



From left to right: W. A. PANTIN, A. B. EMDEN, D. A. CALLUS,
BERYL SMALLEY, R. W. HUNT

BERYL SMALLEY

1905-1984

I

BERYL SMALLEY was born on 3 June 1905, the eldest of six children of Edgar Smalley and his wife Lilian, née Bowman. Her father was a Manchester business man who had inherited a firm of woollen and paper merchants, and in his younger days he had been a talented lacrosse player for Cheshire and for England. By the time of Beryl's birth he had prospered sufficiently to move with his family to a small country house at Cheadle in Derbyshire, and later to a larger house, Taddington Hall near Buxton. In these surroundings, he was able to indulge his taste for hunting with the High Peak Hunt, of which he rose to be joint Master in 1930-1. Beryl, who shared none of these tastes, grew up in an atmosphere of horse riding and other rural unbookish pursuits. As the eldest child she had a good deal to do in looking after the younger children. Later in life she remarked that she had done so much holding of the baby in her youth that she had never lost the knack. She also as a student attributed her disconcerting habit of absent-mindedly muttering 'Yes' or 'No' while she was reading, to her automatic response to questions of the other children when she was studying. Despite these vexations, she retained a strong affection for her brothers and sisters and their children; but she was clearly the solitary member of the family, and some of the features of her early career reflect her reaction against the atmosphere of her childhood.

She was educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College and St Hilda's College, Oxford, where she went as a Scholar to read history in 1924. Here the main influence on her was that of her tutor, Agnes Sandys (later Mrs Leys). Some words which Beryl later wrote in the *Oxford Magazine* in memory of her may be quoted, not only as a description of her tutor, but also (*mutatis mutandis*) of herself:

The intellectual movements at Oxford in her undergraduate days affected her very deeply. She became an ardent medievalist and was influenced by the Christian socialism which was a living force in Oxford at that time.

By the time that Beryl became an undergraduate, the link

between Christianity and Socialism, which had been the inspiration of an earlier generation, had largely disappeared: the two components had been transmogrified into Catholicism and Communism, and stood in bitter opposition to each other. These two forces became successively the two intellectual principles of Beryl's life for the next twenty years; but neither of them displaced her enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, which proved in the end more lasting than either. As a student, she was distinctly wayward. Without taking too literally her own account that she would read nothing except Church history or, at a pinch, diplomatic affairs, she clearly had no inclination to read what the syllabus required. The result was that she finished her undergraduate years with an undistinguished second class. Perhaps the greatest service that Miss Sandys performed for her was to introduce her to Professor Powicke when he came to Oxford in her last undergraduate year to give the Ford Lectures in January 1927. These lectures were a landmark not only in Beryl's life but also in medieval studies in Oxford, so they deserve a brief excursion at this point.

Powicke had chosen as his subject the career of Archbishop Stephen Langton, with the intention of throwing some new light on the archbishop's influence on the struggle for Magna Carta and on the events of the minority of Henry III. But in the course of his preparation, he became increasingly aware of the large number of surviving manuscripts which preserved the substance of Langton's lectures at Paris during the last twenty years of the twelfth century. The existence of this material had long been known, but it had not been studied even by historians of scholasticism, still less of course by political and constitutional historians. Powicke was the first to realize that in this scholastic material there might lurk evidence of the highest importance for the formation of political attitudes. This was the inspiration which transformed his Lectures, and incidentally the whole of Beryl's later life. The story may be told in Powicke's own words:

When I came to examine [Langton's] unpublished lectures, I found that the subject began to have a different and greater significance in my mind. What I had thought of as a restatement containing a few new suggestions was changed into a tentative introduction to a fresh, almost unworked, field of study. A happy result of the change has been that I have been able to gather together a little group of students . . . One of these is at work on Langton's *Questiones*, another on his commentaries [on the Bible], a third on his contemporary at Paris, Robert Curzon.

Beryl was the second of the students mentioned in this passage. The prospect of working on the Bible in the Middle Ages gave her just the stimulus she had been looking for: it was far removed from the kind of history that had bored her in the history syllabus; it brought her into the central intellectual tradition of the Middle Ages; and it struck a blow against the traditional Protestant view that the Bible was a discovery of the Reformation, with which she was disenchanted.

II

Inspired by these hopeful prospects, she at once registered herself as a research student at Manchester under Powicke, and spent the next three years engaged on a Ph.D. thesis on the biblical commentaries of Langton and his contemporaries 'viewed as historical material'. This last phrase is worth quoting as evidence of an intention from which she was soon to break away.

After a year at home, making periodic visits to Manchester for consultations with Powicke, and working on the manuscripts in Cambridge and London, she went to Paris. Here she worked for the greater part of two years under the general direction of Georges Lacombe, who introduced her to the complexities of scholastic manuscripts. To sort out the huge bulk and many varieties of Langton's biblical commentaries was a task of great and—at least immediately—not very rewarding labour. But Lacombe's enthusiasm helped to give her the will to succeed, and the knowledge of authors and manuscripts which she gained in this work was the foundation of all that she did later. Immediately, however, large masses of repetitive commonplaces had to be waded through to reach rare moments of liveliness. To quote her own words:

A very large proportion of Langton's work is composed of extracts from the Gloss, Biblical quotations, allegorical and moral excursions which recall the worst type of twelfth century sermon. It is often necessary to read through many folios of such material before arriving at an interesting *questio* or one of Langton's incomparably pithy *dicta*.

All her comments on the work of those early years give a sensation of back-breaking labour sustained by an eager sense of new discovery. The initial task of sorting out the various branches, types, and recensions of Langton's commentaries was completed with exemplary promptitude. She got her Ph.D. in 1930, and the work was published in 1931. At this point Powicke advised her to turn to some more conventional and marketable form of historical

research. He no doubt reminded her that the aim of her research had been to discover 'historical material' in biblical commentaries. He tried to recall her to this task. But she was now thoroughly immersed in scholastic thought for its own sake, and she was not to be diverted.

One large problem was gradually taking possession of her mind. While working on Langton, she had become haunted by the presence of a great stream of earlier and almost unknown biblical exegesis on which he drew. In particular, the Gloss referred to in the passage I have quoted: What was it? Who made it? When was it made? How and when did it become a central textbook of the medieval schools? These were the questions she set about trying to answer.

Of the traditional answers to these questions the most deeply rooted was that the Gloss had been put together in the ninth century by a German monk, Walafrid Strabo, who had assembled a large body of patristic texts and attached them to appropriate passages of the Bible. Several scholars were beginning to express doubts about this legend—for legend in fact it was. In particular H. H. Glunz, in the course of a study of the text of the Vulgate, had put forward the view that the Gloss was a product of the early twelfth century. This was in fact broadly correct, but his argument was marred by a number of errors and wild conjectures which (somewhat unfairly) had brought his work into disrepute. As a result, the whole subject was in considerable confusion. The material for solving the problem was so abundant, so confused by anonymity and false ascriptions, that it was hard to know in which direction to turn for new light. The best clue was one which Beryl had found in a work of one of Langton's contemporaries. Writing at about the end of the twelfth century and looking back to a time a hundred years earlier, a Parisian master, Peter the Chanter, had written:

It is regrettable that Master Anselm was prevented from completing his gloss on the whole Bible by the many demands made upon him by the canons whose dean he was.

This is one of those remarks which may be either a wild guess or a genuine tradition. It proved to be the latter. The more she worked on the manuscripts, the more the evidence accumulated which pointed to the school of Laon in the period from about 1080 to 1120, under the direction of its most famous master, Anselm, as the source of the gloss on the whole Bible, which was by the time of Langton beginning to be known as the *Glossa Ordinaria*.

Beryl followed this clue and the many others which gradually came to its support during the years from 1931 to 1935, and by the end of this time she had pieced together the main stages by which this essential tool of the schools had evolved from its earliest beginnings under Anselm and his brother Ralph, through its continuation and enlargement by a succession of pupils and masters, Gilbert the Universal, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Peter Lombard, until it came into the hands of the Parisian masters of Langton's generation. These researches were published in a number of articles which are now known to all medievalists.

While completing these researches, Beryl had been lecturing at Royal Holloway College from 1931 to 1935. In the latter year, through the falling out of an already elected candidate, she became a research fellow of Girton College, Cambridge. This new appointment made it a matter of some urgency to write a book which would satisfy the requirements of the College, and establish a claim to permanent employment thereafter.

The origin of the Gloss had come to dominate her work so much by this time that her first thought was to write a volume on Anselm of Laon and the *Glossa Ordinaria*. But fortunately two considerations deterred her. The first was that a book on an unreadable compilation of patristic quotations by an unknown and barely knowable author would provide only a meagre claim to a livelihood. The second and happier reason was that in the course of her most recent work, she had discovered a new character of immense interest to her personally and of considerable potentiality for the future: Andrew of St Victor. A few words are needed to explain the large role which this discovery played in her later development.

Andrew was a character for whom she felt the warmest sympathy. He was an Englishman who had become a canon of St Victor in Paris around 1125, returning to England in about 1145 to become head of a small and remote community of Victorine canons at Shobdon and later at Wigmore in Herefordshire. At St Victor he had been the pupil of Hugh of St Victor, the most capacious thinker of the first half of the twelfth century. Among many other achievements, he had stimulated two quite distinct kinds of biblical exegesis—the symbolic and the literal. The first was traditional and immensely popular, the second new and generally judged to be uninteresting. Hugh's pupil Richard of St Victor undertook the first, and became one of the best known writers of the Middle Ages. Andrew undertook the second and was utterly forgotten until Beryl resurrected him. She was later able to show that his work (its author forgotten) had a considerable

influence on later commentators; but his obscurity and his stubborn, morose independence appealed to her—perhaps she saw in him an image of herself: ‘Far be it from me [he wrote] to extend myself beyond the limits of my powers; I prefer to rest solidly on my own foundations, rather than to be carried away into a void above myself.’ He professed to confine himself to the literal meaning of Scripture because he could not afford the many volumes in which the spiritual meanings had been so abundantly explained. He doubted whether what he was doing was worth much, but at least he might find out a little that was new. He was not a man of towering intellect. He had no interest in natural science, and none in dogmatic theology; and he had nothing to say about the fashionable political or ecclesiastical subjects of the day. ‘He is distinctly prosaic,’ wrote Beryl, ‘this is his virtue. Being merely a scholar, he is unknown to text-books, and almost unknown to modern works of reference.’ But she also saw behind the modesty of aim a grandeur of conception: ‘No Western commentator before him had set out to give a purely literal interpretation of the Old Testament.’ And humble though it seemed, this turning away from the allegory to the ‘undoctored incident that actually occurred’ was itself a symptom of the great twelfth-century breakthrough into the world of physical reality which marked the beginning of modern science.

So in the end the obscure Andrew had a great future ahead of him. He was certainly not a man of superior genius. He lacked many of the historical and linguistic skills necessary for making a substantial contribution to the literal exegesis of the Bible, but at least he had made a start: ‘After all the first person in Western Europe who wanted to know what the authors of the Old Testament were trying to say to the Jews has a certain value.’ In order to understand what the Old Testament authors were trying to say to their contemporaries, Andrew turned to the Jews of his own day. He was not the first twelfth-century scholar to do this, but no one before him had made such systematic and constructive use of collaboration with contemporary Jewish scholarship.

In finding Andrew, Beryl had found in an obscure place the point of cohesion for which she had been looking. She had feared that her researches would drift into a quagmire of details about the growth of biblical glosses, and now she had found an unknown character to whom she responded with all her sympathy. At a time when anti-Jewish pogroms were one of the most loathsome symptoms of the breakdown of civilization she found relief for herself in turning to Jewish scholars for help in understanding a sympathetic

predecessor. This form of collaboration played an important part in her later work. More immediately, she had also found a central theme for her book: the shift of emphasis from the allegorical to the literal interpretation of Scripture. So the newly discovered character both became the central figure in her projected book, and pointed to a future beyond the book.

Andrew of St Victor had fully replaced the unexciting Anselm of Laon by the autumn of 1937, and from this date everything went with a swing: the introductory chapters on the Fathers and Carolingian scholars were rapidly written; the early articles on Anselm of Laon and the *Glossa Ordinaria* were shaped into a substantial section; Andrew was given the place of honour; Langton and his contemporaries were quickly disposed of; and a sketch of the later history of the literal interpretation of the Bible at the hands of the thirteenth-century friars—all the livelier for not having been too laboriously researched—was quickly put together. The book was finished in 1939 and sent to the press a few weeks before war broke out. It finally appeared in July 1941, under the title (arrived at with considerable misgivings), *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*.

It was not a good moment for publicity, and there were not many reviews. Nor were they particularly favourable. It was complained that the contents did not fulfil the expectations aroused by the title, and the index was found remarkably defective. There was only one reviewer, A. G. Little, who spotted the essential quality of the work. 'One does not', he wrote, 'expect a book with this title to be exciting. But Miss Smalley's certainly is. One feels pervading it the thrill of fresh discovery, the adventurous and gay spirit of the pioneer.' This is admirably put. The book was the record of an intellectual voyage of discovery undertaken under the influence of a new faith, and carried on in the midst of ill-health, of fears even of a total breakdown, and of distresses, both private and public, which brought much perplexity. The book itself reflects these circumstances both in its qualities and defects. Although the reviewers were quick to point out the latter, everyone can now see that the qualities are much more important. The book infused into a largely neglected subject a new spirit of discovery, all the more poignant for its troubled background.

III

At the time of the book's publication, Beryl had not yet succeeded in getting a permanent job. Her research fellowship at Girton had

come to an end in 1940, and for the next three years she worked as a temporary assistant in the MSS Department of the Bodleian Library. It was not until 1943, with the resignation of her old tutor, that she returned to St Hilda's as fellow and tutor; and here she remained till her retirement in 1969.

This change in her circumstances affected the tempo and even perhaps the impulse which is so apparent in her earlier work. Most of her time was now devoted to the teaching of a busy college tutor. Then for the last twelve years before her retirement, from 1957 to 1969, she was also Vice-Principal of the College. She made light of the functions attached to the latter office, but they were time-consuming, and there were many College problems, which required attention. Besides, despite her cool and aloof manner of speaking to or about her pupils, she was devoted to their interests in many small ways which might have escaped the attention of more solemnly dedicated teachers. A few words will need to be said later about these matters. For the moment I am concerned only about their effect on her scholarly work, which—however central it remained in her life—could no longer be pursued with the passionate, almost desperate, energy of former days. These changes in her life after the War help to explain why her later studies consisted so largely of new probings in many different directions without any synthesis of the kind she had attempted in her first book. In comparison with the earlier period, the years after 1943 were a time of peaceful development along the lines already laid down. The exegesis of the Bible in the medieval schools continued to be the main area of her scholarly work; but two new areas (medieval political theory and medieval historical writing) were added in the course of time. In what follows I shall describe briefly the extensions of her biblical studies, and then mention the excursions outside this area.

The first notable landmark in her later biblical studies was the appearance, in 1951, of a second edition of *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. The main additions were of two kinds; first, the appearance of a new character who was to play a considerable role in Beryl's later work; and then secondly, an extension in time to include the work of the friars, the chief custodians of biblical studies from about 1230 onwards.

The new character was Herbert of Bosham. Everyone had known him as one of Archbishop Thomas Becket's stoutest supporters, and as the author of an extremely verbose, and on that account undervalued, *Life* of the archbishop. But of his scholarly work little was known. Glunz had written about his edition of

Peter Lombard's glosses on the Psalms and Epistles; but it was left to Beryl to give substance and shape to our knowledge of his mind and aims. For this purpose the essential clue was provided by a manuscript of Bosham's own commentary on the Psalms in Jerome's version *iuxta Hebraicam veritatem*, which Neil Ker had found in the library of St Paul's Cathedral and reported to Beryl. When she looked at this work, she found that Herbert was another man of the same stamp as Andrew of St Victor. Like several of those who had been on the winning side in the Becket struggle, he passed the rest of his life in obscurity and unemployment. It was in the leisure of these later days that he reverted to the biblical studies with which he had been familiar in the schools. He had the independence of one who had seen greatness and was no longer interested in the world. He had always allowed himself the liberty of expressing dangerous thoughts, and this had earned him the reluctant admiration of his arch-enemy, King Henry II. He now brought all his boldness to the study of the Bible. In making a new commentary on the Psalms—the favourite hunting-ground of all allegorical interpreters of Scripture in the past—he broke away from this tradition and made a commentary solely on its *literal* sense.

Perhaps, like Andrew of St Victor, he was partly influenced by the difficulty, in his penurious retirement, of getting the large number of books necessary for an allegorical study, but this cannot have been the main reason. He was inspired by a desire to get to the root of his text. In the first place, he chose to comment, not on the Vulgate, but on the version, the *Hebraica*, which was closest to the original Hebrew. He himself learnt some Hebrew (more, in the judgement of competent scholars, than any of his contemporaries); and he consulted—again more than anyone else—contemporary Jewish scholars, and he entered into their habits of thought more fully than was at all prudent. This led him into some curious speculations. 'Supposing', he asked, 'the Jews turn out to be right after all, and the Messiah has not yet come, will the faith of the Church still be meritorious? Will the sacrament of the Eucharist still be purer and more acceptable than the sacrifice of animals?' He also discovered that St Paul had altered the text at one place (in Ps. 67: 19) to give it a more acceptably Christian interpretation, and he restored its original sense. Strange thoughts indeed for a twelfth-century theologian: they illustrate the existence of a range of doubts and hesitations generally, if they existed, left unspoken. I mention them here because they help to explain why Bosham, independent in action,

restless in enquiry, solitary in his studies, appealed so strongly to Beryl.

The other, and more substantial, addition in the second edition was the extension to include the friars—Hugh of St Cher, Guerric of St Quentin, Bonaventure, Thomas Docking, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas. In all of them she found an extension of interest in the literal meaning of the Bible spreading out in all directions. The list of names itself suffices to show that an emphasis on the *letter* of Holy Scripture no longer came, as it had in the previous century, from fiercely independent scholars on the edge of the scholastic world; it came from within the schools, especially from the friars, the chief custodians of biblical teaching. They brought to their interpretations a wide range of learning which incorporated Aristotle's newly translated scientific works; and they took an interest in ancient legends and classical antiquities, and used their biblical studies to promote the pastoral concerns of the new religious orders.

The mention of these diverse sources of inspiration will help to explain why no simple line of development can be found in Beryl's later work as it can in the work of her earlier years. The further she went, the vaster, the more unmanageable and unexplored, the subject became. Besides, she was never a great schematizer. She preferred to find a man or an aspect of the subject that elicited her sympathy, to work the subject up as far as she could, and leave it to others to carry on from there. That was how she always worked: the medium of her choice was an article, preferably for a *Festschrift* or some other special occasion; a book, if it came at all, arose from a combination of articles. She was always conscious in her post-war studies that the vastness of the materials and the many distractions of College duties would make it impossible for her to do more than illuminate a few points in a vast canvas. Nevertheless, they fall into a pattern, and it is possible to distinguish three main themes which offer a large prospect of further development. The themes are: the continuing growth of interest in the *literal* meaning of the Bible; the discovery of unusual characters whose solitude, dislike of public fame, and willingness to suffer for their independence made a special appeal to her; and finally—marking the last stage of her biblical studies—the increasing attention to the New Testament in the later Middle Ages. In much of her later work, these three themes become intermingled, but I shall try to give a brief account of each of them before turning to other things.

One consequence of growing interest in the literal meaning of

the Bible was to turn the minds of commentators to the historical and mythological events of Antiquity. It is rather strange that this antiquarian interest should have had its first flourishing in the midst of the violent controversies, famines, wars, and threats of war, of the early fourteenth century. Yet such was the case. Beryl was attracted to the investigation of this phenomenon partly because it lay in her path, but more forcibly because some of the pioneers in this early antiquarianism were men who appealed to her on other grounds—such men in particular as the Oxford Dominicans, Thomas Waleys and Robert Holcot. They were both men of marked individuality, and remarkably dissimilar.

The former was, like Beryl herself, a restless traveller. We get our first clear view of him at the papal court at Avignon in 1333, when he used the occasion of preaching in the Dominican convent to denounce the pope's own much cherished opinion on the delay of the Beatific Vision till the Day of Judgement. This earned him a long period of imprisonment in the papal prison. I do not know that Beryl altogether approved of him, but she sympathized with his plight, and she admired his biblical work. Somehow in the midst of his tribulations he managed to write *Moralitates* on a large part of the Old Testament. The main contributions he made to scholarship in this work were his enquiries into ancient history and classical mythology. Waleys was evidently the kind of man who easily blunders into trouble, but there was a natural and carefree quality in him which she liked: 'The type of lectures that he favoured [she wrote] resulted in a quaint mixture of sacred and profane; . . . it stimulated browsing and book-hunting . . . the lecturer on Scripture from now onwards could indulge his secular interests and perform his statutory duties at one and the same time.' Not the highest form of academic commendation, but close to the real life of an Oxford tutor. His existence helped to dissolve the idea of a monolithic and dehumanized Middle Ages, and this she always welcomed.

Like Waleys, Robert Holcot was a Dominican friar, but in all other ways he was a complete contrast. While Waleys spent much of his life abroad, involved in high-level controversies, Holcot is not known to have travelled further from Oxford than Cambridge, or perhaps Durham. He spent all his adult life as a lecturer in various Dominican priories within one or two days' journey from each other. But, stationary though he was, he was something of a gadfly intellectually, gathering picturesque material from every kind of classical and medieval source. Beryl described him as preferring decoration to decorum. The mixture was not

uncongenial, and the extension of biblical studies into the field of ancient antiquities, to which he also was addicted, became the subject of much of Beryl's later work. In 1960 she gathered her various studies into a volume on *The Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century*, in which both Waleys and Holcot have a prominent place.

It will be seen that none of her favourite characters fits easily into any preconceived pattern of medieval piety or intellect. They all have strongly marked idiosyncrasies which might have made them more at home in an Oxford Common Room than a medieval lecture-room or cloister. This remark applies equally to my next example of her later work, and the one which may be expected to have the greatest future: her discovery of the lost biblical lectures of Wycliffe.

It had long been known that Wycliffe had lectured on the Bible. Indeed, as a Bachelor and then Doctor of Divinity, working in Oxford with only one period of absence between 1370 and 1382, he could scarcely have failed to give *some* biblical lectures. But it came as a complete surprise to find, not only that he had lectured on the *whole* of the Bible during these years, but that an almost complete record of his lectures had survived, chiefly in Oxford manuscripts. This is what Beryl discovered, and almost everything about the discovery was surprising. The range of Wycliffe's lectures was unique for their time. Nicholas of Lyre, who had finished his lectures nearly fifty years earlier, had been the last lecturer, so far as we know, to cover the whole Bible. Moreover, nearly all the important biblical lectures of the century were the work of friars, and Wycliffe was nothing if not secular. By a strange coincidence, Stephen Langton, nearly two hundred years earlier, had been the last secular doctor with a comparable range of biblical lectures to his credit. So the wheel of history, like that of her own studies, had come full circle.

It was a thrilling discovery. It allows us to see, for the first time, the most controversial figure in Oxford before Newman going about his daily task steadily, patiently, voluminously, year after year over a period of some ten years in a time of growing intellectual crisis. Much still remains to be done to extract from these lectures all that they can tell us about Wycliffe and the University of his day. They were not intended to be controversial; they were only the bread and butter of the theology course; but anyone who opens them at random will be unlucky not to find some traces of a remarkable man with something new to say.

Yet it must be recorded that Wycliffe was the only man about

whom she made an important discovery for whom Beryl had no sympathy. Broadly speaking, there were two medieval characters to whom she felt a strong aversion. Joachim of Fiore was the first. In his perceptive review of her book in 1941, A. G. Little had noticed this: 'Her charity seems to fail her when she is dealing with Joachim,' he wrote, 'Yet Joachim made one of the great guesses at the riddle of human history.' He put his finger on both the fact and its explanation. Beryl had no patience with guesses; she wanted certainty, even if the certainty was only about points of grammar or the literal meaning of words. She had no use for the lofty structures of eccentric genius. So Wycliffe fell under the same condemnation as Joachim. She liked the qualities which he had in common with such favoured characters as Waleys and Herbert of Bosham: his courage and independence, his persistence in his daily task, and his historical insights. But she could not tolerate his stridency and his putting the Bible above the Church. That was too reminiscent of the position she had broken away from when she first struck out on her own. She could not tolerate his claim that flashes of insight, which (she wrote) 'come to many a scholar', might actually come from God. Consequently she thought him—and it is a very harsh judgement against the background of all that she had waded through over the years—'the most arbitrary interpreter of Biblical texts of the Middle Ages'. Even his forsaken death moved her to no compassion, and she was content to repeat McFarlane's judgement, which tells perhaps more about the temper of our generation than about Wycliffe: 'He ended his life as a mere bore, inventing fresh insults in default of new ideas.'

There is much more that might be said about Beryl's later work, but it must suffice simply to mention its scope. In her Ford Lectures of 1969 on *The Becket Conflict and the Schools* she returned to the subject of the political consequences of scholastic thought which Powicke had wanted her to work on from the beginning. This change of direction reflected a change in her own outlook on life, and it showed itself in several of her later essays. Similarly, her volume *Historians of the Middle Ages*, published in 1974, reflects her growing interest, which all historians must feel as they approach the end of their work, in the processes, aims, and incentives of earlier historians. It is a delightful book, not least for the remarkable evidence it provides of her original and extensive knowledge of illuminated manuscripts. It also gave her an opportunity to exhibit to her wider public her talent for picking unusual characters out of the huge mass of featureless authors: 'I hope', she wrote, 'to convey some idea of the bewildering

richness and variety of medieval historiography. Specialists may think that I pay too much attention to the freaks; but the student can correct me by browsing in run-of-the-mill chronicles and annals.'

Finally, no account of her work would be even tolerably complete without mentioning her final persistence in producing a last group of studies drawing attention to one of the great developments in the literal interpretation of the Bible in the later Middle Ages: the increasing concentration on the New Testament. This was a development of immense significance for the popularization and practical application of the Bible in the later Middle Ages. It raised questions of great consequence about the inerrancy of the Bible, which was the fundamental basis of all medieval—not to say much modern—thought and practice. As always in her later work, Beryl could do no more than open up new lines of enquiry. But, in the long run, this may prove to be as important a contribution to our understanding of the Middle Ages as any that she made in the course of her long and dedicated researches.

IV

It remains only to add a few words about her personality, her work as a tutor, and the impression she made on her colleagues and friends. In speaking of these matters, I must first mention a constraint under which this brief memoir has been written. She was an extremely private person, very reluctant to allow even her friends and colleagues to see much of her hopes and fears, her spiritual perplexities and emotional distresses. She kept these things to herself, partly because these were battles she preferred to fight alone; partly also perhaps because she kept the various sides of her activity, and even of her personality, in watertight compartments. Nor did she wish much to be known after her death. Before she died she ordered the destruction of all her papers, all her unfinished pieces of work. Nevertheless, despite this final expression of her lifelong reserve, the warmth and simplicity of her character become increasingly evident in retrospect. The mystery of her personality remains, but the sense of exclusion disappears. The pooling of recollections brings out an unexpected range of sympathies and charities, which should not go unrecorded. Also, a sense of harmony and unity takes the place of the fragmentation that had seemed so conspicuous in life. For reasons which I shall touch on, she seemed quite glad that I should write about her work, and she must have known that this could not be done

without some reference to the events which moved her. But she did not wish her privacy to be unduly violated.

She and I had known each other for over fifty years. We had some important things in common: we both had experienced the brief sunshine of the late 1920s before the abominations of the '30s; we both had similar academic beginnings in the undemanding and variously stimulating Oxford History School of those days; we both had come under the influence of Powicke, and had both followed—with only intermittent contact—parallel courses in our historical interests. For long periods we lost sight of one another completely; but in the last years of her life, what we had had in common became more evident. I think some recognition of this must have lain behind her willingness that I should write some words about her after her death. She wanted to be remembered as one of a group. Her attempts to find a place in one or other of the universal groups of our time had ultimately failed. There only remained the group within which she had found her scholarly home. The inner circle of this was defined in the only photograph of herself which she preserved. It was a snapshot in which she was a diminutive figure in the company of Billy Pantin, A. B. Emden, Fr. Callus, and Richard Hunt: it is reproduced at the beginning of this memoir. They—and especially the last—were the people with whom she most wished to be associated in retrospect; and, since they were all dead and had also been my friends, it was left to me to say whatever needed to be said.

I have said what I can about the growth of her scholarly work; but, for the latter half of her life, we must turn to her pupils and College colleagues, who were the chief observers and admirers of her personal qualities. To her pupils she presented a fascinating, daunting, and fastidious personality, both visually and mentally. One of her abiding interests throughout her life was in the changing modes and (I suppose) principles of feminine fashion. As far back as I can remember, she was a conspicuous object in the striking elegance and clear-cut severity of her appearance. At a time when dyed hair, painted finger-nails, and cosmetics were held in the greatest abhorrence among 'right-minded' women, she quietly, but not inconspicuously, and when necessary with steely words in shocked ears, registered her dissent. To the uninstructed observer, she had something of the appearance of an exceptionally clearly defined wraith—very thin, austere, remote, but distinctly visible. As a visual object, especially in the days of post-war austerity, she was adored by the junior members of her College.

Her voice was exceptionally clear, rather slow, but precise; her

words few and unambiguous; her judgements decisive, and more often favourable than seemed at all likely. To her undergraduate pupils she was formidable and mild at the same time. As one put it: 'She inspired in me equal parts of love and terror.' The moment after finishing the reading of an essay was apt to be more than usually alarming in the long pause which followed; but then apprehension would be followed by relief as she took up the points one by one, and went round the room picking up books to illustrate them. She kept to the point and rarely obtruded her special interests, though her pupils eagerly examined her remarks for traces of Marxism, or Catholicism—or could it be Buddhism? They found it hard to know. It certainly wasn't Protestantism or Liberalism: that, they would say, was 'for sure'.

Gradually, and mainly after they had gone down, they got to know better another side of her: the wide extent of her kindness and hospitality. Hospitality was one of her duties as a tutor, and it was one for which she had a peculiar genius. She was not in the least convivial, but she cared greatly about people in an austere way and would take endless trouble over their minor needs—major ones were their own affair. She liked to keep in touch with them in later life: 'she delighted', wrote one of them, 'in hearing of personal events—marriages, births, etc., and kept up an enormous correspondence, especially at Christmas.' To another, who was visiting Oxford with her family, she wrote, 'Four school girls constantly come to tea in my room, so I'm quite used to providing for large numbers and appetites'.

Several years before she retired—in 1964 to be precise—she acquired a flat in Oxford to retire to. At once it became a place of hospitality for old, and for some future, pupils. She was always ready to put it at their disposal for family holidays: 'My flat', she wrote, 'can sleep only five unless two children can share a single bed or you can bring a mattress; but Tessa could stay in College with me perhaps. College will be almost empty at the time, so she won't be frightened.'

Many pupils have recollections of this kind, and they are worth reporting because they show a quite different side of her from that which she displayed in public: the private warmth of a singularly independent character in a world which she found, not so much hostile, as extremely testing and ultimately unfathomable.

Her death was in keeping with her life. Her surgeon had told her that she had only a few months to live, and she accepted this warning with gratitude and equanimity. 'The honesty of my surgeon', she wrote, 'has given me the chance to finish everything . . . my last

book is about to appear . . . There will be no *Nachlass*.' She planned to finish as much of her work as possible, and to destroy everything that could not be left in a fit state for publication. The collection of essays, *The Gospels in the Schools, c.1100-c.1280*, which appeared posthumously, was the main result of the work of her last months. By the time she died all had been punctually accomplished. Meanwhile she would accept only the bare minimum of nursing. 'Dying', she said to Menna Prestwich, her closest colleague, 'is an experience like any other.' What might have been bravado in others, in her was no more than a statement of a bleak fact, which she had once hoped to find untrue. In 1929 she had been received into the Roman Catholic Church, and about ten or twelve years later had become a member of the Communist Party. The connection between these two loyalties remained a mystery to all but herself. But by the time of her death she had quietly dissociated herself from both of them. These were her only attempts to find a home in a universal community. When these failed her, she sought no others, and accepted her solitary fate with unflinching courage and steadfastness. She bequeathed her books to her old College, and directed that there should be 'of course, no memorial service'.

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