

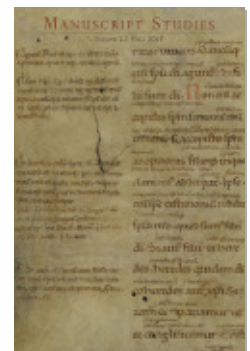


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*Manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible in the Bodleian and
Oxford College Libraries* by Elizabeth Solopova (review)

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Elizabeth Solopova. *Manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible in the Bodleian and Oxford College Libraries*. Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016. 272 pp., 16 color illustrations. £85. ISBN: 978-1-781382-98-1.

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IN *MANUSCRIPTS OF THE Wycliffite Bible*, Elizabeth Solopova gives readers both an important new manuscript catalog and a taste of her larger Leverhulme Trust-funded project on the Wycliffite Bible. Although forthcoming publications will undoubtedly shed a great deal more light on the topic, the detailed descriptions in each entry of the present catalog offer evidence that reinforces her earlier hypothesis that many Wycliffite Bible copies were owned by clergy.¹ For those waiting on that future work, therefore, *Manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible* offers much to digest in the meantime.

The body of the volume consists of meticulous catalog entries familiar to anyone who has made use of Solopova's earlier *Latin Liturgical Psalters in the Bodleian Library* (2013).² These entries cover sixty-four volumes in the Bodleian and Oxford college libraries that contain portions of the Wycliffite Bible, and include the expected information concerning date, text, physical description, binding, and provenance. Solopova's work with the full corpus of Wycliffite Bibles enriches her descriptions of the copies in Oxford. In many entries she is able to compare script and textual features with other specific volumes held elsewhere. Solopova also records the basic variants that would enable dialectal study, though she does not pursue these as far as assigning localizations to individual scribes. This raises another important

1 Elizabeth Solopova, "Manuscript Evidence for the Patronage, Ownership and Use of the Wycliffite Bible," in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible*, ed. E. Pögl and L. Light (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 333–49.

2 Elizabeth Solopova, *Latin Liturgical Psalters in the Bodleian Library: A Select Catalogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

feature—in many instances, Solopova has also begun the task of distinguishing hands. This shows more boldness than may initially appear, as the methodology for identifying scribal hands copying in *textura* remains exceptionally rudimentary. The Wycliffite Bible corpus provides an excellent data set for such research, however, and one can hope that the field will see more of this kind of work in the future. Solopova's close examination of sixteenth-century and later ownership renders the provenance section of many entries especially important, as the absence of many fifteenth-century inscriptions has tended to overshadow more recent ownership marks in previous scholarship.

It is worth highlighting the substantial introductory chapter that offers an excellent introduction to codicological study of the Wycliffite Bible. Here Solopova summarizes most of the recent codicological work on the Wycliffite Bible and suggests ways that her own research will push forward these findings. Though she does not take on the relationship of the General Prologue to the development of the Wycliffite Bible directly, her comparison between the Later Version's rubrics and the General Prologue hints that her future publications will further illuminate. Following Matti Peikola's lead, Solopova introduces the range of paratexts commonly accompanying the Wycliffite Bible, and she expands on Peikola's work especially in describing lectionaries and rubrics. Such work may eventually be used to aid in establishing a stemma for extant Wycliffite Bibles and their accompanying texts. Solopova also develops from Mary Raschko's work in tracking *Oon of Foure*, a gospel harmony that circulates frequently attached to Wycliffite Bible text. All of this suggests connections between copies of both texts held in Oxford, and also hints at wider manuscript networks. Solopova argues that the codicological and paratextual evidence may point to distinct development strategies for complete bibles and New Testaments. Though she builds on her earlier contention that many Wycliffite Bibles remained in clerical hands, she also traces manicules in many copies that highlight passages concerning translation, the Eucharist, or women that she believes show Lollard leanings. Only her future work will fully contextualize these samples and allow assessment of the range of hypotheses she delivers here.

There are a few notable absences in the book that a reader must accommodate, but these do not reduce the importance of *Manuscripts of the Wycliffite*

Bible. First, Solopova's methodology behind her selection of volumes is not always clear. The fragment Worcester College, MS E. 10. 7, seems to be included as a trace of an earlier Old Testament copy. Yet Trinity College, MS 93, is a biblical summary that simply makes use of the Wycliffite Bible's text. If fragments are counted and usage is the lowest unit included in the volume, then it is unclear why the English Books of Hours held in Oxford were not described, as they also make use of the Wycliffite Bible's text. Likewise, the so-called Glossed Gospels housed in the Bodleian are also not covered, though these too quote the Wycliffite Bible extensively. Second, Solopova chose quite conservative terminology for the decoration of these volumes, rather than making use of the specific vocabulary developed for describing fifteenth-century English manuscript decoration by Kathleen L. Scott and others. Third, the book's apparatus itself is relatively nonstandard. There is no unified bibliography for the volume, and instead each entry has its own. The index includes author names, and can be used to lead a reader to citations, but it is otherwise very thin, and does not include codicological features or other lemmata one might expect in the index to such a volume. Instead, Solopova places this material in a series of very useful appendices, covering script styles, localization, and more. Of these criticisms, the last may have been the result of decisions by the press, not the author. The second is quite minor, and only the first might slow down a researcher looking for a complete catalog of Wycliffite Bible text in Oxford. Overall, *Manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible* will be a necessary resource for scholars working on the Wycliffite Bible, and also for codicologists examining Middle English book production.