THE TREASURES OF CHESTER CATHEDRAL LIBRARY

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to the Friends of the Cathedral and
the Chester Theological Society

by

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To mark the re-shelving of the books
and the completion of the first stage in the
reopening of the Library

FOREWORD

When my wife, Canon Loveday Alexander, told me that Chester Cathedral had a library I was at once intrigued to know what was in it. Ever since I was a boy, poking around with my father in the second hand bookshops of Smithfield Market in Belfast, I have had a passion for old books and manuscripts. During my academic career I have worked with some of the rarest books and manuscripts in the world (including the Dead Sea Scrolls), in some of the world's greatest libraries, and I must confess to having acquired a secret vice: I get high on the smell of parchment, paper, papyrus, and old leather! My vision of heaven is a library full of venerable tomes, and an eternity to browse them. So when I heard of the Cathedral Library, I thought, "Chester is an old cathedral, and has had some serious scholars attached to it, so I wonder what it has collected and kept over the centuries." Inquiries revealed the Library was in boxes, because the Choir was using the Library room while its new Song School was being finished, but once the Song School opened the books would go back on the shelves, and I was welcome to see what the Library had got.

I mused as I waited impatiently, "Don't get too excited! There may be nothing much there – just a small, working collection of 19th and 20th century theological textbooks used by the clergy." When I finally got to see it, I was astounded. It far surpassed all my expectations. Here was one of the best libraries of its kind in the North West,[1] particularly strong in theology from the 17th and 18th centuries (one of my own areas of interest), and including no less than eleven incunabula – among them a Latin Bible printed in 1477 in Cologne, which may be unique! I volunteered to give a talk on the collection – and here I am today!

I want to thank most warmly the staff of the Cathedral, the Dean, Gordon McPhate, the Canon Librarian, Trevor Dennis, and above all the small and dedicated Library staff, particularly Derek Nuttall and George Chivers, who gave unstintingly of their time to make my access possible, and who, with John Wolfenden and the other volunteers, have shouldered the burden – a heavy physical burden – of putting the Library back together again. I would also pay tribute to the late Roy Barker, Trevor Dennis's predecessor as

Canon Librarian, who raised substantial funds to help conserve the books and to adapt the present premises for library use. I found that access to the collection was eased by a splendid catalogue which Derek Nuttall has prepared – to the highest professional standards. Derek has also written a short history of the Library, on which I have drawn with gratitude.[2]

This talk and the small exhibition that goes with it reflect my own scholarly tastes, but Derek Nuttall has added other treasures to supplement my choice. Some of the items on display are obviously beautiful and eye-catching; others look nondescript. But don't be fooled by appearances. The real scholar doesn't judge a book by its cover! *All* the items are interesting, and some are very rare indeed. The talk and the collection are focussed on what I would call the intellectual history of the Cathedral, and more broadly of the city of Chester. As I have just said, significant scholars have been associated with the Cathedral and the city over the centuries, and, as I had hoped, their books – those they wrote and those they owned – have found their way into the Library. This makes the Library, *as a collection*, a significant cultural artefact. As librarians today remind us, great libraries are not just random accretions of individual books. They are much more than the sum of their parts: *in their totality* they are objects in their own right, particularly when, as in this case, they belong to great public institutions. The old adage that you can tell a lot about a man from the books on his shelves, can be applied to institutions: Chester Cathedral Library says a great deal about the Cathedral, and about the city where it is located.

Today's event, I must stress, represents only work in progress. There is still much to be done to complete the remaking of the Library. There is even more to be done to make the Library truly accessible. That will require funds – for continuing the work of conservation, for security, for putting the catalogue online, for staffing, and so on. Owning such a collection is a burden on scarce resources, but it is also a precious inheritance and an immense privilege. I hope that this event may serve to pay tribute to the work already done, and stimulate the integration of the Library into the life of the Cathedral, so that it becomes part of its ongoing mission to feed the mind and the spirit.

Let me give you a few facts and figures about the Library, gleaned from Derek Nuttall's unpublished history. There has

probably been some sort of library attached to the Cathedral at least since 1541, when the old Abbey Church became the present Chester Cathedral, but it is highly unlikely that any volumes from that period are still in the collection.[3] The Library does possess items dated earlier than 1541, but, as Derek Nuttall notes, they all "appear to have been acquired in more recent times". The collection at present contains around 8,700 titles, of which some 3,200 are from the 20th century, 3,000 from the 19th, 1000 from the 18th, and 1500 from before the year 1700. Among this final category are eleven incunabula, that is to say very rare and very precious books from before the year 1500, from the "cradle days" of printing. There are also three manuscripts, which are normally kept for safety at the Chester Record Office: a 14th century copy of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (on which more anon), a 13th century Book of Hours, and a letter from Henry VIII to the Abbot of Chester. The Library's contents are varied, but, as you would expect, Biblical Studies and Theology predominate, and it was clearly assembled to support the teaching and preaching roles of the clergy. But it is by no means all theology. It houses, for example, an important collection of books on local history, on permanent loan from the City Library.

RANULPH HIGDEN (*C.*1280 - 1363)

The first treasure I want to talk about is a manuscript of the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph or Ralph Higden.[4] Higden was a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, the forerunner of the present Cathedral. Intellectually and spiritually the Abbey had an auspicious beginning, having been founded by St. Anselm, one of the towering theologians of the middle ages, who installed his Chaplain, Richard of Bec, as the first abbot in 1093. However, it can hardly be said to have lived up to its distinguished pedigree: it was not an intellectual powerhouse in the middle ages. We know of a Robert of Chester (12th century), one of the most important translators of the middle ages, who put into Latin the Arabic treatise of the great Muslim scientist al-Khwarizmi on *Algebra*, which massively stimulated mathematics in the west, but, despite his name, Robert's links with Chester are very problematic, and anyway he made his reputation elsewhere.[5] Chester, however, can lay claim to one significant mediaeval scholar – Ranulph Higden.

In this case the connection is strong and undisputed. Higden, "a Cheshire man, with a great interest in his native county",[6] seems to have spent all his life in Chester, apart from one brief trip to London in 1352 at the behest of King Edward III, and his tomb can still be seen in the south aisle of the Choir. He took his monastic vows in 1299 and died in 1363/64.

Higden's most famous work was his *Polychronicon*, an encyclopaedic history of the world from the creation to his own times. He toiled at this *magnum opus* for many years and produced at least three versions of it: the first came down to the year 1327; the second extended, depending on which manuscript you consult, to 1342 or 1346; and the third continued a bit beyond 1346. This final version, found in what seems to be Higden's own copy, MS HM 132 of the Huntington Library, San Marino California, is clearly unfinished, and appears to show that he was still working on a revision at the time of his death.[7]

There is a rich irony in this. The present Chester Cathedral Library, as I have noted, probably does not now contain a single volume that goes back to the old Abbey Library, which must have been quite rich, judging by the sources Higden is able to quote, but we do know of at least one manuscript that belonged to it – Higden's own copy of his famous *Polychronicon*, no less – but it is in an American library on the other side of the world, in a country which had not even been discovered when Higden wrote! He would have been astonished if he could have foreseen where his precious manuscript would end up. The copy of the *Polychronicon* belonging to the Cathedral Library actually arrived there very late. It was obtained through the good offices of Mrs Paget, wife of Bishop Henry Luke Paget, in 1925, as recorded in the Minutes of the Chapter for 13th March in that year.[8] Curiously, this particular copy does not appear to be well known: it is not included in the list of *Polychronicon* manuscripts compiled by the great Oxford Latinist (whose lectures I attended as a student), Sir R.A.B. Mynors.[9] It deserves a thorough study.

Higden, it seems, really set out to write a history of Britain, but was persuaded by friends to broaden his scope to encompass the whole of the known world, and to carry his story right back to creation, but Britain still gets the lion's share of his attention, and it is as a source for British history in his own times that he is still rated as important by modern historians. His account of the early

history of the world is a fantastic blend of the Bible and the Greek and Latin classics, of the sort that passed for high scholarship in the middle ages. He arranged his work in seven books, following the example, so he tells us (*Polychronicon* i. 26), of the great Worker, who accomplished everything in six days, and rested on the seventh.

Book one is actually a universal geography. Originally it contained, at least from Higden's second edition onwards, a world map, which has been reproduced only in some of the manuscripts.[10] This is of the same type as the famous Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, drawn in 1290 by Richard of Haldingham (present-day Holdingham, near Sleaford in Lincolnshire), and brought with him to Hereford when he became a prebend of Hereford Cathedral in 1303.[11] It now hangs in its own magnificent exhibition centre attached to the Cathedral, and is well worth a visit. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi* is, of course, much bigger (it was designed, I imagine, as a teaching aid for catechetical or "class" use), but its affinities to the contemporary Higden map are obvious at a glance. Both are elaborate versions of what is known as a T-O map. East, rather than north, is at the top, and the inhabited world is represented as a circular island surrounded entirely by Ocean, the O. The T is superimposed on the lower half of the O: its vertical stroke represents the Mediterranean (which spills into the circular landmass through the Pillars of Hercules, i.e. the Straits of Gibraltar); its left arm represents the River Don (dividing Europe from Asia); and its right arm represents the Nile (dividing Asia from Africa). Jerusalem is in the dead centre of the map – the "navel" of the earth – and the British Isles lie at the bottom left corner, perched precariously on the very edges of the known world. America and Australia are, of course, nowhere to be seen: they had yet to be discovered (at least by Europeans: the natives always knew they were there!). The Higden map shows us graphically how the world looked to a learned monk in Chester in the 14th century, and how different his picture was from ours.[12]

Higden's *Polychronicon* became a "best-seller" in the middle ages, and more than 120 manuscripts of it are still extant, many of them traceable back to the cathedral and collegiate libraries of England. It was enormously influential. It was *the* textbook from which educated Englishmen for a couple of centuries learned their history, and its influence increased still further, when, shortly after

Higden's death, it was translated into English by John Trevisa. Trevisa was a younger contemporary of Higden, born probably around 1342 and died around 1402, but his name suggests he hailed from the other end of England, from Cornwall. After studying at Oxford, he became vicar of Berkeley in Gloucestershire in 1374, and chaplain to the local Berkeley family in 1379. It was at the behest of his patron, Sir Thomas Berkeley, that he put Higden's *Polychronicon* into English. He seems to have made the translation during a period of residence back in Oxford between 1383 and 1387, presumably leaving his parish duties to a long-suffering curate. This was a momentous time to be in Oxford, coinciding, as it did, with the residency of John Wycliffe, and the beginnings of the Wycliffite translation of the Bible. There are grounds for thinking that Trevisa had a hand in this (the Wycliffe version was a collective effort and not all by Wycliffe himself). Be that as it may, translation was certainly "in the air", and Trevisa's version of Higden's *Polychronicon* is, like the Wycliffe Bible, a very precious record of Middle English of the 14th century, specifically of the South Western dialect.[13]

It is fitting that a copy of the Trevisa translation should be in the Cathedral Library, not, alas, a manuscript, but a rare old print issued at Southwark in 1527 by Peter Treveris (**Figure 1B**). This is a "pirated" copy of the Wynkyn de Worde text of 1495, which in turn was a reissue of the first printed edition by William Caxton in 1482, and includes the changes which Caxton introduced to the "rude and old englyssh" of Trevisa's original text.[14]

WILLIAM BARLOW (*C.*1565-1613)

We leap forward almost one hundred years to the early 17th century, to William Barlow, born in London but "descended from a family long settled at Barlow Moor near Manchester",[15] Dean of Chester from 1602 to 1605, who was a figure to be reckoned with in the religious controversies of his day, a doughty defender of episcopacy against Presbyterianism and Puritan non-conformity, and a severe critic of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.[16] It was during his deanship at Chester that he was summoned to take part in the Hampton Court Conference of January 1604, a head-to-head between the more traditional English Bishops and the Puritan leaders, presided over by James I, to consider the Puritans'

demands for further reform of the Church, set out in the Millenary Petition, which the Puritans had presented to James in April 1603 on his way south from Scotland to England.[17] The petition was supposed to represent the views of a thousand ministers (hence its title), who objected to the cross in Baptism, Confirmation, the surplice, the length of services, the profanation of the Lord's Day, bowing at the name of Jesus, and the reading of the Apocrypha in lessons. Though it did not mention episcopacy as such, it was a barely veiled attack on it, and on what the petitioners saw as the incomplete reformation of the English Church. James, famously declaring, "No bishop, no king!", threw his weight behind the traditionalists. Barlow wrote the "official" account of the conference, entitled *Summe and Substance of the Conference … at Hampton Court* (1604), a copy of which is in the Cathedral Library.[18] His defence of episcopacy was rewarded by the bishopric of Rochester in 1605 and of Lincoln in 1608.[19]

The most enduring outcome of the Hampton Court Conference was the king's decision to authorize a new translation of the Bible which would reflect better than current versions, such as the popular Geneva Bible, the position of the victorious traditionalists, which he had backed. This was finally produced in 1611 and is now known as the Authorized or King James' version – one of the glories of English literature, and of incalculable influence on the English language. Barlow, a considerable scholar, was one of the translators.[20] The Cathedral Library has several copies of the 1611 folio edition of the Authorized Version, one of which is on display, but whether this is the precise copy referred to in the Chapter Minutes for 1613 as costing 69 shillings to purchase and cart from London – a substantial sum in those days – cannot be determined.[21]

BRIAN WALTON (*C.*1600-61)

We move forward to the latter half of the 17th century to a "purple patch" in the intellectual history of the Cathedral. It opens with one of my heroes, Brian Walton, who was appointed Bishop of Chester in 1660 only to die in office just over a year later.[22] Walton was a master of oriental languages, and one of the greatest Bible scholars this country has ever produced. He was the editor of the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, known also as "Walton's" or "the

London Polyglot", printed in six massive folio volumes between 1653 and 1657, and, so it is claimed, one of the first books in England to be published by subscription – £10 for the complete set![23] This was a stupendous work containing the Old and New Testaments in their original languages, together with new Latin translations, accompanied by all the major ancient versions, with Latin versions of these, and furnished with useful Appendices and Tables which constitute a veritable encyclopaedia of the most up-to-date Bible-knowledge of the period.

One can only talk of the Polyglot in superlatives, even today. It is a monumental achievement in terms of printing. When you recall that all the letters on the page had to be set, letter by letter, in tiny, moveable type, and corrections made to this moveable type, which was largely in foreign languages and scripts, within the frame of the metal plate – one can only be awestruck by the skill, dedication, and accuracy of the type-setters, printers and editors, and amazed that they completed their task in only four years. This project would tax our technology even today, in the age of computer-generated print. The Polyglot established London as a serious centre of printing in the late 17th century, to rival Antwerp, Paris, Basel and Venice. Printing was the cutting-edge technology of its age, and a great source of national pride. Walton's Polyglot trumpeted that London had joined the first division. "It was regarded at the time of its appearance", write Margoliouth and Keene (*ODNB* online), "as a monument to the intellectual capacity of an English nation previously eclipsed by some of its European brethren".[24]

The Polyglot also showcased English biblical scholarship, and engaged the talents of the leading English Bible scholars of the day, including the great Edward Pococke, and Edmund Castell, whose *Lexicon Heptaglotton* (1669) is sometimes regarded as an integral part of the project.[25] Walton cleverly hogged the limelight, but he was unquestionably a major scholar in his own right. Striking testimony to his standing in Europe is found in Johannes Buxtorf the Younger's reissue of his father's *Synagoga Judaica*, a learned account of the religious beliefs and practices of the Jews that still bears reading today. Johannes Buxtorf, the Younger, who lived in Basel in Switzerland, was the greatest Christian Hebraist of his age, yet he dedicates his book to "The Most Reverend in Christ Father and Lord, Brian Walton, Bishop of Chester", and

pays warm tribute to his scholarship. The dedication ends poignantly by wishing Walton long life and good health so that the whole Church of God and the Republic of Letters may enjoy his piety, erudition and wisdom for many years. The dedication is dated 26th August 1661. Walton died on 29th November!.

We need to put Walton's achievement into perspective. His Polyglot came at the end of a series of great Polyglot Bibles, beginning with the Complutensian Polyglot produced in Spain at Alcalá de Henares, between 1514 and 1517. This was followed in 1569-72 by the larger *Biblia Regia*, so called because it was produced (in Antwerp at the presses of the great printer Christophe Plantin) under the patronage of Philip II of Spain. Le Jay's even bigger *Paris Polyglot* of 1645 followed. Walton's Polyglot was the biggest of them all, and is now seen, from a scholarly point of view, as the crowning glory of the series. Walton used the other Polyglots (people were less worried about copyright in those days),[26] but he and his collaborators corrected the earlier prints and added new texts in new languages. Eight different languages, in seven different scripts, are found in Walton's Polyglot (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Persian, Arabic), and to do their job the editors had to know these very well indeed. As someone who has struggled all his life to master these languages, I know what this takes, and I salute my seventeenth-century colleagues.

You have to remember that a knowledge of many of these languages had come comparatively recently to England. Up until the Reformation the Bible was known almost exclusively in Latin, if it was known at all.[27] The Reformers turned to the original Hebrew and Greek, and insisted that *they* constituted the inspired Word of God, not the Latin Vulgate. They also began to take an interest in the early versions of the Bible, particularly the ancient Greek, Aramaic and Syriac translations of the Old Testament, recognizing that they were of great value for the history of the biblical text, and for understanding its sometimes difficult Hebrew and Greek. The accomplished Christian scholar was expected to know his biblical languages (those were the days!). Training could begin young, for not only were Latin and Greek taught in the grammar schools of Tudor England (as you would expect), but *Hebrew* as well.[28] I love the idea of little Tudor English boys (perhaps even in the King's school here in Chester, founded by

Henry VIII in 1541, at the same time as the Cathedral) puzzling over the Hebrew alphabet, and trying to remember their doubly-weak Hebrew verbs in the intensive theme!

Walton was a pioneering biblical scholar, and the *Prolegomena* to his Polyglot, printed separately, remained the standard advanced introduction to the text of the Bible down to the early 19th century.[29] His approach had theological implications. This becomes clear in the sharp controversy between himself and the great Puritan divine John Owen (1616-1683). Owen was no backwoodsman, but like Walton, one of the greatest scholars of his age – for a time Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and Vice-Chancellor of the University. Like Walton he was highly accomplished in the biblical languages.[30] Owen, though generally appreciative of the Polyglot, attacked it particularly on one point in a tract printed in Oxford in 1659, *Considerations on the Prolegomena, & Appendix to the Late Biblia Polyglotta* – the fact that Walton had published variant readings to the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible.[31] Owen was worried that this would give people the impression that the originals of the Scriptures were corrupt and unreliable, and so weaken their faith in Biblical authority. The publicizing of these variants, he thundered, provided "the foundation of Mohammedanism, … the chiefest and principal prop of Popery, the only pretence of fanatical antiscripturists, and the root of much hidden atheism in the world." "We went from Rome", he added, "under the conduct of the purity of the originals. I wish none have a mind to return thither under the pretence of their *corruption*."[32] Walton replied immediately with a vigorous defence, *The Considerator Considered: Or, a brief view of certain considerations upon the Biblia Polyglotta, the Prolegomena and Appendix thereof* (London, 1659). There is a serious and enduring debate here, in which, I must confess, I'm on Walton's side, though I admire Owen and cut my theological teeth on his writings. You can't build a doctrine of Scripture on ignoring manifest facts, still less on treating people with contempt by hiding the facts from them, because you think their faith will be shaken![33]

JOHN WILKINS (1614-72)

The next figure to claim our attention was a contemporary of Brian Walton, but his scholarly interests could hardly have been more different: he is John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester from 1668 to 1673, and one of the greatest English scientists of his age, a founder and first secretary of the Royal Society, which Charles II established by Royal Charter on 15th July 1662. Wilkins seems to have been an attractive character, a man of great natural curiosity, with a quirky mind and broad sympathies, who, as Bishop of Chester, strongly advocated the toleration of dissenters. John Henry notes that when Wilkins became Bishop of Chester, "the diocese was a stronghold of both Roman Catholicism and Presbyterianism, but the bishop's tolerant and conciliatory approach to dissenters succeeded in bringing some nonconformists back to the Church of England, and ensured good relations with those who remained recalcitrant".[34] He had supported Parliament during the Civil War, and married Cromwell's sister Robina in 1656. That hardly endeared him to the Royalists after the Restoration, but his irenic disposition won over the King, who was content for him to become secretary of his new Royal Society, and six years later the Bishop of Chester.

Two of Wilkins most interesting early scientific treatises were *The Discovery of a New World* (1638) and *A Discourse concerning a New Planet* (1640). In the former he argued that the moon is a habitable world like the earth, and he even speculated on how we might get there.[35] In the latter he attempted to prove that the earth was one of the planets, and like them goes round the sun – not by any means such an obvious proposition in his day. (You must remember that Copernicus's theory was not universally accepted by scientists as *proved* till the time of Newton.) Later he turned his mind to mathematics, to communication theory, and to the problem of creating a universal language. He published the *Mathematical Magick, or the Wonders that may be performed by Mechanical Geometry* (1648), and the astonishing *Mercury, or the Secret and Swift Messenger, shewing how a man may with privacy and speed communicate his thoughts to a friend at any distance* (1641). The latter was the first serious treatise in English on cryptography, a word Wilkins apparently introduced into the English language –

the principles of how to encode and decode messages, and communicate them over distance. His discoveries laid the foundations for developments which resulted later in the telegraph, and ultimately in the internet. His major achievement in the study of universal languages, and possibly the most original work of his whole career, was his *Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, which was issued under the auspices of the fledgling Royal Society in 1668.[36]

In retrospect Wilkins' scientific achievements are dwarfed by those of his contemporary Isaac Newton (1642-1727), one the greatest scientific geniuses of all time, but in his day he was seen as Newton's equal, and, like Newton, he had no difficulty in reconciling religion and science. As early as his *Discourse concerning a New Planet* he had argued that there was no real conflict between the Bible and science. Like Newton, in uncovering the secrets of the natural world, he would have seen himself as "thinking God's thoughts after him". I'm sure the Dean would say "Amen" to that!

JOHN PEARSON (1613-86)

In 1673 Wilkins was succeeded as Bishop of Chester by John Pearson, "perhaps the most erudite and profound divine of a learned and theological age".[37] Thus in a period of less than twenty years Chester had for its bishop one of the greatest Bible scholars of the age (Walton), one of the greatest scientists (Wilkins), and one of the greatest theologians (Pearson). As I said, this was, surely, a high-point in its intellectual history. Before coming to Chester Pearson had been successively Master of Jesus College (1660) and of Trinity College (1662), and from 1661 Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. But his fame rests primarily on a work which he began when he was a mere parish priest at St. Clement's, Eastcheap, London. There over a number of years he gave a series of lectures on the Creed to his parishioners, which were published in book form in 1659 under the title, *Exposition of the Creed*. This was expressed with such clarity, good sense and learning that it rapidly established itself as an Anglican classic. It was revised many times, both by Pearson and by others after his death, and remained a staple of Anglican theological training down to the nineteenth century.[38] The Cathedral library

has an excellent collection of editions of Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed*, starting with the first.

Pearson's erudition was legendary, and his command of ancient Greek astounding. There is a curious confirmation of this in the library, which has a fine copy of the beautiful Aldine press folio edition (Venice 1514) of the large Greek dictionary compiled by Hesychius of Alexandria, probably in the fifth century CE.[39] This once belonged to Bishop Pearson, and on the title page at the top right he has written in Latin: "I read through the whole of Hesychius for the first time on October 15th, 1655, [and] for the second time on March 26th, 1667". That anyone should read right through this massive dictionary all in Greek is impressive enough, but that they should do it not once, but twice, and, if we are to take the words at face value, on both occasions in a single day, is well nigh incredible.[40]

Pearson was modestly buried near the high altar in an unmarked grave. In the 1860s his coffin was re-discovered, bearing the simple inscription, "J.P., Epis.". It was removed to the north transept and interred in suitable splendour beneath a monument designed by Sir A.W. Bloomfield, A.R.A.[41]

MATTHEW HENRY (1662-1714)

In 1687, a year after Pearson's death, a young man of twenty-five came to Chester to serve as minister to its Presbyterian congregation. His name was Matthew Henry. He was the son of a respected nonconformist minister, Philip Henry, who had been ejected from his living at Worthenbury (about twelve miles south of Chester, towards Malpas) in 1662, the year in which Matthew was born at the farm of his mother's parents not far away at Broadoak. From an early age Matthew was marked out to follow in his father's footsteps, but discrimination against nonconformists was still strong, and he spent a time in London studying law at Grays Inn. By 1687, however, the penalties for dissent had eased, and he was able to be ordained and take up the post in Chester. He was to spend twenty-five years in the town, and by the time he left in 1712 to answer a call to Hackney, he was one of the most famous ministers in the land.[42] His congregation in Chester grew, and in 1700 a new meeting-house was opened for him in Crook Lane (now Crook Street, opposite the Gateway Theatre). There is,

of course, no sign of it today (not even a blue plaque!): I'm not sure when it was demolished.[43]

Matthew Henry's great gift was Bible teaching. He had an orderly mind, and over many years the systematic exposition of the books of the Bible lay at the heart of his ministry.[44] In 1708 he began to write these expositions up for publication. By 1714, the year of his death, he had completed the whole of the Old Testament and the Gospels and Acts.[45] His *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (1708-14) is one of the most important and influential commentaries on the Bible ever published in English,[46] re-issued numerous times, and, I calculate, probably never out of print since it was first issued. You can still buy it new, as well as second-hand, and it is fully available online![47] The comparison with that other great Cestrian biblicist, Brian Walton, is instructive. Walton, like any clergyman or bishop, did his fair share of preaching, but he is primarily remembered for his contribution to the technical, critical aspects of Bible-study – the texts, the languages, the historical background. Matthew Henry's primary interests were devotional, the application of the Bible to everyday life.[48] In this area he showed a masterly combination of good sense and vivid exposition that has probably never been surpassed.

Charles Spurgeon, the famous 19th century evangelical preacher, and himself no mean homilist, admirably caught the qualities of his exposition: "First among the mighty [Bible commentators] we are bound to mention a man whose name is a household word, Matthew Henry. He is most pious and pithy, sound and sensible, suggestive and sober, terse and trustworthy. You will find him to be glittering with metaphors, rich in analogies, overflowing with illustrations, superabundant in reflections. He delights in apposition and alliteration; he is usually plain, quaint, and full of pith; he sees right through a text directly; apparently he is not critical, but he quietly gives the result of an accurate critical knowledge of the original fully up to the best critics of his time. He is not versed in the manners and customs of the East, for the Holy Land was not so accessible as in our day; but he is deeply spiritual, heavenly, and profitable; finding good matter in every text, and from all deducing most practical and judicious lessons. He is a kind of commentary to be placed where I saw it, in the old meeting-house at Chester – chained in the vestry for anybody and every body to read."[49]

It is interesting to speculate on the relations between the eminent dissenting sage of Crook Lane and the Cathedral, which was only about three minutes walk from his Chapel. Relations between Episcopalians and Dissenters in Chester could be tense: "An attempt was made to burn down [Henry's] meeting-place in October 1692, and he and his congregation were publicly abused by high-churchmen and subject to petty slanders, particularly in Queen Anne's reign" (Wykes, "Henry", *ODNB* online). The immediate successors of Pearson as bishops of Chester – Thomas Cartwright (1686-89), Nicholas Stratford (1689-1707) and Sir William Dawes (1707-14) – were not, in my opinion, of the same intellectual calibre as Pearson, Wilkins and Walton. Cartwright disastrously supported James II, accompanying him to Ireland, and dying there. "No one could be sure", says Dean Darby, "whether he died a Roman Catholic or not." "Possibly", he adds dryly, "he himself could not determine."[50] Stratford is remembered as the founder of the Blue Coat Hospital in Chester. Dawes was a favourite of Queen Anne, and subsequently Archbishop of York. But none had the ability as a teacher and pastor, that Matthew Henry had, nor has their name been remembered as his has by the universal Church. It is reported that Episcopalians attended Matthew Henry's Thursday evening Bible-classes.[51] Perhaps they went to Crook Lane for something they were missing at the Cathedral. Whatever the relations between Henry and the Cathedral may have been, it is a pleasure to note that copies of his great *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* are found in the Cathedral Library, and in a spirit of ecumenicity we have displayed one of these.[52]

CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819-75) AND WILLIAM STUBBS (1825-1901)

Time does not allow me to say much more, but I would not like to leave you with the impression that the Cathedral simply went into a long decline from the late 17th century onwards. Far from it! Eminent and able men (and more recently women!) have served from time to time as Bishops, Deans and Canons in the succeeding centuries. I shall close by briefly mentioning two who must stand for all the rest. The first is Charles Kingsley, who was a residentiary canon from 1869-73. Kingsley, of course, is best

known to the general public as a novelist, author of *Westward Ho!* (1855) and *Hereward the Wake* (1866).[53] But he was also a serious Christian thinker, one of the founders of Christian Socialism, which through a radical critique of society attempted to rouse the Church to the appalling plight of the poor in Britain, and which campaigned to ameliorate their lot through improving their education, their living conditions, and their incomes. He helped lay the foundations for a strand of thought, immensely influential both inside and outside the Anglican Church, that has been cited as a source of inspiration by our present Prime Minister, Tony Blair.[54] Kingsley was a controversialist, and it was his barbed anti-Tractarian remark in 1863, "Truth for its own sake has never been a virtue of the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us that it need not and on the whole ought not to be", that provoked John Henry Newman to write his famous *Apologia pro Vita sua* (1864).[55] Most have assumed that Newman won this exchange hands down, but I am not so sure.[56] The Library acquired in recent years on loan a collection of Kingsley's numerous writings, which must surely be among the finest you could see; I would reckon, it is complete, or nearly so.[57]

William Stubbs, Bishop from 1884-89, who came to Chester from the Regius Chair of History at Oxford, was a very different character, much more the academic. He was, quite simply, the most brilliant British historian of his generation, and he made a massive contribution to the study of mediaeval English history, especially of the English Church.[58] His *Constitutional History of England* (3 vols, 1873-78), with its companion volume of *Select Charters* (1870), is a classic, and the Library's copy of the *History*, which has clearly seen heavy use, is on display. When I was a student in Oxford in the 1960s I well remember friends who were reading History groaning over Stubbs' *Select Charters*, as their predecessors had done for almost one hundred years. But Stubbs was not just an academic. He was also a vigorous and effective bishop. Great scholar-bishops don't always prove to be good pastors. They can get too wrapped up in their books, and the Cathedral Library may have been a source of temptation in this regard! Bishop Burnet claims that Pearson "was not active in his diocese, but too much remiss and easy in his Episcopal function, and was a much better divine than a bishop" (quoted by de Qehen, "Pearson", *ODNB* online). But this charge cannot be laid at

Stubbs's door, consummate scholar though he was. He was "unwearying in visiting his parishes. Part of Chester diocese was industrialized, populous, and under-churched, and Stubbs immediately launched an appeal for the creation of nine new parishes, each with church, school, and vicarage, and for fifteen mission rooms. The estimated cost was £84,000, of which the bishop contributed £1000 (he was believed to give away half his episcopal income for such purposes). The appeal was largely successful, and in general, Stubbs played a prominent part in local affairs" (Campbell, "Stubbs", *ODNB* online).

The fact that Stubbs was a major contributor to the famous Rolls Series of *Chronicles and Memorials*, in which the complete Latin text of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* was published for the first time (though not by him),[59] brings us back to the Chester scholar with whom we began and neatly closes the circle of this talk.

AFTERWORD

There is, of course, much more that could be said: each of the Chester worthies I have mentioned deserves a whole lecture in his own right. But I hope I have said enough to whet your appetite, and to convince you how important the Cathedral Library is. Over its long and chequered history, the Library has had its ups and downs, and it has not always been treated with the respect it deserves. John Wolfenden has drawn my attention to a revealing entry in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *English Notebooks* for 1853 in which he wrote after a visit to Chester Cathedral: "In the Chapter House (comfortless vault of dusky stonework) we found a coal-fire burning in a grate, and a large heap of old books, the library of the Cathedral, in a discreditable state of decay – mildewed, rotten, neglected for years. The sexton told us that they were to be arranged and better ordered." The "better ordering" promised in 1853 is finally reaching its fulfilment! I think you will agree when you visit the exhibition that these fine old books are now in a much happier, more dignified condition. But much remains to be done. I hope this occasion, which marks the completion of the work of re-shelving, will prove an important step in the taking up of the Library into the life and work of this great Church.

NOTES

[1] It reminds me a little of Chetham's Library, Manchester, and also of St. Deiniols, Hawarden, which houses Gladstone's books. But perhaps the closest analogy would be to the library of one of the smaller Oxbridge Colleges, minus its more modern acquisitions (say Pembroke Oxford, my own college). The John Rylands, Manchester, is, of course, very much bigger (it is one of the great academic libraries of the world), but it is extremely rich in the same sort of material, though the Cathedral has items which it lacks. Many Cathedrals have libraries, and some of their Chapters have been scratching their heads in recent years over what to do with them. Chester's, fine though it is, cannot compete with some of these, e.g. Durham. See E. Anne Read, *A Checklist of Books, Catalogues and Periodical Articles relating to the Cathedral Libraries of England* (Oxford Bibliographical Society, Bodleian Library: Oxford, 1970); Margaret S.G. McLeod. *The Cathedral Libraries Catalogue of England: Books Printed before 1701 in the Libraries of the Anglican Cathedrals of England and Wales*, vols 1-2, continuing (British Library: London, 1984-98).

[2] Derek Nuttall, *Chester Cathedral Library: A Brief History* (Nov., 2001; unpublished). Histories of the Cathedral also mention the Library in passing: see, e.g., R.V.H. Burne, *Chester Cathedral from its founding by Henry VIII to the accession of Queen Victoria* (SPCK: London, 1958).

[3] An interesting project would be to reconstruct as far as possible, the old Abbey library: the sources used in Higden's *Polychronicon* would be the place to start; and then we could try and identify in other libraries manuscripts and old books that were once in Chester, such as the Huntington Library manuscript of the *Polychronicon* (see below).

[4] John Taylor, "Higden, Ranulf", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004) = *ODNB*. I have used the online version.

[5] Charles Burnett, "Robert of Ketton", *ODNB* online. Robert of Chester is associated with Segovia and London, and it was in the former in 1145 that he produced his momentous translation of al-Khwarizmi's *Algebra*: B.B. Hughes, *Robert of Chester's Latin Translation of al-Khwarizmi's al-Jabr: A New Critical Edition* (Steiner: Stuttgart, 1989).

[6] John Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulph Higden* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1966), p.1.

[7] V.H. Galbraith, "An Autograph Manuscript of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23 (1959), pp. 1-18. It is possible Higden was custodian of the Abbey library and head of the scriptorium.

Among the owners marks in the Huntington manuscript is a curious doggerel in a mixture of Latin and English: "Iste liber pertinet [this book belongs] beare it well in mind/Ad me [to me] Georgium Savagium Boothe curteyes and kinde/ A penis inferni [from the pains of hell] Iehesu him bringe/ Ad gaudia celestia [to heavenly delights] to everlastinge ioye". George Savage was appointed Chancellor of Chester Cathedral in 1541, a year after St. Werburgh's was dissolved (see the Huntington Library Catalogue). This suggests that some of the books from the old Abbey library were indeed transferred across to the new Cathedral.

[8] Nuttall, *Chester Cathedral Library*, p. 3. Mrs Paget's role in acquiring the manuscript is somewhat unclear. The wording of the Chapter Minutes (13th March 1925) is: "The Chapter wish to record their thanks to Mrs. Paget for her kindness in obtaining Hignett's [*sic*] Polychronicon MSS for the Cathedral." Mrs Paget herself states in her biography of her husband: "Mr. Ferguson Irvine, well known as an archaeological authority … helped Mrs. Paget … in the purchase for the Cathedral of a fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Polychronicon*, a history of the world written by Ralph Higden, monk of the abbey and which had probably been transcribed in the cloister" (Elma K. Paget, *Henry Luke Paget: Portrait and Frame* [Longmans: London, 1939], p. 246). Dean Bennett in a note in the *Chester Diocesan Gazette* for April 1925 writes:

> "Last month there was acquired for the Cathedral, through the alert energy of Mrs Paget, a unique treasure in the shape of a really beautiful copy of Ranulf Higden's Polychronicon. The date of the manuscript is about 1370. Quite possibly it was written in our own cloister, on sheets of vellum provided by the Abbey's sheep and with covers of wood from some tree that grew nearby. The body of Ranulf Higden, the most distinguished lay brother of our old Community, lies in the south Choir Aisle, and now, in our Chapter House, is one of the original copies of this once famous and popular work. Below is printed the list of those whose kind donations made the purchase possible and everybody will be grateful to them and Mrs Paget. Among them should be included Messrs Dobell and Sons from whom the treasure was secured. They were offering it for the sum of £95; but when they heard it was wanted for its old Chester home, they gave us £25 by generously reducing their price to £70. The Cathedral feels much enriched."

The list of about 40 donors includes "The Chester Training College Library Society" and the "King's School (per the Headmaster)". My thanks to John Wolfenden for ferreting out this reference from the *Gazette*. He thinks Messers Percy J. Dobell and Sons, antiquarian booksellers, were located somewhere in Shropshire.

Putting all this together, the most likely story is that Ferguson Irvine, who was an antiquarian and archaeologist (he helped Mrs Paget dig up the Dean's garden to look for Roman remains!), saw Dobell and Sons catalogue and alerted Mrs Paget, who, formidable woman, promptly organized the subscription. I do not know on what authority the manuscript is dated to 1370

(which would put it within seven years of Higden's death!), and possibly assigned to the Chester scriptorium. I suspect that goes back to Dobell's catalogue, but, as anyone in the business will tell you, you should take booksellers' catalogues with a pinch of salt. Ferguson Irvine, by the way, was the father of Andrew Irvine, who along with George Leigh Mallory, another Cheshire man, disappeared during the tragic 1924 attempt on Everest.

[9] See the catalogue in Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle*, pp. 152-59, an augmented version of Mynors' list.

[10] Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle*, pp. 63-68, knows of only nine copies of the map out of over 120 known manuscripts. The classic study of the inter-relationship of the different versions of the Higden *Mappa Mundi* remains Konrad Miller, *Mappaemundi: Die ältesten Weltkarten*, vol. 3 (J. Roth: Stuttgart, 1895).

[11] P.D.A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (Hereford Cathedral & The British Library: London, 1996).

[12] I have argued elsewhere that this type of world-map has an astonishingly ancient pedigree, going all the way back to a Jewish world-map compiled around 150 BCE, which was in turn a *Jewish* version of a map first produced by the Ionian *Greek* geographers of the 6th century BCE, which in its turn may have owed something to an even earlier Babylonian world map, a copy of which is in the British Museum (BM 92687). Now there's tradition for you! See: P.S. Alexander, "Early Jewish Geography", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman (Doubleday: New York, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 980-82.

[13] Robert Waldron, "Trevisa, John", *ODNB* online. Further: Waldron, *John Trevisa's Translation of the Polychronicon of Ranulph Higden, Book VI* (Middle English Texts 35; Winter: Heidelberg, 2004); David C. Fowler, *John Trevisa* (Variorum: Aldershot, 1993).

[14] On Treveris, see N.F. Blake, "Treveris, John", *ODNB* online. Dean Darby claims that the Cathedral Library print is by Wynkyn de Worde (John L. Darby, *Chester Cathedral* [Isbister & Co.: London, 1898], p. 32), and this was stamped on the spine when the volume was rebound in the 19th century, but this is a mistake. Wynkyn de Worde, who took over Caxton's printing business on his death in 1492, did indeed re-issue Caxton's text in 1492, but the Cathedral copy is, as indicated, a slightly later Treveris (Nuttall, *Catalogue*).

[15] C.S. Knighton, "Barlow, William (d. 1613)", *ODNB* online.

[16] He was involved in the debates in the 1590s in Cambridge on predestination, and attacked the then Regius Professor of Divinity, J. Overall, for indulging the Calvinists.
[17] Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (2nd edn; Oxford University Press: London, 1963), pp. 397-400, gives the text of the petition.

[18] It is to Barlow's *Summe* that we owe the "No bishop, no king!" remark, as well as James's other famous outburst: "I shall make them conforme, or I wil harrie them out of the land, or else do worse" (*Summe and Substance of the Conference*, pp. 82-83).

[19] Knighton in the *ODNB* doesn't think much of Barlow, claiming that "his oleaginous pulpit manner was … much admired by Elizabeth, as by her successor, and it lubricated his passage to preferment well enough." He also claims that Barlow saw the deanship of Chester as merely a step to higher things: "This office (perhaps reflecting his origins in the north-west) had little claim on his attention; its chief importance was that it gave him status to attend the Hampton Court conference."

[20] He chaired the company that produced the first draft of the New Testament Epistles from Romans to Jude, and that being so, he surely deserves some credit for the fine, sonorous rendering of this section (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13!), even allowing for the AV's immense debt to Tyndale and the other earlier versions. Curiously the one section of the AV for which we have a translator's notes is Romans to Revelation. These were made by John Bois, but relate to the work of the final committee at Stationers' Hall in London, 1610-11, and not to the preliminary work of the companies. See Ward Allen, *Translating for King James: Notes made by a translator of the King James's Bible* (Vanderbilt University Press: Nashville, 1969); further, David Norton, "John Bois's Notes on the Revision of the King James's Bible New Testament: A New Manuscript", *The Library*, 6th series 18.4 (December 1996). For a vividly imaginative account of Barlow and his collaborators at work, see David Norton, "Imagining Translation Committees at Work: The King James and the Revised Versions", in: Orlaith O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Bible as Book: The Reformation* (The British Library: London, 2000), pp. 162-63.

[21] Burne, *Chester Cathedral*, p. 94.

[22] D.S. Margoliouth and N. Keene, "Walton, Brian", *ODNB* online.

[23] A substantial sum in those days. To buy a good second-hand copy today (at least ten are for sale at the moment on the internet: see AbeBooks and AddALL) would set you back £6,000-£10,000, though you might pick up a modern facsimile reprint for as little as £600. The Polyglot is in fact, astonishingly, totally available online in the massive database known as Early English Books on Line (EEBO). Walton was a shrewd businessman, and was

determined not to repeat the mistake of the Paris Polyglot, which virtually priced itself out of the market. His Polyglot "was … a successful commercial speculation … The work commanded a high price on the continent; in a letter to John Buxtorf the younger at Basel, Walton puts the price at £50. In the latter half of the seventeenth century secondhand copies in England invariably fetched in excess of £10. The London polyglot Bible often constituted the single most expensive item in the libraries of scholars and gentlemen" (Margoliouth and Keene, *ODNB* online).

[24] The Cromwell government was well aware of its national significance, and although it did not finance the venture, assisted it in several ways, and Cromwell was thanked in the original Preface, but this reference was removed from copies printed after the Restoration. I have not had time yet to discover whether the Cathedral copy of the Polyglot has the "republican" or the "royalist" preface. One of the copies of the Polyglot in the Rylands was specially prepared as a presentation copy for the Lord Protector.

[25] There has been some speculation that John Pearson (see below) was involved. He certainly lobbied influential people in favour of the project, but there is scant evidence that he was one of the editors, and he is not thanked by Walton in his preface. John Evelyn records in his *Diary* under November 1652: "Went to *Lond*: where was proposd to me the promoting of that greate Work (since accomplishd by *Dr. Walton* (Bishop of Chester) Biblia polyglotta), by *Mr. Pierson* that most learned divine."

[26] The frontispiece of the Polyglot subtly hints at its intellectual pedigree. This shows a forbidding-looking Walton sitting at his desk with a copy of his Polyglot open in front of him. Behind him on the shelf are some weighty tomes with names on their spines. On the top shelf we have: Bibl. Complutens [the Complutensian Polyglot]; Bibl. Munster. [the *Biblia Hebraica* of Sebastian Münster]; Bibl. Stephan. [the Greek New Testament of Robert Stephanus]; Bibl. Paris [the Paris Polyglot]; Origen. Opera [the works of Origin the greatest Bible scholar among the Greek Fathers]. On the lower shelf are: S. Hieron. Opera [the works of St. Jerome, the greatest Bible scholar among the Latin Fathers, translator of the Vulgate]; Hexapla [the great multi-versioned Bible of Origen, now lost]; Bibl. Regia [the Antwerp Polyglot]; Bibl. Veneta [the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible, Venice]; Bibl. Basil. [the *Biblia Rabbinica* of the Elder Johannes Buxtorf, Basel].

[27] There was some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek in England (and, indeed, in Ireland) in the middle ages, but it was limited to a very small circle.

[28] Gareth Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1983). My Manchester colleague, Colin Phillips, from the department of History, has drawn my attention to a strikingly concrete piece of evidence for knowledge of the

Biblical languages among the clergy in 17th century Cheshire. It is a brass memorial plaque in Great Budworth Church, for the Rev. Ephraim Elcock, incumbent of Great Budworth, who died (according to the brass) 30th Dec. 1656. It is in four languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin and English. The lettering is crude, but that says more about the skill, or lack of it, of the engraver, than the linguistic competence of the person who composed it, possibly, Phillips wonders, Adam Martindale, at that time the incumbent of Rostherne, whose name is mentioned on the plaque. Martindale was schooled in Lancashire, but not a university graduate.

[29] The Prolegomena was updated by Johann August Dathe (Leipzig, 1777), and again by Francis Wrangham (Cambridge, 1828).

[30] R.L. Greaves, "Owen, John", *ODNB* online.

[31] There was also a more technical issue about the status of the vowel points in Hebrew, but that need not concern us here.

[32] John Owen, *Works*, ed. W.H. Goold, vol. 16 (London, 1853; repr. Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 348, 370.

[33] When you look at the Appendices of variant readings in the Polyglot, you can see Owen's point. These are so massive that the casual reader might be forgiven for thinking that the text of Scripture is hopelessly corrupt. Most of the variants, however, are very minor, and Owen's wish to keep the laity in the dark cannot be excused. For the background to this debate see F.F. Bruce, "Scripture in Relation to Tradition and Reason", in: Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery, *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine. Essays in Honour of Richard P.C. Hanson* (T & T Clark: Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 35-64.

[34] John Henry, "Wilkins, John", *ODNB* online.

[35] A handwritten slip inserted into the front of the Cathedral copy of this work says: "In a conversation which Dr. John Wilkins, the author of this book, had with Her Grace the Duchess of Newcastle, she asked him, 'Doctor, where am I to find a place for baiting [i.e. lodging] at, in my way up to the moon?' 'Madame', he replied, 'of all the persons in the world, I should never have expected that question from you, who have built so many castles in the air, that you might lie each night at one of your own.'" I don't know the source of this, but surely it has the ring of truth (note the archaic use of "bait"). The good doctor's views seem to have been regarded as slightly batty by many in his day, but his reply is a clever put-down (flighty woman!), while maintaining the outward demeanour of the smooth courtier.

[36] A typed slip inserted at the front of the Cathedral copy of this volume states: "On July 17th 1947 Their Majesties King George V[I]th and Queen Elizabeth visited the Cathedral at Chester, and were interested to be shown the Cathedral Library and some of the treasures it contains. Among them was this book written by John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester in the 17th cent. which contains a description of Noah's Ark and of the way it contained the animals and other living creatures at the time of The Flood as described in the Book of Genesis. Norman Tubbs Bp. DEAN; R.V.H. Burne Vice Dean; C.E. Jarman, W.S. Coad, B.A. Hardy Canons."

[37] *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (3rd edn; Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997), p. 1245. "Pearson's true glory was not a matter of marble and wrought iron: he belonged, in Pepys's phrase, among 'the great Cavalier parsons during the late troubles' (Pepys, Diary, 8.337); his friend Evelyn reckoned him 'the most learned Divine of our Nation' (Evelyn, 4.5–6), and Burnet acknowledged him 'in all respects the greatest divine of the age' (Bishop Burnet's History, 3.134)" (Hugh de Qehen, "Pearson, John", *ODNB* online).

[38] The latest edition I know of was published in Cambridge in 1899. The form of the *Exposition* is interesting. The body of the text is very clear and uncluttered, but it is furnished with a formidable apparatus of references to and quotations from the Fathers and other divines, quoted in the original languages. These were first printed as marginalia, but in later editions transferred into footnotes. George Herbert in his famous and highly popular manual for the clergy, *The Country Parson* (1632), states:

> "The Countrey Parson hath read the Fathers also, and the Schoolmen, and the later Writers, or a good proportion of all, out of all which he hath compiled a book, and body of Divinity, which is the storehouse of his Sermons, and which he preacheth all his Life; but diversly clothed, illustrated, and inlarged. For though the world is full of such composures, yet every mans own is fittest, readyest, and most savoury to him. Besides this being to be done in his younger and preparatory times, it is an honest joy to look upon his well spent houres. This Body he made by way of expounding the Church Catechisme, to which all divinity may easily be reduced. For it being indifferent in it selfe to chose any Method, that is best to be chosen, of which there is likeliest to be most use. Now Catechizing being a work of singular, and admirable benefit to the Church of God, and a thing required under Canonicall obedience, the expounding of our Catechisme must needs be the most useful forme" (F.E. Hutchinson, *The Works of George Herbert* [Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1970], pp. 229-30).

Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed* is a wonderful example of this advice in practice (the Creed, of course, being a central part of the C. of E. Catechism, since the first Prayerbook of Edward VI). The learned marginalia were probably extracted from Pearson's "book", which was the result of his

comprehensive reading of the Fathers, the Schoolmen and the Classics. The text of the exposition, uncluttered though it is, is still intellectually very demanding. Confirmation classes seem to have been made of sterner stuff in those days! (Thanks to Canon Loveday Alexander for spotting the link between Pearson's *Exposition* and Herbert's *Country Parson*.)

[39] The Greek, like many Greek texts printed at this time, has numerous abbreviations and ligatures. These saved space, but make the text annoying for the modern scholar to read (printers, thankfully, gave these up long ago).

[40] The Latin runs: *Hesychium integrum primo perlegi, MDCLV. Octr. xv. Iterum MDCLXVII. Mart. xxvi*. It is possible the sense is that he *completed* the reading on these dates, but that does not seem to me the natural force of the words. Pearson left behind him some manuscript notes on Hesychius. His prowess in Greek was so formidable that, on the basis of his glosses to the plays of Aeschylus, Eduard Fraenkel, a luminary of the Classical firmament when I was reading Classics at Oxford in the 1960s, opined: "Pearson, though primarily known as a theologian, was perhaps England's greatest classical scholar before Bentley (his only possible rival being Thomas Gataker); in range of learning and critical power he is probably inferior to no English scholar save Bentley" (*Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, vol. 1 [Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1950], pp. 40-44 and 78-85). To appreciate the force of this compliment you have to be aware that Richard Bentley is accorded near divinity by Classical philologians.

[41] Darby, *Chester Cathedral*, pp. 59-60.

[42] David L. Wykes, "Henry, Matthew", *ODNB* online.

[43] After Matthew Henry's death, the Presbyterian Chapel in Chester became a Unitarian meeting house, a not uncommon transformation (James Hamilton, "Life of Matthew Henry", in: *Works of the English Puritan Divines: Matthew Henry* [Thomas Nelson: London, 1897], p. 41).

[44] Hamilton, "Life of Matthew Henry", p. 31, records that the Sunday morning service was devoted to the Old Testament and the afternoon to the New.

[45] The rest of the New Testament was completed by others, but not at the same level.

[46] Historically his work should be compared with the commentaries on the whole Bible by Matthew Poole, John Gill, Thomas Scott, John Brown (the *Self-Interpreting Bible*), and Adam Clarke.

[47] Google "Christian Classics Ethereal Library" or "Matthew Henry" to find it.

[48] There is no question, however, that he could read the Scriptures in the original languages. Hamilton ("Life of Matthew Henry", pp. 17-18) states that Philip Henry taught his daughter Sarah Hebrew at the age of six or seven. One can imagine he would have started earlier with her brother Matthew! Even a glance at his Old Testament commentaries reveals that he was a competent Hebraist.

[49] C.H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries* (Passmore and Alabaster: London, 1887), pp. 2-3. Lest I be misunderstood, I would counsel caution in using Matthew Henry today. He spoke from and to his times, but his times are not ours. Better to start with his present day successors, such as William Barclay, or Tom Wright, or the *People's Bible*. It shows infirmity of mind and spirit to put old commentators on a pedestal simply because they are old.

[50] Darby, *Chester Cathedral*, p. 60.

[51] Hamilton, "Life of Matthew Henry", p. 31.

[52] Actually the item on display is an abridged version, though still in two fat volumes!

[53] Norman Vance, "Kingsley, Charles", *ODNB* online.

[54] The tradition of trying to bring Christian thought to bear specifically on social, economic and political problems lives on in my own department at Manchester, in the Manchester Research Institute for Religion and Civil Society, especially in the work of the William Temple Foundation, named after Archbishop William Temple (1881-1944) who made a massive contribution in this area. See the Institute's website: www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/mrircs/.

[55] Charles Kingsley, *"What then, does Dr. Newman mean?" A Reply to a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Newman* (5th edn; Macmillan and Co.: London, 1864).

[56] Kingsley has been almost universally condemned for his attack on Newman. Typical is the editor of the Everyman's Library edition of the *Apologia* (1912):

> "About [Newman's] controversy with Charles Kingsley, the immediate cause of his *Apologia*, what new thing need be said? It is clear that Kingsley, who was the type of a class of mind then common enough in his Church, impulsive, prejudiced, not logical, gave himself away both by the mode and by the burden of his unfortunate attack. But we need not complain of it today, since it called out one of the noblest pieces of spiritual history the world possesses: one indeed which has the unique merit of making only the truth that is intrinsic and devout seem in the end to matter" (John Henry

(Cardinal) Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua* [Everyman's Library; J.M. Dent: London, 1912], p. ix).

But much of the criticism of Kingsley is as unbalanced and partisan as Kingsley's was of Newman. To rate an outpouring as self-justifying and self-absorbed as Newman's *Apologia* "one of the noblest pieces of spiritual history the world possesses" is surely open to question. Is the *Apologia* really on a par with Augustine's *Confessions*? Contrast this effusion with Norman Vance's cooler, more perceptive evaluation of the Kingsley-Newman exchange:

> "Kingsley was in a sense renewing a long-standing debate in moral theology: casuists such as St Alphonsus Liguori had controversially justified equivocation and evasions in particular situations for the greater good of the church. But this was hardly the real issue. Kingsley, the embattled activist, sensed that Catholic spirituality exemplified by Newman could sanction serene, even disdainful, withdrawal from the everyday problems and responsibilities of secular life and from ordinary moral accountability, and he resented and felt threatened by it, especially because it had encouraged [his wife] Fanny's original sense of a special celibate vocation. Newman chose to respond to his gibes in largely personal terms which did not fully address the more general questions" (*ODNB* online).

[57] Many of the volumes carry the stamp of the Free Library, Chester, and appear to have nothing to do, as I once thought, with the books in the trunk belonging to Kingsley discovered in the cellars of the Retreat House (formerly the Canons' residence) in 1958. The history of the Retreat House records the discovery but says the books were so damp they disintegrated when handled. See Sister Kate CHN, *Retreat House Chester 1925-1975* (np, nd), p. 14. The same author also writes:

> "The Kingsleys were very happy during their three years at Chester, and although Canon Kingsley was in residence for only three months of the year, the family became quite involved in the life of the city; Charles started a botany class which within a year became the nucleus of the present Chester Natural Historical Society, and his daughter trained as a nurse at the Infirmary. One of the drawbacks of being a famous author, however, is noted in another of Mrs Kingsley's letters, which has a surprisingly modern ring! She wrote to her friend after her husband's first period of residence in 1870: 'My husband likes his Cathedral Services. Especially daily the 8 o'clock AM & the 5 PM. He feels his soul at anchor at these two hours day by day – & he can take refuge in the Chapter room & Library (which are one) when we are likely to be invaded in the Residence. There he is safe from Every one except parties of *Americans* – whose first act on disembarking at Liverpool is to come over to Chester & see the *oldest* thing they can – i.e., a Cathedral – & then the Old Verger who unfortunately is a great Hero worshipper invariably tells them who the Canon in Residence is, & asks if they wd. not like to see *him too*! They are all paraded into the Chapter room too suddenly for Mr. Kingsley to make his Exit'" (*Retreat House Chester*, pp. 16-17).

[58] J. Campbell, "Stubbs, William", *ODNB* online. The entry in the old *Dictionary of National Biography 1901-11*, by the great Manchester historian T.F. Tout, one of Stubbs's most eminent students, is still worth reading.

[59] *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis, together with the English translation of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, edited by Churchill Babington and Joseph R. Lumby (9 vols, Rolls Series 41; HMSO: London, 1865-86).

ITEMS IN THE EXHIBITION MENTIONED IN THE LECTURE

Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*, 14th century

John Trevisa's translations of Higden's *Polychronicon*, printed by Peter Treveris at Southwark, London, in 1527

Latin Bible, Cologne 1476/77

William Barlow, *Summe and Substance of the Conference*, 1604

Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611

Brian Walton, *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, 1653-57

John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death In the Death of Christ*, 1648

Brian Walton, *The Considerator Considered: a brief view of certain Considerations upon the Biblia Polyglotta, the Prolegomena and Appendix thereof*, 1659

John Wilkins, *The Discovery of a New World, Or A Discourse tending to prove that 'tis possible there may be another habitable World in the Moone, With a Discourse concerning the possibility of a passage thither*, 1640

John Wilkins, *An Essay Towards a Real Character, And a Philosophical Language*, 1668

John Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed*, editions of 1659 and 1741

Hesychius, *Dictionarium*, 1514 (Bishop Pearson's copy)

Matthew Henry, *The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Testaments, to which are added notes and practical observations selected from the exposition of the Rev. Matthew Henry*, 1830

Charles Kingsley, *His Letters and Memories of his Life*, edited by his Wife, 9th edition, 1877

William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development*, 1877