



Records
of the
English Bible

*Relating to the Translation
and
Publication of the Bible in English*

Alfred W. Pollard

RECORDS
OF THE
ENGLISH BIBLE

THE DOCUMENTS
RELATING TO THE TRANSLATION AND
PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE
IN ENGLISH, 1525-1611

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ALFRED W. POLLARD

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PREFACE

IN writing a Bibliographical Introduction to the Oxford University Press reprints of the English Bible of 1611 I found myself constantly hampered by the lack of such a collection of original documents as has here been brought together. Quite a large number of important documents had never been printed in full; others were available only in books now out of print or for other reasons difficult to obtain. Many of the books, moreover, were extremely bulky, and when it was desired to consider afresh the evidence of several different documents in order to straighten out some small tangle, the difficulties of remembering where each was to be found and getting hold of the right books were somewhat harassing. I was thus moved, when my Introduction was nearing completion, to suggest to Mr. Frowde that a collection of original documents relating to the making, printing, and publishing of the English translations of the Bible, from Tyndale's New Testament of 1525 to the appearance of the version of 1611, would be as appropriate a commemoration of the Tercentenary as could well be conceived. Mr. Frowde cordially agreed, and the volume was accordingly put in hand. The natural desire of publisher and editor that it should be available for the use of those taking part in the Tercentenary Celebrations in March 1911 will be no defence if any serious fault should be found, but may perhaps be allowed some weight by

readers who would have liked fuller notes to some of the documents, or see room for minor improvements in other respects.

Although the documents here printed are mainly those which I used in writing my Introduction¹ they take a considerably wider range. The personal element which the bibliographer was bound to leave very imperfectly indicated here crops up at every turn, and in their own words in prefaces and letters, or in the narratives and comments of contemporaries, we get intimate glimpses into the characters of many of those who played their part in the century which it took to determine the great question as to what Bible the English people should be allowed to read. Another point which the documents emphasize is the political importance attached to that struggle. Just as the documents relating to the quarrel of Tyndale and Joye have little bearing on the main history of the English Bible, and yet are worth all the pages they fill because of their human interest, so the long reports of Hackett to Wolsey, or, again, the diplomatic correspondence about the Bible of 1539, which takes us so far away from text and translators, are yet thoroughly relevant as showing the immense importance attached by the statesmen of the day to stopping or forwarding the supply of the Scriptures in English, according as their policy dictated.

I have already indicated in my Introduction my belief that after the accession of Queen Elizabeth the question of what Bible the English people should be allowed to

¹ In reprinting this, marginal references by their numbers have been given to the documents used.

read was almost as keenly contested as before. The documents kindly supplied to me by Mr. Charles Rivington, just in time for insertion (see Nos. LVI and LXI), justify far stronger language than on the evidence at first before me I ventured to use. As long as he lived Archbishop Parker kept the Geneva Bible from being printed in England, and secured a monopoly for the Bishops' Bible, and for Jugge as its printer. We now know that it was within three weeks of Parker's death that Jugge's monopoly was broken down and that not more than three days later, at the instance of seven members of the Privy Council, Christopher Barker was allowed to enter the Geneva Bible 'for his copy' at Stationers' Hall. In 1577, when Jugge died, the office of Queen's Printer was conferred on Barker by a patent which gave him the most absolute control over Bible-printing in England, and until the accession of Whitgift this patent was used to secure a monopoly for the Geneva version as rigorous as that which Parker had obtained for the Bishops'. To the reasons I have given in my Introduction for believing that after a few years of grace recourse was had to the methods of Archbishop Parker to support the version of 1611 as against that of Geneva, I should like to add here that the real triumph of the 1611 version came in the days of the Commonwealth, when its hold on the affections of the people proved so strong that its supremacy remained undisturbed. The leaders of the two great parties in the Church had loyally co-operated in making it, and after the experience of a third of a century it was recognized as the Bible of the whole Church and the whole Nation.

It only remains to acknowledge some personal obligations. The heaviest of these is to my friend Mr. H. R. Plomer, by whom the greater part of the documents were transcribed.¹ Mr. Plomer took the keenest interest in the work, and without his experienced helpfulness I could have done nothing. Like most other students of the subject, I have found Anderson's *Annals of the English Bible* (1845) of great use despite its vehement partisanship. I also owe many valuable references to Professor Arber's introduction to his facsimile of the Grenville fragment of Tyndale's New Testament of 1525; to Mr. J. A. Kingdon's privately printed monograph on *Two Members of the Grocers' Company, Richard Grafton and Thomas Poyntz*; to the admirable *Historical Catalogue of Printed Bibles* by Messrs Darlow and Moule; and to that standard work, *A General View of the History of the English Bible* by the late Bishop Westcott, as edited by Dr. Aldis Wright.

ALFRED W. POLLARD.

¹ With the exception of a few in Episcopal Registers all documents have been transcribed from, or collated with, the originals. These have been transcribed as they stand, but contracted forms have been written out. In some documents the form ' & ' has been expanded; in others it has been allowed to stand.

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE EARLIER ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS (1380-1582)

MAINLY, no doubt, because of the predominance of ^{The} French as the language of educated people in England ^{Wyclifite} from the time of the Norman Conquest until the middle ^{Bibles.} of the fourteenth century, the Bible, as a whole, remained untranslated into English, until the last years of the life of Wyclif. A version was then made, about 1380-3, and some years later this was revised and substantially rewritten in a simpler style by another hand. That the reformer himself took any personal share in either of these versions which pass popularly under his name is unlikely, and in the case of the second is not seriously contended. We know from a manuscript at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, that Nicholas of Hereford, who up to the time of the final defeat of Wyclif's cause at Oxford (June 1382) figured as one of his strongest supporters at the University, was the author of the first version as far as Baruch iii. 20, where it breaks off in the manuscript abruptly, presumably because of Hereford's flight. The authorship of the rest of this version is unknown, and being unknown has been ascribed to Wyclif himself, with more piety than probability, since the master does not often take up the work of the disciple, and Wyclif, after June 1382, was both old and ill. The authorship of the second version was tentatively ascribed to one of Wyclif's followers, John Purvey, by Daniel Waterton in 1729

(*Waterton's Works*, vol. x, p. 361), and although Waterton says himself that he merely guessed and 'pitched upon' Purvey as the author, and his reason for doing so has not been confirmed, the suggestion was accepted by Forshall and Madden in their splendid edition of the two versions in 1850, and is now frequently stated as a fact.

A name which long before Waterton's time was connected with an English version of the Bible was that of John of Trevisa, of whom Caxton wrote in the preface to his edition of Higden's *Polychronicon* that at the request of 'one Sir Thomas lord barkley', to whom he acted as priest, he had translated the *Polychronicon*, the Bible, and the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, one of the best known of mediaeval encyclopaedias. The first and third of these translations survive. Of that of the Bible (mentioned also, probably on Caxton's authority, in the preface to the Bible of 1611) nothing is known, unless it can be identified either with the completion of the first version begun by Nicholas of Hereford or with the second version which has somewhat lightly been assigned to Purvey. For our present purpose it is unnecessary to enter further into these questions of authorship. It is sufficient to note that the translator of the second of the two extant versions worked, according to his own account, 'with diverse felawis and helpars' and had 'manie gode felawis and kunnynges at the correccioun of his translacioun'. It thus seems certain that there was something of the nature of an informal board or company of translators, and if piety did not constrain us to speak of these two versions, not indeed as the Wyclif, but as the Wyclifite Bible, we might well have been content, as the present writer suggested ten years ago, to have called this the Oxford Bible, since it was with the reform party at Oxford that it took its

inception and, despite its origin among Wyclif's followers, there was no attempt in either version to translate in any party spirit, or to do anything else than give a faithful rendering of the Vulgate Latin.

As early as 1397 at least one copy of this English Bible was in the possession of a royal duke, and the names of other noble owners during the fifteenth century, as well as fine manuscripts decorated so as to be worthy of such ownership, remain on record. In 1408 the Convocation held at Oxford had forbidden the possession of any English version of the Bible without licence from a bishop, but it is plain that such a licence could be procured, and we even hear of a copy belonging to such an eminently orthodox community as the Bridgetine house of Sion, at Isleworth. But the existence of Lollardy had reawakened such fears as Aelfric had expressed lest his epitome of the Pentateuch should entrap the unwary to believe in the lawfulness of polygamy, and a reader of the merchant class who had asked his priest to get him a licence to own an English Bible towards the end of the fifteenth century would probably have met but small encouragement. Add to this the fact that by this time the language of the Wyclifite versions was fast becoming obsolete, and also the vast expense of such an enterprise, and we have no reason to wonder that Caxton neither printed either of the existing translations, nor set himself to procure, or (hardened translator as he was) to make, a new one. But a generation later, other ideas had sprung up, and at least one man in England, William Tyndale, was determined that there should be an English Bible which not merely merchants but ploughboys could buy and read.

William Tyndale had come to London, with a translation of a speech of Isocrates as a proof of his ability, in the hope of finding encouragement from the Bishop of

Record i,
iii.

Tyndale's
New
Testa-
ment.