly, Workman includes an appendix discussing the authorship of the English works.¹⁸

However, Workman also insists that Wycliffe was the originator and leader of the movement, howevermuch others may have responded to and developed his ideas. For example, Workman imagines how Wycliffe's disciples must have come to Lutterworth for advice and tracts in Wycliffe's declining years. He also maintains that Wycliffe did indeed commission itinerant preachers and organize an order of Poor Priests as the chronicler Walsingham asserts. To support this, he cites not only Walsingham but also references to "poor priests" in Wycliffe's works, which, as we have already seen, McFarlane rejects.¹⁹ Without examining the sources for ourselves, we cannot decide who is correct; but in terms of the historiographical question, it is important to note that McKisack, Leff, Lambert, and Parker follow McFarlane. Lambert in particular develops the argument by pointing out that Knighton contradicts Walsingham ^{how} on this issue by describing Wycliffe as attracting disciples without actively seeking them. Delaruelle, however, simply calls this question, "l'enfant terrible de l'historiographie wyclifite," and refuses to accept McFarlane's argument as conclusive.²⁰ As we shall see, Delaruelle's caution is well-advised.

On another matter, the translation of the Scriptures, Workman is much less tied to the tradition, insisting that Wycliffe was the "moving spirit" behind the work but probably took no personal part in the first translation (there are two--an early one from the last years of Wycliffe's life and a revised version done a few years after his death).²¹ On this question, however, Workman is basically following the work of another, Margaret Deanesly, who, in her book The Lollard Bible, seeks to establish the primary responsibility for each of the two extant Wycliffite versions of the Scriptures.

To begin with, Deanesly rehearses the evidence used by earlier historians--evidence which associates Wycliffe with the Bible: (1) Archbishop Arundel's letter to Pope John XXII in 1412 (Arundel sought to suppress the vernacular Bible in the Oxford Constitutions of 1408); (2) Knighton's chronicle; (3) the opinion of the Bohemian followers of Wycliffe; and (4) Wycliffe's own references to such a translation. Therefore, says Deanesly, with respect to Wycliffe's translating the Bible, "there is more contemporary evidence as to authorship than any that could be found, for instance, to prove that Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales."²²

Yet, Deanesly credits Wycliffe's Lollard disciples with the actual work of translation and Wycliffe with just its instigation. Why? Because of her analysis of the actual manuscript evidence. In other words, Deanesly here opens up another source for Wycliffe/Lollard studies, viz., the actual manuscripts of their works. As mentioned earlier, two versions of the translation are extant, an earlier and a later one. By examining manuscripts of the earlier version, Deanesly is able to associate the Lollard Nicholas Hereford with the work (his name is mentioned at the end of one manuscript) and at least four others since five different handwritings were used and different English dialects are evident. There is nothing to tell us whether Wycliffe took a hand in the work or not; but there is the highest probability that his circle at Oxford produced it.²³

With respect to the second version, Deanesly dates it around 1395--more than ten years after Wycliffe's death--and ascribes it to John Purvey, Wycliffe's amanuensis in his last years and an early Lollard propagandist. Once again she examines manuscript evidence (the earliest extant copy is from around that date) and literary evidence (it is obviously dependent on the first and therefore later than the first). Furthermore, the later version

is prefaced in ten manuscripts by a long General Prologue which, following Forshall and Madden, Deanesly dates around 1395 on internal grounds (it refers to persecutions and the question of celibacy discussed in the "last parliament"). Furthermore, the author of the Prologue also discusses the methodology employed in each of the two versions, thus suggesting that the author of the Prologue and the translator of the Bible are one and the same. The only scholarly Lollard still holding firm in 1395 was John Purvey; and, therefore, he is the obvious candidate for editor of the later version.²⁴

Deanesly's work has not gone unassailed. McFarlane, for example, remarks that "the usual ascription to Purvey...rests on slight foundation.... To assume that he was the only Lollard in 1396 capable of doing the work... is to pile guesswork upon ignorance."²⁵ That probably is a correct assessment. However, Sven L. Fristedt has gone beyond McFarlane's skepticism to attempt a major revision of Deanesly's argument, in fact, a major reversion to the earlier view: "The evidence distinctly singles out Wycliffe as the initiator and supervisor of the First Revision and indicates him as one of the correctors and even as one of the translators of the Wycliffe Bible."²⁶ Fristedt's argument is quite detailed (and quite frankly, a bit beyond me); but, essentially, he returns to the manuscripts themselves, examining some that were not available to Deanesly; comments on the presence of northern dialect (presumably that of Wycliffe a Yorkshireman); and concludes as indicated above.

Even Fristedt, however, does not exclude the Oxford Lollards from also having a hand in the translation, which, for our purposes, is the major significance of both Deanesly's and Fristedt's work: the evidence of the earliest manuscripts shows that the English Bible was, at least, a cooperative venture of Wycliffe and the early Lollards. Furthermore, such close attention to manuscripts and texts, once assigned to Wycliffe, points the way to further

studies regarding the relationship between the heresiarch and his followers.

We shall see how others have followed this lead, particularly Leff and Hudson; but before leaving Deanesly, we should note that her book also explores other aspects of Lollardy besides the Bible translation. In particular, she examines several of the Lollard tracts and the answers of their opponents in order to see how Wycliffite teaching evolved at a more popular level. Her conclusions are not radical nor is her analysis sustained, as in the case of the Bible translation; but it does flesh out the story, bemoaned by the chroniclers, that Wycliffe's disciples spread his ideas.

Finally, we should note, at least in passing, that later historians are still following Deanesly for the most part rather than Fristedt regarding the provenance of the English Bible, e.g., McKisack, Lambert, Leff (although he questions the Purvey connection), and Delaruelle.²⁷ At this point, therefore, the scholarly consensus is that the role of Wycliffe in the Bible translation is that of instigator. It was his theology which made it necessary; but it was his disciples who did the work.

Gordon Leff in his Heresy in the Later Middle Ages extends this view from the Bible translation to all of Lollardy. Wycliffe was its instigator. Leff calls Lollardy the "outstanding example in the later middle ages of popular heresy as the direct outcome of learned heresy." At first glance, perhaps this looks like Lechler's view revived; however, Leff's argument is much more nuanced and he does not see Wycliffe as a revolutionary leader. Yet, more than McFarlane, he finds a real link between Wycliffe and the Lollards in their beliefs. Using the insights of others but also doing his own careful reading of the sources, particularly those which reveal the ideas of the Lollards rather than merely their story, Leff describes how "the learned advocacy of the Oxford schoolman was translated into the vernacular of the poor preachers."²⁸

Leff begins with a perceptive analysis of Wycliffe's theology based on Wycliffe's Latin writings. It is not, however, Leff's contention that such abstract theologizing had a direct influence upon ordinary people. Instead, Wycliffe's ideas were mediated to the people, first of all, by his Oxford disciples. In order, therefore, to see how Wycliffe's ideas were perceived and received in academic Lollardy, Leff examines particularly the documents produced when the Church sought to suppress Lollardy at Oxford, first by Archbishop Courtenay's attempts in the 1380's and then by Archbishop Arundel's in the early 1400's.

Since, however, Wycliffe's Oxford protégés did not all at once cease and desist but instead preached and wrote in English, there was an opportunity for Wycliffe's ideas to take root in popular soil already well cultivated by anti-clerical preachers, rabble-rousers, etc. It is at this point, then, in the 1380's and 1390's, that Lollardy began to be a popular movement; and it is Leff's concern actually to examine Lollard writings and Lollard confessions (as reported by others and as collected in the Fasciculi Zizaniorum in the early fifteenth century). In this way, Leff discerns to what degree the Lollards agreed or differed with Wycliffe's original ideas and emphases; and thus, he traces the evolution of Wycliffe's ideas as his followers appropriated them.

Through such analysis, then, of tracts and confessions, expressions of actual religious beliefs, Leff is able to establish a closer connection between Wycliffe and the Lollards than does McFarlane on the basis of the records of Lollard trials. For example, with respect to the Lollard platform, Twenty-five Points (1388), Leff can conclude, "If the framework is Wyclif's, many of the emphases are Lollard. All the main Wyclifite tenets are there.... Yet there are often notable differences from Wyclif both in the expression of these views and in others not found in him." So, too,

with respect to John Purvey, Wycliffe's secretary and Lollard preacher until 1401, Leff concludes that his confession, "running to 17 printed pages... show[s] at once how deeply Purvey had drunk of Wyclif's teaching and yet had on certain points crucial for Lollardy gone beyond him."²⁹ Similarly, then, Leff evaluates the views of Swinderby, Wyche, Sawtry, Taylor, and Brute as well as those expressed in the Twelve Conclusions of 1395 to show the persistence as well as the modification of Wycliffe's theology in Lollardy.

From all such analyses, Leff concludes:

Wyclif had already travelled the path from heterodoxy to dissent; and what he transmitted to his followers was dissent ready-made. Its subsequent evolution as Lollardy made it more extreme and violent....Since Wyclif's doctrine of the eucharist was at the centre of these charges of heresy, it became one of the hallmarks of Lollardy....But Lollardy also came to comprise Wyclif's fierce antisacerdotalism without the nuances of thought with which he had invested it. The emphasis of the Lollards was predominantly moral and practical.³⁰

Of course, an underlying assumption in any argument regarding the nature of Lollard beliefs from religious literature is that Lollards could read--or at least could hear others read. In mentioning this assumption, we come to Margaret Aston, another contemporary scholar, whose little piece on "Lollardy and Literacy" delves into the relationship between heresy and vernacular literature. Though not treating our subject directly, Aston adds a dimension to our inquiry by pointing to some aspects of medieval literacy that facilitated the spread of heretical ideas, e.g., reading was a social activity and often surrounded the reader with the aura of authority. Obviously, both characteristics could easily lead to socially disruptive consequences. She bases her article for the most part on actual Lollard writings as well as those of their opponents; but she also includes an analysis of non-Lollard vernacular writings which the Lollards modified for their own use, including Canterbury Tales.

Another of Aston's works, more closely related to our subject of the

connection between Wycliffe and the early Lollards is her article, "Lollardy and Sedition 1381-1431." In this work, she is arguing that in the late medieval period, heresy, always implicitly and usually explicitly, threatened the social and political structure, so closely entwined were church and society. Thus, religious Lollards and political rebels were drawn together by an almost inexorable logic. She finds this logic enunciated in Wycliffe's writings and in the reactions of his opponents and acted upon by his followers in the course of the next fifty years. In spite of Wycliffe's own social status and his repudiation of the rebels of 1381, Aston points to his and the Lollards' denunciations of ecclesiastical temporalities and mandatory tithes as well as their anti-clerical views and lay preaching as subversive of the social order. Although Aston is very cautious about asserting a direct causal link between Wycliffe's ideas and Lollard rebellions, she does wonder aloud about how many individuals "joined or left the Lollard movement not only for the stimulus of its devotional creed, but also because it provided the promise of rewarding but treasonable action in rebellious times."³¹ Moreover, in addition to discussing the ideological rationale relating heresy and dissent on the basis of Wycliffe's and especially Lollard writings, Aston also use government records, e.g., parliamentary rolls, to trace the activities of potential or actual rebels of the knightly class. Furthermore, as the bibliography demonstrates, Aston has written on other aspects of Lollardy, including a full-length biography of its scourge at the turn of the fourteenth/fifteenth century, Archbishop Arundel.

Aston is an excellent scholar and has made important contributions to our understanding of Lollardy; however, at the very cutting edge of today's scholarship is yet another English scholar, Anne Hudson. Hudson is

represented in our bibliogrpahy by several items which are very helpful in answering our original question regarding the connection between Wycliffe and Lollardy because her special study has been the Lollard documents themselves. Like Leff, she represents a partial reaction to McFarlane's discounting the connection, for she finds in the Lollard writings themselves evidence of "their debt to Wyclif's thought and phraseology." This, combined with testimony of Lollardy's opponents who insisted they were opposing the views of Wycliffe, leads Hudson to conclude that even though "in some respects the Lollards went further than Wyclif...the seed of their ideas can be found in Wyclif." Furthermore, she even goes so far as to suggest that Wycliffe not only inspired the movements but actually also may have helped organize it: "References within his Wycliffe's writings are most reasonably interpreted as indicating his interest in, even if not his initiation of, wandering preachers;...hints are also available to suggest that he may himself have begun the popularisation of his own writings."³² In this position, she is following the assessment of Michael Wilks that Wycliffe in his own writings reveals his concern to effect reformation through an order of itinerant priests.³³

Right now, Hudson is apparently at work producing what promises to be the climax of her contributions to Lollard studies thus far: a new edition of the Lollard sermon-cycle, a set of 294 sermons organized around the liturgical propers of the church year. The first volume of that set has already appeared, English Wycliffite Sermons, and three more are promised. Unfortunately, she is postponing the question of date and authorship to volume four, which means that the volume at hand is of limited value for our purposes.³⁴

However, several articles in the bibliography as well as her introduction

and notes to Selections from English Wycliffite Sermons permit us to determine her answer thus far to the question at hand. As one might guess from the titles to her works, she specializes in close scrutiny of Lollard sources in manuscript. On the basis of both internal and external evidence (where available) including paleography, she seeks to answer questions regarding date of composition, authorship, and textual tradition. Such close, careful work enables her both to reject and to affirm parts of the traditional view. On the one hand, therefore, she insists that of the surviving Lollard literature, "none of the English texts can certainly be ascribed to Wyclif himself" (here she is disputing Talbert and Thomson in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English as well as G.V. Lechler) and finds no evidence for connecting Wycliffe with the Bible translation.³⁵

On the other hand, her examination of the manuscript evidence convinces her against McFarlane that the early Lollard movement was precisely an organized attempt to spread the ideas of John Wycliffe. In her "Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," for example, she describes the content of the Floretum Theologie as an analysis and index of Wycliffe's works, a compilation made at the university level for use by parish priests. Such a work suggests time, resources, and commitment to Wycliffe. Likewise, the production and dissemination of the English sermons, which Hudson discusses in "A Lollard Sermon-Cycle," indicate an audience capable of appreciating them and a source wealthy and organized enough to produce them. Furthermore, Hudson contends that such vernacular works often show clear dependence upon as well as familiarity with Wycliffe's own Latin works. This, too, is a sign that Lollardy began as an authentically Wycliffite movement. Hudson, however, disdains speculation regarding the actual authors of such works, contending that "the complexities of relationship...between the Latin tracts of Wyclif and his followers, on the one hand,

and the vernacular treatises on the other are only confused by ill-founded speculation connecting the last with well-known disciples."³⁶

With Anne Hudson, we come to the end of our study of the question regarding the relationship between Wycliffe and the early Lollards. Historians have been hard at work now for over a century in investigating it and have put together many of the pieces if not yet the whole story. The first of those whom we looked at saw Lollardy as a religious movement conceived, led, and organized by John Wycliffe himself who was responsible for both the Latin and English Lollard writings. Historians who have interpreted the movement in this way have based their observations largely on the late medieval chroniclers who so reported it and from official ecclesiastical documents condemning the ideas of Wycliffe.

With Deanesly and Workman, however, we begin to see a real shift, for they were willing to credit Wycliffe's disciples with the production of Wycliffe's Bible and other vernacular works. This led to seeing the Lollard movement as more than a one-man show. Although they used a wide range of sources, their assessment of the Bible was based in large measure on the manuscripts themselves.

K.B. McFarlane marked yet another stage in developing the story, for he concentrated on the episcopal and civil judicial records to give us not only the career of Wycliffe but also of his followers. That emphasis tended to remove Wycliffe even further from Lollardy, for his Oxford disciples were soon silenced; and direct links between heretic and people were practically nil. In McFarlane's view, some of Wycliffe's ideas may have caught on, e.g., the need for a vernacular Bible; but his actual involvement with and responsibility for the movement was slight.

Finally, however, with the work of Anne Hudson, we see the influence

of still another source of evidence--the Lollard's own writings. Her careful examination reveals that Wycliffe did not write the English works formerly attributed to him. Moreover, even some Latin Lollard works survive. At the same time, however, Hudson is convinced that these early Lollard writings show commitment to Wycliffe's ideas and even his direct literary influence. Thus, in the most recent scholarship, Wycliffe returns from McFarlane's exile to inspire and direct--at least by his intellectual efforts--the movement which has for so long been associated with his name.

It is obvious from what we have said above Hudson's English Wycliffite Sermons that more Lollard material will soon be in print. Once available, the scholarly community will be able to assess the Wycliffite influence with even greater precision. Furthermore, when such analysis is integrated with the previous work of scholars like Workman and McFarlane, an even more accurate and complete picture of Wycliffe and the early Lollards is bound to emerge. This, combined with the scholarship of those like Dickens and J.A.F. Thomson who have studied later Lollardy, promises to give us a comprehensive account of the Lollards and their founder, John Wycliffe. Perhaps, then, we will arrive at a final answer to the question which Grundmann thought had been answered years ago.

FOOTNOTES

References are by author and short title (if necessary). Full bibliographical information is provided in the bibliography.

¹Grundmann, p. 417.

²Lechler, pp. 208, 229, 476.

³Carrick, pp. 199, 132.

⁴Ibid., p. 251.

⁵Ibid., p. 251.

⁶Trevelyan, pp. 291-92, 198.

⁷Ibid., pp. 310, 313, 316, 314.

⁸Gairdner 1: 18, 12.

⁹Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁰Waugh, "Lollard Knights," p. 91.

¹¹Waugh, "Sir John Oldcastle," pp. 657-58.

¹²Workman, Wyclif 2: 386; McKisack, p. 521.

¹³McFarlane, John Wycliffe, pp. 146-47.

¹⁴Waugh, "Lollard Knights," p. 63; McFarlane, Lancastrian Kings, pp. 139, 213.

¹⁵McFarlane, Lancastrian Kings, p. 144.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 204-5.

¹⁷McFarlane, John Wycliffe, pp. 101, 119, 103.

¹⁸Workman, Wyclif 2: 306.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 326.

²⁰McKisack, p. 518; Leff, Heresy 2: 494, 559; Lambert, p. 232;

Parker, pp. 47-48; and Delaruelle, p. 966.

²¹Workman 2: 160, 162.

²²Deanesly, Lollard Bible, p. 250.

²³Ibid., pp. 252-55.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 255-67, 376-82.

²⁵McFarlane, John Wycliffe, p. 149.

²⁶Fristedt, p. 148.

²⁷McKisack, p. 523; Lambert, p. 236; Leff, Heresy 2: 591; Delaruelle, p. 969.

²⁸Leff, Heresy 2: 559.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 576, 579.

³⁰Ibid., p. 559.

³¹Aston, "Lollardy and Sedition," p. 35.

³²Hudson, Selections, p. 9.

³³Wilks, p. 120.

³⁴Hudson, English, p. 6.

³⁵Hudson, Selections, pp. 11, 162.

³⁶Hudson, "Contributions," p. 449.

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