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A Literary Relic of Scottish Lollardy

THE Scottish Text Society have done a great service to many departments of historical inquiry by the publication of Murdoch Nisbet's *New Testament in Scots*,¹ the second volume being part of last year's issue.

The history of the MS. is given in Dr. Law's scholarly preface to the first volume, which was published in 1901. It is briefly this: Sometime before 1500, Murdoch Nisbet,² of Hardhill, in the parish of Loudon, Ayrshire, became a Lollard, and left the communion of the Medieval Church in Scotland. He shared in the troubles which befell his companions in the faith, and fled 'over seas' 'abroad.' In his exile he transcribed for himself a copy of Wycliffe's *New Testament*. The transcription was made from the second edition of Wycliffe's translation—that improved by his friend and disciple, John Purvey, and published probably in 1388, or four years after the death of Wycliffe. Dr. Law believes that the transcript was made about the year 1520. Somewhat later Nisbet added a prologue, which is for the most part a close translation of Luther's preface to the New Testament, first published in September, 1522, and some years afterwards appended Tyndal's long prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, which was first printed in 1525.

¹ Scottish Text Society. *The New Testament in Scots*; being Purvey's Revision of Wycliffe's Version, Turned into Scots by Murdoch Nisbet, c. 1520; edited from the unique MS. in the possession of Lord Amherst of Hackney, by Thomas Graves Law, LL.D., vol. i., 1901, vol. ii., 1903. Printed for the Society by William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London.

² Murdoch Nisbet of Hardhill had a son Alexander, whose son, James, was succeeded by his son, John Nisbet, in Hardhill. John Nisbet was a devoted Covenanter; he was one of Gustavus Adolphus' Scotch officers, and commanded a troop of horse at Bothwell Bridge; he was executed at the Grassmarket in 1684.

His granddaughter, Elizabeth Nisbet, married Charles Weir, whose daughter, Elizabeth, married Thomas Lindsay, the grandfather of the author of this paper.

In a Review dealing, *inter alia*, with genealogical subjects, it is not without interest to notice, what must be an extremely rare occurrence—an author being reviewed by his direct descendant in the ninth generation.—EDITOR, S.H.R.]

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The book shared the fortunes of the writer. It was his companion when he went into hiding in a vault which he had 'dug and built' under his own house at Hardhill, in which he remained concealed until the death of James V., and where he 'instructed some few that had access to him.' It was bequeathed as a precious legacy to his descendants. It was at last sold to a bookseller, from whom it was bought by Sir Alexander Boswell, and it remained among the Auchinleck Papers until 1893. It is now in the possession of Lord Amherst, of Hackney, who has permitted the Scottish Text Society to print it.

The existence of the book has been long known to persons interested in Scottish ecclesiastical history. Wodrow and M'Crie both refer to it; but neither seem to have seen the MS., nor to have recognised its unique character. For it is not a simple transcript of Purvey's edition of Wycliffe's *New Testament*; it is a translation of that book into the Scots language. It is the only version which exists of the New Testament in the tongue of the northern portion of Great Britain. It is more. It is the only literary relic we possess of the Scottish Lollards. It was made 'over seas' or 'abroad,' and suggests a connection between Scottish Lollardy and a kindred faith outside Scotland. It must be classed among the pre-reformation translations of the Bible; for it is a version made not from the Greek New Testament, but from the Vulgate, which was *the* Medieval Bible.

This *New Testament in Scots* therefore suggests some interesting questions: Its value as an example of the old Scots language; the attitude of the Medieval Church to translations of Scripture into the vernaculars of Europe; translations of the Bible from the Vulgate more or less contemporary with Nisbet's, or with the much earlier work of Purvey; Scottish Lollardy; and the relation which a Scottish Lollard might have in the beginning of the sixteenth century with companions in the faith outside Scotland.

The linguistic question, even if I were competent to discuss it, which I am not, had best be left untouched until we have the third volume, with the promised remarks of Mr. Hall on the linguistic peculiarities of the text; and I content myself with some observations on other questions suggested by Dr. Law's preface.

The relation of the Medieval Church to vernacular translations of the Vulgate for the benefit of the people is a somewhat complex question. This is certain that the Medieval

Church always proclaimed that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were the supreme source and authority for all questions of doctrine and morals, and that in the earlier stages of the Reformation controversy the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures was not supposed to be one of the matters of dispute between the contending parties. This is at once evident when we remember that the *Augsburg Confession*, unlike the later Confessions of the Reformed Churches, does not contain any Article affirming the supreme authority of Scripture. That was not supposed to be a question in debate. It was reserved for the Council of Trent, for the first time, to place *traditiones sine scripto* on the same level of authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (*4th Sess., Dec. de Can. Script.*). Hence, when we examine the small booklets written for the home instruction of the people, issued, many of them, from Convent presses, in the decades before the Reformation, it is frequently asserted that the whole teaching of the Church is to be found contained within the Books of the Holy Scriptures.

Then while it is undoubted that the highest authorities of the Medieval Church urgently forbade, over and over again, the reading of the Scripture by the laity in the vernacular, it will be found that these prohibitions were generally, though by no means invariably, connected with endeavours to suppress movements which were deemed to be heretical, and at the same time viewed as dangerous to ecclesiastical authority and to the possessions and privileges of the clergy. Thus the strongest prohibition of the vernacular Scriptures comes from the times of the Albigenses: 'Prohibemus etiam, ne libros veteris Testamenti aut novi laici permittantur habere; nisi forte psalterium, vel brevarium pro divinis officiis, aut horas B. Mariae aliquis ex devotione habere velit. Sed ne praemissos libros habeant in vulgari translatos, arctissime inhibemus' (*Conc. of Toulouse* of 1229, c. 14). And under the same class may be put the 7th of the *Constitutiones* of Arundel (1408): *Ordinamus ut nemo deinceps aliquem textum S. Scripturae auctoritate sua in linguam Anglicanam vel aliam transferat per viam libri, libelli, aut tractatus.*

On the other hand, no official encouragement of the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular by the people can be found during the whole of the Middle Age, and no official patronage of vernacular translations. The utmost which was done in the way of tolerating, it can scarcely be said of encouraging, a know-

ledge of the vernacular Scriptures, was the issue of vernacular psalters, of Service-books, and, in the fifteenth century, of the *Plenaria*—little books which contained translations of some of the paragraphs from the Gospels and Epistles read in the Church service, accompanied by legends and popular tales. Translations of the Scriptures into the vernacular were continually reprobated for various reasons, such as the incapacity of the ordinary layman, and especially of women, to understand the Scriptures: *Tanta est enim divinae Scripturae profunditas ut non solum simplices et illiterati, sed etiam prudentes et docti non plene sufficiant ad ipsius intelligentiam indagandum* (Innocent III., *Epist.* ii. 141); or that the vernaculars were unable to express the profundity of the thoughts contained in the original languages of Scriptures, as was said by Berthold, Archbishop of Mainz, in his diocesan edict of 1486. It is also evident that a knowledge of the Scriptures in the vernacular, especially by uneducated men and by women, was almost always taken to be a sign of heretical tendency. An Austrian Inquisitor, writing in the end of the thirteenth century, says: *Tertia causa haeresis est, quia Novum et Vetus Testamentum vulgariter transtulerunt; et sic docent et discunt. Audivi et vidi quendam rusticum idiotam, qui Job recitavit de verbo ad verbum, et plures, qui totum Novum Testamentum perfecte sciverunt.*¹ Upon the whole a survey of the evidence seems to lead to the conclusion that the official guides of the Medieval Church down to the time of the Reformation distinctly discouraged the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, that they regarded a knowledge of the vernacular Scriptures with grave suspicion, but that they did not as a rule condemn the possession of copies of the vernacular Scriptures by persons whom they believed to be trustworthy, whether clergy, monks or nuns, or distinguished laymen.

This brings us to the second question—the existence of vernacular translations of the whole Scriptures during the fifteenth and the earlier decades of the sixteenth centuries. It

¹The quotation is from the 3rd chap. of the *Summa* of Rainerius, who was an Inquisitor in Lombardy, and who died in 1259. I am aware that this book, as we now have it, has been largely interpolated; that only the 6th chapter contains the original Rainerius; and that the portion from which I have taken the quotation belongs to one of the later additions made by an Austrian Inquisitor; cf. Gieseler's critical study of the book in his *Göttinger Osterprogramm* of 1834, entitled *Comm. Crit. de Rainerii Saxonii Summa de Catharis et Leonistis*.

would appear that the growing spread of education during the fifteenth century, due in the Low Countries and in Germany mainly to the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, created a desire among the people for the Scriptures in the vernacular, and that this was satisfied by the production of many vernacular translations. The oldest German version exists in an incomplete MS., which contains only the Old Testament, and which experts date about the year 1400. It bears, in its surviving form, neither place of writing nor date. The earliest French vernacular Bible came somewhat later. The earliest Bohemian version is dated 1417. Of course there were much older versions both in the Romance and in the Teutonic languages. The records of Councils and the reports of Inquisitors make that plain. But the evidence does not support an assertion commonly made that these earlier versions influenced all the fifteenth century translations of the Scriptures into the vernacular. Nor does the evidence bear out another statement also frequently made, that we owe all these translations to men who were hostile to the Roman See. John Rellach, a native of Constance, was a student in Rome in 1450, and while there heard a Greek bishop preach about the disaster to Christendom caused by the Fall of Constantinople. Rellach and other student friends believed that this disaster was a punishment sent by God on account of the evil state of the Christian people of Europe, and he and his friends thought that the evils came largely because the people were not acquainted with the Word of God. He resolved to make a translation of the whole Bible into German. He began his work in 1450 and it was not finished before 1470. He adds little autobiographical details at the close of portions of his translation. He was a firm believer in the authority of the Pope; but he also believed that the common people ought to have access to the whole Scriptures and that the reading of the Bible 'was well pleasing to God.'

When the invention of printing had made the diffusion of literature easy, it is noteworthy that the earliest printing presses in Germany printed many more books for family and private devotion, many more *Plenaria*, and many more editions of the Bible than editions of the classics. Twenty-two editions of the Psalter in German appeared before 1509, and twenty-five of the Gospels and Epistles before 1518. No less than fourteen versions of the whole Bible were printed in High-German and four in Low-German during the last decades of the fifteenth

and earlier decades of the sixteenth century—all translations from the Vulgate. The first was issued by John Mentel in Strassburg in 1466. There followed another Strassburg edition in 1470; two Augsburg editions in 1473; one in the Swiss dialect in 1474; two in Augsburg in 1477; one in Augsburg in 1480; one in Nürnberg in 1483; one in Strassburg in 1485; and editions in Augsburg in 1487, 1490, 1507 and 1518.

It cannot be shown that all these versions were issued by enemies of the Medieval Church or that they were all promoted by the 'Brethren' or Waldenses or Hussites; as little can it be proved that they were printed in the interests of the authorities of the Church. It is somewhat significant, however, that none of these versions came from any of the Convent Printing Presses; that the Koburgers, the celebrated Nürnberg firm which printed so many Bibles, were also the printers of the Catechism in use among the 'Brethren,' Waldensian, German and Bohemian; that Augsburg, which issued from its presses so many editions of the vernacular Bible, was the chosen home of the German 'Brethren,' and that printers were the artizans who more than any other class inclined to associate with the 'Brethren'; that the last decades of the fifteenth and the early decades of the sixteenth century witnessed all over Germany the growth of a non-ecclesiastical Christianity manifesting itself in a great variety of ways; and that the German 'Brethren' and the Waldenses seemed to have used the same Bible that was in use among the adherents of the Medieval Church. All these things go to show that these vernacular Bibles came to supply a popular need apart from any ecclesiastical impulse; while proclamations such as those of the Archbishops of Mainz and Cologne establishing a censorship of printed books and having special references to printed Bibles, show that the authorities of the Medieval Church viewed this circulation of the Scriptures with something like alarm.

A careful comparison of these printed vernacular Bibles proves that the earlier issues at least were independent productions; but as edition succeeded edition the text became gradually assimilated until it may be almost said that there came into existence a German Vulgate which was used indiscriminately by those who adhered to and by those who objected to the Medieval Church. These German versions of the Vulgate were largely, but by no means completely, displaced by Luther's version. The Anabaptists, who were

the lineal descendants of these pre-Reformation evangelical 'Brethren,' retained this German Vulgate long after the publication of Luther's version, and these pre-Reformation German Bibles were to be found in use almost two hundred years after the Reformation.

Scottish Lollardy, Dr. Law says, is an obscure subject. In a sense this is true. The records of the Inquisitorial and other ecclesiastical courts appointed to ferret out, try, and punish Scottish Lollards have wholly disappeared, so far as I know. It may be a question, however, whether the obscurity which rests over these persecuted persons does not proceed, to some extent at least, from the lack of competent investigation. No historian or antiquary since Dr. David Laing has brought together all the Scottish sources of information, and his list is somewhat defective. Nor has any one attempted to find what light may be thrown upon the subject by comparing the movement in Scotland with similar ones on the continent of Europe. I am inclined to think that, if this were done, it would be found that a consistent picture of Scottish Lollardy might be constructed. Take, for example, the episode of Paul Craw or Crawar in 1431 or 1432. Every country in Europe was then being flooded with Hussite manifestoes, and traversed by Hussite emissaries, with the result that the Council of Basel was rendered inevitable.¹ It is not too much to say that almost every incident concerning Scottish Lollardy which has come down to us from Scottish can be illustrated, explained, and enlarged from continental sources. It is impossible to do so within the limits of this paper. All that can be attempted is to collect and state as briefly as possible the Scottish sources of information, and to arrange them in chronological order.

Our earliest exact date concerning Wyclif is 1361, when he was Master of Balliol College and a power in the University of Oxford. When we turn to the *Rotuli Scotiae* we find a continuous stream of Scottish students going to the English Universities under safe-conducts from the English monarchs, from 1357 on to 1389. During the earlier years of this period—that is, up to 1364—the safe-conducts applied for and obtained entitled the bearers to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, or elsewhere; but from 1364 on to 1379 Oxford seems to have

¹ John of Segovia tells us what effect they had in Spain (*Monumenta Concilii*, ii. 5).

been the one University frequented.¹ The years during which, according to the evidence of the *Rotuli Scotiae*, the Scottish students turned exclusively, or almost exclusively, to the University of Oxford, were those during which the influence of Wyclif was most powerful, and when the whole of the University life seethed with Lollardy. During one of those years, 1365, safe-conducts seem to have been given to no fewer than eighty-one Scottish students to study at Oxford. This shows the very intimate connection between the English movement under Wyclif and Scottish students.

By the year 1405 Scottish Lollardy had attracted the attention of the civil authorities. Robert, Duke of Albany, was appointed Governor of Scotland in that year, and Andrew of Wyntoun, in his *Metrical Chronicle*, commended him for his fidelity to the cause of the Church:

‘He wes a constant Catholike,
All Lollard he hatyt and heretike.’²

In 1405 or 1406 we find an alliance between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities in Scotland for the purpose of exterminating Lollardy and other heresy. This is shown by the existence of an Inquisitorial Court, presided over by a *Haereticae Pravitatis Inquisitor* in the person of Lawrence of Lindores. This Lawrence was abbot of Scone in 1411 (and may have been so at an earlier date); he became the first Professor of Law in the University of St. Andrews, and is said to have written a book, *Examen Haeticorum Lolardorum, quos toto regno exegit*. He presided at the trial, condemnation, and execution by burning of James Resby, an English presbyter ‘of the School of Wyclife.’ Resby, according to the chronicler, was a preacher much admired by the common people. The Inquisitor found him guilty on forty-two counts of heresy, the second being that no one could be the Pope or the Vicar

¹ *Rotuli Scotiae*, i. pp. 808, 815, 816, 822, 825, 828, 829, 849, 851, 859, 877, 881, 886, 891, 896, and ii. pp. 8, 20, 45, 100.

² *Historians of Scotland*, iii. p. 100; or Wyntoun’s *Orygynale Cronykil*, ix. ch. xxvi. lines 2773, 2774. Lollard is with Wyntoun a general term for dissentients from the Church of the period, for he says of the Emperor Theodosius:

‘Tyrandryis and mawmentryis
Herrysys and Lollardyis
He fordyd.’

v. xi. line 3970; cf. *Historians of Scotland*, ii. p. 401.

of Christ unless he was a saintly man.¹ This was a universal belief among the 'Brethren,' who held that no ecclesiastical ceremony of ordination or other could override the universal moral law of God.

We may infer that Lollardy had found entrance into the newly founded University of St. Andrews (founded 1405), for at a Congregation held in 1416 all intending Masters of Arts were required as part of their graduation oath to declare against Lollardy.

In spite of all such attempts to extirpate it, Lollardy lived on, and was a declared source of anxiety both to Church and State. It began to figure in the Acts of the Scots Parliaments. In a Parliament held by James I. at Perth, soon after his return from his captivity in England, it was enacted (March 12th, 1424-25) that all bishops were to make search through their Inquisitorial Courts for all Heretics and Lollards, and apply, if necessary, to the civil authorities to support them; and in succeeding years other Acts were directed either against Lollardy or against the fruitful soil which produced it—the corruption and luxury of the Church in Scotland, and especially among the higher clergy.²

In 1431 or 1432 Paul Crow or Crawar was seized, tried before the Inquisitorial Court, condemned, and burnt as a heretic.³ He had brought letters from the Hussites of Prag, and acknowledged that he had been sent to interest the Scots in the Hussite movement—one of the many emissaries who were then being sent into all European lands by the Hussite leaders, John of Rokycana and Procopius. He was a skilled physician, and in all probability used the art of healing to screen his mission. Examples of this are not lacking among the descriptions of the work of the 'Brethren' on the Continent.⁴ Like all the prominent 'Brethren,' he was found by

¹ For Resby's case, see Fordun's *History*, continuation by Bower, Lib. xv. cap. xx. After stating what the two first counts were, the chronicler adds: *De consimilibus, vel pejoribus, tenuit quadraginta conclusiones.* Resby's writings were cherished by the people after his death, and were a source of heresy, we are told.

² *Act Parl. Scot.*, ii. 7, etc.

³ Fordun's *History*, continuation by Bower, Lib. xv. cap. xx.; Sir James Balfour's *Annals*, i. 161.

⁴ Cf. D. H. Arnold, *Kirchengeschichte des Königreichs Preussen*, p. 319—the case of Dr. Albanus Leander, a physician.

the Inquisitor to be a man *in sacris literis et in allegatione Biblicae promptus et exercitatus*. This is the universal testimony of the records of Inquisitors, from the end of the thirteenth century at least. The Scottish Inquisitor evidently acquired great credit in discovering and slaying the Hussite envoy.

Some authorities are disposed to include the deposition and imprisonment of Archbishop Graham as an episode belonging to the history of Scottish Lollardy, and Dr. Laing includes it in his collection of notices.¹ But there appears to me to be no evidence for any sympathy with Lollardy in any of Graham's actions. To recognise the ecclesiastical corruption of the day, and to strive to amend it, was one thing; Lollardy was another; and as for the charges of heresy—such charges, true or false, were always brought forward during the Middle Ages when a Churchman had to be got rid of.

In 1494, Knox tells us in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Campbell of Cesnock, with twenty-nine companions, all belonging to Ayrshire, were summoned before King James IV. and accused of holding Lollard opinions. Knox quotes thirty-four counts of indictment preferred against them by Archbishop Blackadder of Glasgow, which he took from the diocesan register. These heads of accusation are valuable, because they represent what the Romanist clergy of the day believed the Lollard opinions to be, and also because they give a sure basis for comparison with the opinions of the continental 'Brethren.'²

About the same date Quintin Kennedy, in his short poem entitled *In Prais of Aige*, bears witness to the prevalence of Lollardy in Scotland:

'The schip of faith, tempestuous wind and rane,
Dryvis in the see of Lollerdry that blaws.'

The same writer, in his 'Flyting' with William Dunbar, calls his opponent 'Lamp Lollardorum,' and:

'Judas, jow, juglour, Lollard Laureate,
Sarazene, symonyte, provit Pagane.'³

¹ *The Works of John Knox, edited and collected by David Laing*, vol. i. p. 499.

² Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (Laing's edition), i. 6-11. The trial and acquittal of the Laird of Cesnock is also referred to in Calderwood's *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, i. 456, where the letter of Alexander Alesius to King James V. is quoted; also in M'Crie's *Life of Melville*, 2nd ed. i. 418, where the rare poem of John Davidson is quoted.

³ (Lord Hailes), *Ancient Scottish Poems, published from the MS. of George Bannatyne*, Edin. 1770, p. 190; Dunbar's *Poems* (Scottish Text Society), ii. 28.

It must have been about the same time also that Murdoch Nisbet became a Lollard, fled the country 'over seas,' returned to live in hiding, and only felt safe after the death of James V.¹

Somewhat later we have the history of John Andrew Duncan of Airdree, in Fifeshire, and of Maynar (or Mainwarre), in Stirlingshire, in the *Biographia Britannica*, founded, it is said, on family papers. Duncan was taken prisoner at the battle of Flodden, was carried into Yorkshire, and there was permitted, by the courtesy of the Duke of Surrey, to live with a Mr. Burnet, a relation of his mother. Burnet was a zealous Lollard, and Duncan became a convert to his opinions. When the prisoner returned to Scotland, he became involved in the opposition to the regency of the Duke of Albany, and had to flee the country. When he was at length allowed to live in peace on his own estate, his house became a natural meeting-place for all who desired a religious reformation in the realm. The author makes the curious statement that Duncan found many sympathisers in Fifeshire, because sons of English Lollards and of German Hussites had been sent to St. Andrews for their education during the closing years of the fifteenth century. This would be a very important contribution to the history of Scottish Lollardy, if it did not stand alone and without any confirmation. Through the courtesy of Mr. Maitland Anderson, I have had the opportunity of studying the lists of the *Incorporati* of the University of St. Andrews, and they do not contain any names which are distinctly foreign.² The absence of foreign names from these lists does not disprove the statement, for the *Incorporati* included only a small proportion of the students—those who had attended for three years, and who had the right of voting. On the other hand, I cannot find any corroborative evidence from the English or German sides.³

The earlier poems of Sir David Lindsay, which belong to the years 1529 and 1530, may also be quoted as containing Lollard opinions. It is true that Lutheran writings had found their way into Scotland some years earlier, and that these may

¹ Wodrow Society, *Select Biographies*, ii. pp. 377 ff.

² Mr. J. T. T. Brown has kindly looked at these names and confirms this statement.

³ *Biographia Britannica*, v. 493.

have influenced the writer. But the sentiments in the *Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo* are more Lollard than Lutheran.¹

Lastly, there is the statement made by Wodrow in his *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*,² 'I have been informed that the predecessors of this ancient family (Gordon of Earlstoun) entertained the disciples of Wicliff, and had a new Testament in the vulgar tongue, which they used in reading at meetings in the woods about Earlstoun House.' The author gives no date.

When all these statements are brought together it will be seen that there is a good deal of contemporary evidence relating to the Scottish Lollards; and if they were, as they can be, illustrated and enlarged by continental evidence, some of the obscurity which is said to surround Scottish Lollardy would be largely dispelled.

Dr. Law informs us that Murdoch Nisbet made his Scots version while he was absent from Scotland. He interprets the phrase 'over seas' to mean England, and it is undoubted that the words will bear that interpretation. He may have further evidence than is at my command; but if he has no more than is contained in the *True Relation of the Life and Sufferings of John Nisbet in Hardhill*, reprinted by the Wodrow Society in the second volume of their *Select Biographies* (not in their *Miscellany* as Dr. Law says by an evident slip), it appears to me that the probabilities are that Nisbet went to Germany or perhaps to the Low Countries. I am inclined to infer this from the early use made by him of Luther's Prologue, which I venture to suggest could hardly have been easily accessible in England at the date required to fit all the evidence so carefully marshalled by Dr. Law as to the date of the transcript. In spite of what Dr. James Gairdner says (*Historical Essays*, p. 3) English Lollardy was alive, propagating itself, and had connections with Scottish Lollardy during the first quarter of the sixteenth century (cf. *Biographia Brit.*, v. 492, and M'Crie's *Life of Melville*, 2nd ed. pp. 420, 421), and Nisbet might have found refuge in England even although the period included the years immediately preceding and succeeding the battle of Flodden. But on the

¹ *The Poetical Works of Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount*, edited by David Laing, i. pp. 88 ff.

² Bk. iii. ch. ii.; vol. ii. p. 67 of the ed. of 1722.

other hand, Nisbet was sure to be welcomed and protected in many parts of Germany for his faith's sake—simply because he was a Lollard—and residence in Germany would explain both his very early acquaintance with Luther's Prologue and his knowledge of German necessary to translate the Prologue into Scots.

The societies of the 'Brethren' had never died out on the continent of Europe, and their communities were existing and very active during the half century before 1520. They can be traced back decade by decade to the close of the thirteenth century at least. They appear in the records of Councils and in the reports of Inquisitors under a great variety of names, among which we find 'Waldenses,' 'Picards,' 'Hussites,' and even 'Wiclifites'; for it would seem as if the authorities of the Medieval Church called them by the name of the prevailing anti-ecclesiastical movement. Thus D. H. Arnold tells us, in his *Kirchengeschichte des Königreichs Preussen*, that the 'Wicklifites' were protected by the civil authorities in East Prussia in 1387, 1393, 1414, and 1422. They called themselves by the name of the 'Brethren,' or the 'Evangelicals' (this latter being later); they professed a simple evangelical creed; they offered a passive resistance to the hierarchical and priestly pretensions of the medieval clergy; they set great store on the education of their children; they had vernacular translations of the Scriptures; and they conducted their religious services in the vernacular. A description of their life and opinions by an Inquisitor in the end of the thirteenth century—fifty years before the Wiclifite movement in England—has many points of resemblance to statements in the Lollard Petition to the English Parliament. He says: 'Haeretici cognoscuntur per mores et verba. Sunt enim in moribus compositi et modesti; superbiam in vestibus non habent, nec pretiosis, nec multum abjectis utuntur. . . . Doctores etiam ipsorum sunt sutores et textores. Divitias non multiplicant, sed necessariis sunt contenti. Casti etiam sunt. . . . Temperati etiam in cibo et potu. Ad tabernas non eunt, nec ad choreas, nec ad alias vanitates. Ab ira se cohibent: semper operantur, discunt vel docent, et ideo parum orant. . . . Cognoscuntur etiam in verbis praecisus et modestis. Cavent etiam a scurrilitate et detractatione, et verborum levitate, et mendacio, et juramento' (*Rainerii Summa*, c. 7). During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries these 'Brethren' were continually subject to local and somewhat spasmodic persecutions when the ecclesiastical authorities could secure

the aid of the civil rulers, which they could not always do, to their schemes of repression. This led to an organisation whereby the 'Brethren,' who for the time being lived in peace, made arrangements to receive and support those who were able to escape from their tormentors. These societies were in active correspondence with their co-religionists all over Europe, and were never so active as in the last decades of the fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth centuries. We have no direct evidence that they preserved among them copies of Wyclife's New Testament, but when we remember the diffusion of Wiclifite literature over Europe, the tenacity with which it was clung to, and the character of the leaders of the 'Brethren,' it is most probable that they did, and that a stranger from England or Scotland would be shown such a treasure. For the leaders of the period of Nisbet's sojourn outside Scotland were not the ignorant fanatics they are continually represented to be. Hans Denck and Conrad Grebel were members of the Erasmus 'circle' in Basel; and Grebel was universally acknowledged to be the ablest Greek scholar in that learned circle. A Scottish Lollard refugee, like Nisbet, would certainly find the welcome, protection, and congenial religious society in many a German town which Tyndal found at Worms. All these considerations induce me to think that Nisbet found shelter, not in England as Dr. Law supposes, but in Germany.

Unfortunately I have found it impossible to compare the *New Testament in Scots* with the pre-reformation German versions above referred to. The copies which survive are scattered over a large number of German Libraries, and the fac-similes of pages and of passages given by Walther (*Die deutsche Bibel-übersetzung des Mittelalters*, Brunswick, 1869), while they afford material to compare the one German version with the other, do not suffice for a comparison with the work of Purvey or of Nisbet. The comparison would be interesting if it were possible.

Let me, in conclusion, express my admiration for the scholarly way in which Dr. Law has accomplished his very arduous undertaking.

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