

English Bishops It was to these translations that Cranmer appealed as a reason for issuing a fresh and authorized version.

With the mention of Wycliffe, we part company for the moment with our non-Catholic authorities, and call as a witness one belonging to the Household of Faith, whose authority and learning are, at the very least, not inferior to those of any referred or to be referred to. In his "Old English Bible," Abbot Gasquet has given convincing reasons for asserting that the so-called "Wycliffe Bibles," still extant, being wholly free from all taint of "Lollard pravity," are not the work of that rebel against the Church's divine authority, but must be counted among the Catholic translations mentioned by the apostate Cranmer, and "the holy and blissful martyrs," Blessed Thomas More.

It is no exaggeration, therefore, on the strength of the above evidence, to speak of the vernacular Scriptures as the source and inspiration of English literature, and to say that, in this sense, the influence of Catholicism is synonymous with the influence of the Bible, with that, in fact, of the Church's best gift to European literature, medieval or modern, Protestant, no less than Catholic.

I lay stress, possibly undue stress, on this point, just because the influence of the vernacular Bible on English literature has been so commonly, I was going to say so impudently, attributed to the "pure gospel" of Henry VIII, the light of which, we are told by an English poet, "first dawned in Bullen's eyes." If English literature, according to the witness of writers indifferent, if not hostile, to our Holy Faith, owes its beginnings, its form, its perfection, to the English Bible, it no less surely owes that vernacular Bible to the Catholic Church. That, and nothing short of that, is the form and measure of the influence of Catholicism on English literature.

Garrett, indeed, whom we called as our first witness, says, in effect, that if all that English literature owes, directly or indirectly, to the English Bible, were withdrawn, there would be little or nothing of interest or of value remaining. Stated differently, it may be safely said that English literature, whether prior to, or subsequent to, the miscalled reformation, is as meaningless, as incomprehensible, apart from the English Bible, as medieval literature, according to the Anglican Dr. Maitland — in his work already referred to — is meaningless and incomprehensible apart from a familiar acquaintance with the text of the Vulgate.