

HENRY JULIAN WHITE

1859-1934

HENRY JULIAN WHITE was born in North London on the 27th of August 1859. He was the second son of Henry John White, sometime in the Mercantile Service, and afterwards on the staff of a local bank in Islington. His only brother, William, survived him for six months. His only sister died some years before. The records of his early life are very few and scanty. Owing to his somewhat weak state of health he was educated not far from his home at the Islington Proprietary School, at that time under Prebendary Wheeler Bush. Here, and also with some private tuition, he laid a good foundation of classical learning which was of great assistance to him afterwards in his life's work.

At the age of 19 he went up to Christ Church, Oxford, as a Commoner, obtained a Second Class in Classical Moderations in 1880, and took his B.A. (3rd Class Lit. Hum.) in 1882. His real bent of mind, however, was in the direction of Theology, and he took a First Class in the Honours Theological School in 1883. This he followed up by obtaining the Denyer and Johnson Theological Prize in 1884 and the Senior Greek Testament Prize the following year. During his undergraduate days his health handicapped him from time to time, and in his fourth year he had a severe attack of rheumatic fever, and it was during his convalescence that he had to face the final Classical School.

He was ordained Deacon in 1885 and Priest in 1886, serving his only curacy at Oxted, Surrey, 1885-6. It was at this time that John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury, was making plans for a new critical edition of the Vulgate New Testament and was seeking some one to help in the work. Dr. Sanday, who knew White's capabilities, recommended him to the Bishop as the best possible assistant. It was the kind of careful accurate work which appealed most to

H. J. White's bent of mind, and he went from Oxted to Salisbury as domestic Chaplain to the Bishop and there started the Vulgate researches which proved to be the great task of his life. There he became Missioner of the Society of St. Andrew, and in 1887 was appointed Vice-Principal of Salisbury Theological College, an office which he filled for eight years until he accepted the post of Theological Lecturer and Chaplain of Merton College, Oxford, in 1895, where he resided for ten years, during which he acted as Examining Chaplain to Bishop Stubbs and to his successor Bishop Paget. These years at Oxford were full and busy ones. His conscientious work and personality were much prized by all who came in contact with him, and the College showed its appreciation by electing him in 1897 to a Fellowship. By this time he seems quite to have overcome the weak health of his early years. He was strong and active, rising early and fitting himself for his intellectual tasks by vigorous walks and energetic games of tennis. Large portions of his vacations were spent abroad, where we find him between the years 1884 and 1905 at most of the more important continental libraries such as Paris, St. Gall, Breslau, Munich, Milan, and others, making collations of Vulgate and early Latin MSS. for the work of the great edition which he always considered to be the chief object of his life.

This earlier period of his life at Oxford came to an end in 1905, when he succeeded Dr. R. J. Knowling as Professor of New Testament Exegesis at King's College, London. Here the writer of this Memoir came for the first time into close contact with him and was his Assistant Professor for many years. For fifteen years he remained as Professor at King's College. The first four of these years were spent in bachelor chambers over D. H. Evans's stores in Oxford Street, until in 1909 he married Mrs. Clara Miller Warden, widow of Lieutenant-Colonel Warden of the Indian Medical Service, and settled down first in Lexham Gardens, Earl's Court and afterwards at St. James's Court, Westminster. The actual amount of lecturing work at King's College was not

great, and it would be quite easy to excuse oneself from further duties owing to the fact that there are no resident students in the College, the larger number residing at home in the suburbs. There was, however, a small but growing Theological Hostel where students were encouraged, if possible, to spend at least a portion of their period of training. Dr. White took his duties at King's College most seriously, and he was often to be found either at the College or at the Hostel giving gratuitous tuition to some of the weaker students or taking part in the life and entertainments of the Hostel—a welcome guest at special gatherings; and though a life-long abstainer from tobacco himself he was frequently present at the smoking concerts, where he would take his share in the programme by performing on the 'cello, in which he had acquired considerable proficiency, or telling his favourite story of a murder trial by a Cornish jury with a really good imitation of the Cornishman's brogue. During these years at King's College he took his Oxford D.D. and also received an Honorary D.D. of St. Andrews University. Towards the close of this period came the difficult years of the Great War, and many of the students who went out to serve in the forces abroad can testify to the sympathy and encouragement which he showed both in correspondence with them while on foreign service and in personal help and advice on their return on leave from time to time.

Shortly after the War, in 1920, he was appointed to succeed Dr. Strong as Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. He possessed eminent qualifications for this important office, and his fitness for the appointment was soon obvious to all connected with the House. His simple goodness, his devotion to all the sound traditions of the House, his suspicion of all unnecessary changes and his willingness to consider and adopt everything that he saw to be in the best interests of the College won for him the respect and affection of all—even of those who were not entirely in agreement with him in policy and principles.

The writer of this Memoir was a frequent visitor at the Deanery during the period of Dr. White's office, and was generally introduced by the Dean to his friends with a quiet touch of humour in which he excelled, with a warning that they must be careful what they said as I was a member of the sister University. As an outsider, therefore, I feel I may be considered to be a more impartial judge, and it is my firm conviction that at this difficult time of post-war instability and unsettlement Dr. White's strong conservative principles, from which he never swerved, his high moral courage, his strong sense of the dignity of the office which he filled, his readiness to devote himself to all questions small or great which came within the province of his administration, have shown abundantly the wisdom and rightness of his appointment as Dean, and time alone will prove its value to Christ Church at this difficult period of its history. He was a worthy successor of the other great Deans who have left their mark on the history of the House.

During this period as Dean of Christ Church he became a Fellow of Winchester College, 1921-3, an Honorary Fellow of Merton College in 1921, an Honorary D.D. of Dublin in 1927, and Fellow of the British Academy in 1932. As Dean of Christ Church he also became a member of the Governing Body of Westminster School, a Delegate of the Oxford University Press, and served for a time on the Hebdomadal Council.

There is little doubt that the heavy responsibilities of the double position as Head of a great College and Dean of a Cathedral Church coupled with his eagerness to complete the critical edition of the Vulgate told on his health in the later years of his life. In the spring of 1934, during the Easter vacation, he had an attack of influenza from which he had not fully recovered before the summer term began. Towards the end of May he had a serious break-down which laid him aside from his duties for just over a fortnight. He was able, however, to take a full part in the closing functions of the summer term and seemed to be making a good

recovery. There was, however, a sudden relapse in the middle of July and he passed away at the Deanery in the early morning of 16 July. The funeral service was held in Christ Church Cathedral on the 19th of July, and was attended by most of the Heads of the Oxford Colleges and a large concourse of distinguished people. His body was laid to rest in Osney Cemetery.

It is necessary now to supplement this brief outline of his life by a short account of his endeavours to fulfil the task which amid the distractions of his activities at Salisbury, Merton College, King's College, London, and Christ Church, Oxford, he kept uppermost in his mind and to which he devoted all the spare time that he could afford.

As early as the year 1877 John Wordsworth, while still at Brasenose College, conceived the idea of making a new critical edition of the Latin New Testament which should reproduce as nearly as possible the original text which had been the authorised edition since the time of Jerome and commonly called the Vulgate. The following year a correspondence with the Clarendon Press was started, though no agreement was executed till 1890. The whole extent of the proposed work was reviewed and a large number of distinguished continental scholars were consulted. A first prospectus was issued in 1882. Two years later H. J. White was first introduced to Wordsworth and began to take an interest in the enterprise, but it was not until two years later that he became Wordsworth's chief assistant. White, therefore, had little share in the early plans of the work, but as the work progressed he made many suggestions for enlarging the scope and value of the critical notes, and much of the increased evidence in the later fasciculi was mainly due to his devotion to the task.

The first business was to select from the mass of extant MSS. scattered throughout the chief libraries of Europe those which were considered the best representatives of the authentic text of Jerome. Twenty-nine were finally chosen which were thought to be the most important, and they

were divided into three classes according to their considered value. These fundamental MSS. were denoted by the capital letters of the English alphabet and Δ and Θ of the Greek, together with two composite letters ℙ for Codex Epternacensis and ™ for Codex Martini-Turonensis. The full list of these MSS. is to be found in the Introduction to the first fasciculus (Matthew) and need not be repeated here. White took his full share in examining or recollating many of the fundamental MSS., and he made a special study of A, the Codex Amiatinus, which has generally been regarded as the best authority for the Vulgate text. He wrote a monograph on this MS., entitled 'Codex Amiatinus and its birthplace' which was published in *Studia Biblica*, vol. ii, 1890. In this he set out clearly the evidence which is now regarded by many as proof that the Codex was written at Wearmouth or Jarrow and was given as a present by Abbot Ceolfrid to Pope Gregory II at Rome, whence it finally found its home in the Mediceo-Laurentian Library at Florence. This monograph was well received by scholars all over Europe and greatly enhanced White's reputation for accurate scholarship. Letters of thanks and appreciation were received by him from Scrivener, William Ridgeway, Peter Corsen, Th. Zahn, L. Delisle, and many others.

From the first the editors realized the importance to be attached to the old Latin MSS. which represented the various types of text which existed before Jerome's time and which formed the basis of his version. Both the Bishop and White spent much time in collating and editing as many of these as possible. As a by-product of the new edition of the Vulgate the editors decided to publish a series of these texts with introductions under the title of 'Old Latin Biblical Texts'. These texts are denoted mostly by the small letters of the English alphabet. White took a specially active part in this series as joint-editor, and started working at the Codex Monacensis (q) in Munich in the year 1884. This was vol. iii of the series published in 1888. He had in the meantime published as a supplement in vol. ii a text of the

fragments of n, o, p, a₂, s, and t. Later on, in 1907 and 1911, texts of ff₂ and b, the work of E. S. Buchanan, were published under his supervision. The Codex Brixianus (f) was considered by the editors to be the old Latin text which approximated mostly to the text upon which Jerome based his revision and was printed by them beneath their own eclectic text of the Gospels. These old Latin versions, though at first not quoted exhaustively, always formed part of the material used by the editors. They are referred to very sparingly in the critical notes of Matthew and Mark, more fully in Luke, and completely in John, Acts and the rest of the work. This was also the case with reference to the quotations from the Fathers. White took a special interest in this section of the work, and it was largely due to his persuasion that, after being almost neglected in the Gospels, they were added frequently in the Acts and very carefully represented in the Epistles.

The editors also took into account the four important editions of the Vulgate which had been published in the sixteenth century, viz. Stephanus (S) 1546, Hentenius (A) 1547, the Sixtine (\$) by the command and under the authority of Pope Sixtus V, 1590, and the Clementine (C) by the command of Pope Clement VIII under whose authority three official editions were published 1592, 1593, 1598. Of these earlier editions White made a careful examination of the Sixtine, in which he showed that the charge of inaccurate printing which had been the pretext for the recall of this edition and the making of a new one under Clement VIII cannot be sustained. Some other reason must be sought for the new edition under Clement, which has remained the standard edition of the Roman Church up to the present day.

All these editions are very frequently quoted and their agreement is noted under the sign Vg.

Early in the eighteenth century Richard Bentley, with the assistance of John Walker, had planned a new critical edition; but Bentley died in 1742 and nothing was printed.

A conspectus of readings, however, had been deposited in Trinity College, Cambridge, and full use of this was made by the new editors of the Oxford Critical Edition. It was quoted as Bendl. in the first two fasciculi, but afterwards its importance was such that they decided to add it as \mathfrak{F} to the list of fundamental MSS., thus raising the number of these to thirty. The readings also of Tischendorf and Westcott and Hort were added by White with increasing regularity as the work went on.

At length, twelve years after its first conception by John Wordsworth, the new Oxford Critical Edition of the Vulgate began to be published in 1889 under the joint editorship of Wordsworth and White. It was hoped to issue it in fasciculi at regular intervals of about two years, and this plan was adhered to in the case of the first four fasciculi of the Gospels—Matthew (1889), Mark (1891), Luke (1893), and John (1895). Then, after an interval of three years, an Epilogue on the Gospels was published in 1898, which was largely the work of Bishop Wordsworth. At this time both the editors were very busy in their several spheres of work and were unable to meet except in vacations. There was also now a good deal of remapping of material to be done which to some extent varied in the later books of the New Testament. White also had now prevailed in his desire to quote the Fathers as widely as possible, and this added heavily to his share of the work. Acts did not appear till 1905, and then in 1911 came the death of Bishop Wordsworth, which delayed the publication of Romans till 1913. White was now almost alone in the work. He had, however, some assistance from G. M. Youngman, who all along had given most useful aid in collating MSS. for the editors and whose advice on the characteristics and types of MSS. was always considered to be of value. 1 Corinthians was published in 1922, and then with the aid of A. Ramsbotham, Preacher of the Charterhouse, who now became an enthusiastic assistant in the work, 2 Corinthians came out in 1926. A rather longer interval now elapsed before the next part was ready. This

was mainly due to the exacting tasks which fell to the Dean at Christ Church and to the death of his assistant Mr. Ramsbotham. The fasciculus containing Galatians and Ephesians, though ready and actually in print, was not published until about a month after the Dean's death.

At the time of his death the Dean was well advanced in preparation for the next fasciculus, which is to contain Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Most of the material was ready, but very little had been assembled so far in copy. This is now being put into form and seen through the Press by H. F. D. Sparks, whom the Dean had already taken on as an assistant in succession to Mr. Ramsbotham. This part should not now be long delayed. A large amount of material is ready, too, for the final fasciculus of the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews. Much has still to be done for the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse, but the Clarendon Press and the Dean's Executors are determined that the work which the Dean had so much at heart shall, if possible, be completed in due course. During these years in which he was anxious to devote all the time he could spare to the Vulgate work, Dr. White also found time for one or two small publications mostly connected with the task in which he was engaged. Between 1900 and 1902 he wrote the article on the Vulgate for Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, a very comprehensive survey of the whole history of the Vulgate, and this took up a large part of his spare time. Then between 1910 and 1912 White was busy with the preparation of the editio minor—a hand-edition of the Vulgate New Testament. This was almost entirely his own undertaking. The Bishop, though interested in its publication, took no real part in it. It contains the eclectic text of the editors as far as the end of Romans and then a provisional text formed from some eight or nine specially selected MSS. for the rest of the New Testament. Brief footnotes are added for the more important variant readings. This was published in 1912 by both the Clarendon Press and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Later on, in 1926, he published,

jointly with W. E. Plater, a Grammar of the Vulgate, which supplied in a popular form a long-felt need. He also edited a small selection of some of the most important passages from the Vulgate for teaching in schools and colleges. These, with a small monograph on Merton College written in 1906 and published by J. M. Dent & Co., complete his literary output.

There was one other enterprise in which the Dean took a keen interest. In the year 1926 a Committee was formed to bring out a new edition of the Greek Testament on the lines of Tischendorf's famous edition of 1869 with a critical apparatus as full and up to date as possible. Dr. White took an active part as a Member and Treasurer of this Committee up to the time of his death.

The Dean had naturally collected a very valuable library on the Vulgate containing many of the Benedictine editions of the Fathers and other rare books connected with the subject, which he had found it possible to acquire, including a large number bequeathed to him by Bishop Wordsworth. In his later years, with the vast amount of material that he had collected around him and nearly all the necessary books of reference on his own shelves, he was able to continue his labours with very little need of wandering out of his own study at Christ Church. This Vulgate collection of books he bequeathed in his will to the library of Christ Church, Oxford.

His was a life of consistent useful service in the highest sense, both in his influence towards those of his own generation and especially the many hundreds of students with whom he came in contact, and also in furtherance of accurate scholarship for generations to come in the task which he had set himself to undertake.

In a sermon preached in Gloucester Cathedral shortly after Dr. White's death, Dr. Headlam, the Bishop, referring to the late Dean of Christ Church as an example of one of those whose labour was not in vain, says, 'there are many who will testify to his courtesy, geniality, and to the example which he set of the most perfect Christian temper'.

S. C. E. LEGG.