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978-1-107-64358-1 - Bishop Reginald Pecock: A Study in Ecclesiastical History
and Thought: Thirlwall Prize, 1941

V. H. H. Green

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A Study in Ecclesiastical History and Thought

BY

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University of Cambridge. Fellow of St Augustine's College,
Canterbury. Assistant Master at Sherborne School*

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PREFACE

‘Who on earth’, my friends say to me, ‘was Bishop Pecock?’ This small and obviously imperfect essay is intended as an answer to that question. Its career has been somewhat chequered. Teaching and lecturing work at a theological college, at a training college and at a school have prevented anything like continuous research into the problems of fifteenth-century history. Apart from this, when the finishing touches were being put to the essay the Luftwaffe treated it with that incivility and disdain, which was so characteristic of the housemaid’s attitude to a very much greater work, Carlyle’s *French Revolution*. In other words, the manuscript was burned, burned as Abailard’s precious writings on Ezekiel had been burned centuries before. The rough copy of the essay which survived provided the foundations for this book. I had hoped to explore further, to have found more documentary evidence for the details of Pecock’s career and thought, but the difficulties of our time and my own feeling that there was further and probably more important work to be done in other fields of historical research convinced me that I should not be justified in withholding this short study any longer. This explanation is intended in no sense as an apology. It is merely meant to explain the imperfections and defects of the essay itself.

It is a pleasant task to thank those who have in greater or lesser degree helped this essay on its way. I must particularly acknowledge my indebtedness to the adjudicators of the Thirlwall Prize, 1941, the Chairman of the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Divinity, and to the Trustees of St Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, for the award of a Gladstone Studentship in 1937. Many friends have at one time or another shown an interest in my work, Professor C. W. Previt -Orton who first suggested that Pecock was worthy of study, Professor A. Hamilton Thompson with whom I used to talk most fruitfully at Leeds, Mr C. W.

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PREFACE

Crawley of Trinity Hall and the Rev. Dr G. C. Richards, sometime senior Fellow of Pecock's old college, Oriel. My friend and colleague, Dr F. J. Badcock, Librarian of St Augustine's College, Canterbury, has always placed the full facilities of the library at my complete disposal, nor can I forget the help which I have received during past years from Dr Williams's Library of Gordon Square, London. A former pupil, Mr David Munns, has kindly helped me with the Index. I have mentioned some further obligations in the footnotes, but I am grateful to the Rev. G. F. Nuttall, B.D., for so kindly lending me his thesis on 'Faith and Reason in the Works of Bishop Pecock'. I have also to thank the editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* for permission to use my article on 'Bishop Pecock and the English Bible'. The tragic death of Mr J. G. Sikes deprived the world of a real scholar and the author of a personal friend and adviser. Two other scholars of note, Mr B. L. Manning and Dr E. V. Hitchcock, who expressed their interest, and the former of whom gave me invaluable advice, have died since I commenced this study. Finally, it would be the height of discourtesy to omit my thanks to the Cambridge University Press for the helpful suggestions of its proof readers and the patience of its printers. I need hardly add that I am alone responsible for any errors and imperfections.

This essay is intended primarily for students of theology, of history, of English literature and of the medieval and pre-Reformation period in general. I have therefore nearly always retained the wording of the original manuscripts, modified and punctuated by their various editors. I have, however, taken the liberty of substituting the letters 'th' for the O.E. form 'þ'. Wherever possible I have let Bishop Pecock speak for himself so that students of English literature may gather some impression of his style while they are reading about the man and his works.

Dominus tecum!

VIVIAN H. HOWARD GREEN

HOLNICOTE, 1944