ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY.

Edited by

Rev. C. SILVESTER HORNE, M.A.

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I

OUR LOLLARD ANCESTORS

JOHANNES WICKLIFFE.

Obiit A. 1384: a Tabula in Coll. Reg. Cantab.

OUR LOLLARD ANCESTORS

BY

W. H. SUMMERS

Author of

"THE RISE AND SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE,"
"MEMORIES OF JORDANS AND THE CHALFONTS," ETC.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES
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INTRODUCTION

THE significance of the Free Church principle in England can never be rightly appreciated so long as it is regarded as confined to two or three centuries. It had its roots far back in the Middle Ages, and has had a recognisable history of at least half a thousand years. This again divides itself into two nearly equal portions. During the first (1382–1640), the movement was kept under, proscribed, silenced, by the dominant Church, with the aid of the civil power. During the second, which extends from 1640 to the present time (with a partial exception in 1660–1689), it has been more or less set free to work itself out for good or evil.

It is singular that no history of the Lollard movement, considered separately from the career of Wycliffe, or from the general course

of the Reformation, appears to exist in our literature; and it is especially singular that Nonconformist historians should have paid so little attention to the connection between Lollardy and the first rise of English Dissent. Romanist and Anglican writers, however fair and impartial, can hardly do the same justice to the position of the Lollards as the Free Churchman who finds his own most cherished ideals recognised and contended for by men who lived five centuries ago.

In this little handbook, the writer has aimed at substantiating the following conclusions:—

1. That there are evidences of a considerable degree of dissatisfaction with the teachings of the Church in England, prior to the rise of Wycliffe.

2. That the influence of the Lollard reformation on the national life and character was much more deep and lasting than is sometimes supposed.

3. That this influence was continuously exerted, though in a modified form, down to the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

4. That the more thorough-going Reformers of that time were influenced by Lollard traditions, as well as by the teachings of the Continental Protestants.

5. That the impress of Lollardy is thus distinctly traceable in the history of English Nonconformity.

The writer desires to express his gratitude to various gentlemen for valuable information, and especially to Mr. F. D. Mathew, of Hampstead; Mr. R. L. Poole, of Oxford; Mr. J. Baker, of Clifton; Mr. J. J. Green, of Tunbridge Wells; and above all, to Dr. F. J. Furnivall, who has kindly permitted him to make use of some "confessions of heresy" in the registers of Lincoln and Salisbury, which had been copied by him with a view to their being included in the series of records published by the Early English Text Society. It is much to be regretted that the scanty support given by the public to that valuable society has hitherto prevented their being issued in a complete form.

In giving the list of trials for heresy, much use has been made of a list drawn up by the late Bishop Stubbs, and appended to the Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts (1883).

CONTENTS

I

PRECURSORS OF LOLLARDY

(1050–1350.)

AT the commencement of the fourteenth century, England was—and had been for ten years—in a condition it had never known before, and which it has never known again since that century drew to its close. Its inhabitants were nominally all of one faith. The last relics of Scandinavian heathenism had disappeared in the twelfth century; and the only dissidents from the teaching of the Catholic Church were a handful of Jews.

1290 In 1290 these were all banished from the realm by Edward I., and the outward uniformity was complete. But three forces had long been preparing the way for the great movement of Edward III.'s reign—three forces very diverse in origin and character, but all unconsciously working to one end: (1) the spirit of English nationality;

(2) the preaching of the Friars; and (3) the teachings of so-called "heretics."

1. *The Spirit of Nationality.*

Dr. Stoughton, in his *Church of the Civil Wars* (p. 52), suggests with some plausibility that "the plain and sturdy nature of the Anglo-Saxon" always leaned to "a simple and unostentatious kind of religious worship," and cared little for "that ecclesiastical pomp of architecture and glittering ritual" which delighted the Norman. We shall find, as we proceed, much to confirm his further suggestion that "traditional opinions and sentiments opposed to the spirit of Romanism" were "handed down through the Middle Ages from one generation to another of the English commonalty in their homesteads and cottages." It may be added that it is at least open to question whether there was not an unconscious tendency to embody in the ecclesiastical sphere the self-governing habits of the Teutonic races, in place of the elaborate system built up on the model of Roman civil law.

But the spirit of nationality displayed itself in Norman kings and barons as well as in Saxon burghers and yeomen. William the Conqueror had sternly refused to do homage to Gregory VII., the mighty Hildebrand, for

the realm of England. Under his successors, however, Rome had slowly gained ground, and Henry II.'s penance at Becket's tomb was more humiliating than even that of Henry IV. of Germany at Canossa. At last the worthless John, kneeling before the legate Pandulph, had surrendered the crown for five days into his hands, and promised an annual tribute of a thousand marks to the Pope. But the nation utterly ignored the surrender, and the Great Charter, signed two years later, says not a word of it. Henry III.'s Parliaments raised protest after protest against the extortions of the Papal Court and the appointment of foreigners to English livings. At one time the Pope's legate was mobbed by Oxford students, and narrowly escaped with his life; at another, the tithe-barns of the foreign clergy were plundered, and the contents given to the poor. Pope Boniface VIII., one of those men who seem born to ruin great institutions by their intolerable pretensions, hastened the crisis by demanding that

1299 Edward I. should submit his claims on Scotland to his decision. The demand was indignantly repudiated by the haughty Plantagenet and his barons in 1301. Events followed in rapid succession, all tending to undermine the Papal authority

—the defiance of Boniface by Philip the Fair of France (1302), the Pope's arrest at Anagni (1303), the removal of Clement V. from Rome to Avignon six years later, and the "Seventy Years' Captivity" (1309–1377), of the Church under seven successive French Popes, who were regarded in England as the tools of the Court of Paris, and whose decrees could never have the same effect on men's imaginations as those which emanated from the Eternal City.

Meanwhile the Saxon element was coming more and more into prominence in the population of England, and this among the higher clergy as well as among the laity. William I. had appointed Norman bishops to nearly all the sees; but in the thirteenth century the most conspicuous figures among the prelates of the Anglican Church were the English Archbishop Stephen Langton, who supported the barons in their demand for the Great Charter, and the famous Robert Grossetête (Greathead), Bishop of Lincoln, a true Christian pastor as well as a noble English patriot, the friend of the "Good Earl" Simon de Montfort. Born of humble peasant stock in Suffolk, he was no "hireling that cared not for the flock," no unsympathetic alien, but regarded every peasant and serf in his vast

diocese as a fellow-countryman and a brother in Christ. When asked by a nobleman how he, a man of such humble origin, had attained to such dignity of manner and bearing, he made the noble reply, "I studied the lives of the great men of the Bible, and set them before me as my patterns." Grossetête made a most courageous stand against the encroachments of the "rascal Romans," and twice visited the Papal Court to lay his protest before the Pope himself. He has sometimes been styled "a Reformer before the Reformation," but it must be borne in mind that he had no scruple in accepting the doctrines of Rome, but simply sought to purify the Church's discipline and life. The after history of the Anglican Church might have been strangely different could he have had his way, protesting as he did against impropriation of tithes, against absentee and pluralist clergy, and against the holding of magisterial office by priests and bishops. Though never canonised at Rome, he was regarded for centuries by the English people as a saint—"Saint Robert of Lincoln." In more respects than one Grossetête was the forerunner of Wycliffe.

II. *The Preaching of the Friars.*

All over England in the Middle Ages were

scattered religious houses belonging to the Benedictines, Cluniacs, and other orders of monks. The services to religion and learning rendered by the early Benedictines must never be forgotten. Throughout England, too, the monks were the best farmers. The sneer that

> "these black crows
> Had pitched by instinct on the fattest pastures,"

loses its point when it is remembered that the sites they selected were often unreclaimed wastes and swamps, and owed their subsequent beauty and fertility to the patient toil of the brethren. But admitting that the monasteries did much for piety, for scholarship, for architecture and agricultural improvement, it is evident that a certain deviation from their original ideals had already shown itself. Moreover, as Dr. Jessopp has shown in his *Coming of the Friars*, the monk was usually an aristocrat by birth, education, and sympathies. He was by choice a recluse, and often a scholar, and these tastes led him to choose his abode far from the noisy town. Moreover, he was virtually a landlord; and though his usual attitude towards his tenants was probably not so harsh as that of the baron, the records of St. Albans show that

it could be tyrannous enough at times. All these facts tended to alienate the monks from large masses of the common people. They were often popular with those around their gates, who tilled their fields, executed their repairs, or lived by their bounty. But the tradesman and the yeoman farmer were by no means so favourable to them.

The spiritual needs of the people were mainly attended to by the parish priests; but there is reason to fear that these were sadly ignorant and inefficient. They preached but little, and when Archbishop Peckham tried to institute a reform in the days of Edward I., he went no further than to require that every clerk should deliver four sermons a year to his parishioners.

But the followers of St. Dominic and St. Francis, who first landed in England in 1221 and 1224 respectively, introduced a new ideal of religious life. "The poor," says the late Rev. W. H. Beckett in his *English Reformation* (p. 24) "welcomed the Friars into their homes as ministers of religion not too proud to sit down under the thatched roof and share with them their plain fare. The suffering and the miserable, even the fever-stricken and the loathsome leper, found in them friends to sympathise and to help. Dressed in a long

robe of coarsest cloth, bareheaded, barefooted, they appeared by day, and at night they lay without a pillow in dwellings as mean as the wattled hovels around."

The Friars had Papal license to preach either in churches or in the open air. They availed themselves freely of this, and with marked effect on the religious life of England. The great religious revival in the early part of the twelfth century, due to the influence of the Cistercians, the "White Monks of Citeaux," and which had led to the building of so many churches and monasteries, had died away. "To the towns especially," says Mr. J. R. Green, "the coming of the Friars was a religious revolution. They had been left for the most part to the worst and most ignorant of the clergy, the mass-priest, whose sole subsistence lay in his fees. We can hardly wonder at the burst of enthusiasm which welcomed the itinerant preacher, whose fervent appeal, coarse wit, and familiar story brought religion into the fair and the market-place."

The after developments of the system were strangely alien from its early ideals. The Friars found means of evading their vow of poverty, and acquired rich possessions. Many became scholars and leaders

of thought. The great scholastic Doctors, Bonaventura, "the Seraphic"; Duns Scotus, "the Subtle"; Alexander of Hales, "The Irrefragable"; Roger Bacon, "the Marvellous"; and William of Ockham, "The Invincible," were Franciscans; while Albertus "the Great," and Thomas Aquinas, "the Angelic," were Dominicans. On the other hand, the wandering life of many exposed them to special temptations, and it was difficult for the people to respect men who could scarcely be distinguished from beggars or pedlars. The popular satires of the day are full of invectives against their greed, laziness, and licentiousness.

Yet with all their faults the Friars were almost the first originators of English popular preaching. As the "common people" listened to the fervid eloquence of the Black and Grey Brothers, they not only "heard them gladly," but were filled with a fierce indignation against the "unpreaching prelates" and priests, who, they began to suspect, had kept them in ignorance for their own purposes. At a later date Jack Straw's insurgents confessed their intention of murdering all endowed priests, and leaving the Friars to carry on the ordinances of religion. The preaching

Friars awakened a love of earnest, homely preaching which has largely characterised the English race ever since, let the cynic and the pessimist say what they will. Of course, however, their preaching was thoroughly Romanist, and Wycliffe complains that they took for their texts not only the legends of the saints, but popular fables and ballads, instead of the words of Scripture.

III. "*Heretical*" *Sects and Teachers.*

Although, as we have seen, outward conformity to "the Catholic faith" was complete in England at the commencement of the fourteenth century, there was a good deal of dissent hidden beneath the surface. Matthew of Westminster complains that the doctrines of Berengarius of Tours, who opposed the belief in transubstantiation (about 1050) had "corrupted almost all the English." Walden, too in his *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* (p. 145) says that Wycliffe and his followers declared that their doctrines as to the Eucharist had been handed down from the earliest times among the laity.

How any actual separation from the Church would have been dealt with we may see from

1166 the account very complacently given by William of Newburgh, of the treatment accorded to certain "here-

tics" by Henry II. in 1166. The Bishop of Worcester had called attention to a company of German weavers, about thirty in number, whom the old chronicler calls "Publicani" (Paulicians?). They appear to have been the sect described by other writers as Tisserands or Paterines. These were widely scattered over Southern Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and are said to have had a kind of combined college and weaving-school at Cordes in Languedoc. This party had been in England seven years, and during that time had made but one convert to their views—a young woman, who immediately abjured when summoned to do so. Yet these poor weavers were deemed of such importance that a council of bishops was summoned at Oxford to inquire into their heresies. Gerard, their leader, who is admitted to have been a man of education, answered for the rest. It is stated that he was orthodox on the person of Christ, but rejected baptism, the Eucharist, marriage, and the authority of the Church. How far we are to take these statements literally is open to some doubt. The Quakers were charged by the High Church clergy of Charles II.'s reign with "rejecting marriage" and "living in adultery." When Gerard and

his followers were ordered to recant they refused to do so. Threatened with punishment, they quietly replied, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." By the king's command, and in accordance with the punishment decreed for heretics by a council held at Rheims in 1157, they were stripped to the waist, scourged through the city of Oxford, and branded on the forehead with a hot iron. Gerard, who was branded on the chin as well as the forehead, led them to their punishment, singing "Blessed shall ye be when men shall hate you." Proclamation having been made that no man was to give them food or shelter, they were driven forth, with loud cracking of whips, to perish miserably of cold and hunger. Such is Newburgh's account, on which Miss E. S. Holt has founded her pathetic narrative, *One Snowy Night.* The Rev. Samuel Denne, however, in a paper in the *Archæologia* (ix. 292) long ago cast doubt on the tragic climax of the story. He shows that Newburgh, living in the north of England, and some time afterwards, wrote from hearsay, that his account seems somewhat confused, and that Ralph de Diceto seems to imply that they were banished from the realm. In an article on "Evangelical

Nonconformity under the First of the Plantagenets," by the Rev. T. Davids, which appeared in the *British Quarterly Review* for April, 1870, quotations are given from Roger of Wendover, Walter Mapes, and Ralph of Coggeshall, all of whom speak of their being banished after the branding; unless, indeed, two distinct parties of "Publicani" are referred to.

At the Assize of Clarendon shortly after, a law was made that heretics were to be treated as outlaws, and that their houses were to be pulled down and the materials taken out of the town and burned. Yet about 1182, according to Roger of Hoveden (*Annales*, 352), the Publicani had become very numerous (*perplurimi*) in England. He adds that several were burned alive in France, but that Henry II. could not be prevailed on to sanction the infliction of this penalty.

Mr. Denne, in the paper just now referred to, discusses a reference in the *Custumale* of the diocese of Rochester to certain persons described as "Waldenses," who settled as tenants of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Darenth, in Kent, some time between 1181 and 1197. The manor of an archbishop is the last place where we should have expected to find any toleration accorded to heretics; but

it may be urged in reply that the earlier Waldenses were scarcely regarded as heretical, their divergences from the Church being rather in practice than in doctrine. On the other hand, these Darenth folk may have been simply men of the Walda, or Weald of Kent.

Still more interesting is an allusion in a document cited in Burn's *History of Henley* (p. 186). By a lease dated in the sixth year of Henry IV. the Warden and Bridgemen of Henley demised to Master Edward Bekynham, rector of the church of Henley, a granary situate near the bridge, with a chapel adjoining, *quondam Waldeschenes*. Mr. Burn renders these last words "formerly that of the Waldenses," and suggests that there may have been some connection between them and the followers of Gerard! It need not be said that this seems in the last degree improbable; but it is at least curious that Henley became a seat of Lollardy at an early date.

Coming now to the thirteenth century, the French historian De Thou states that some of the Albigenses who fled from the great persecution of 1209–1229, "turning to the west, found refuge in Britain." One of these according to Henry of Knyghton (col. 2418)

was burned alive in London, while others suffered in other parts of the country. All over Europe at this time a variety of sects—ascetic, mystic, socialistic —were protesting against the teachings of Rome, and striving to return to a purer Christianity. Some of these are accused of blasphemous tenets and immoral conduct. But the assertions of unscrupulous antagonists, when not supported by documentary evidence, must be taken for what they are worth.

1210

About 1222 complaints begin to be made of heretical monks, who had laid aside the monastic habit, and were living as laymen. In 1236 several persons were charged with heresy in Yorkshire. In 1240 a Carthusian monk was arrested for heresy at Cambridge. In 1246, just at the date of the great disputes in the Franciscan order about its departure from the rule of poverty, Henry III. addressed a writ to all the sheriffs ordering them to arrest and imprison all "apostate friars." This is a significant landmark, for on the Continent many of the protesting Franciscans joined the sect of the Fraticelli, who, like the Lollards in later days, held that the Church had apostatised from the faith, and that the ministrations of priests living in mortal sin were invalid.

Cir. 1222

In 1263 Henry addressed a letter to the Sheriff of Oxfordshire, requiring him to suppress certain "vagabond persons calling themselves Harloti," who are stated to have carried on "meetings, conventicles, and unlawful contracts against the honesty of the Church and of good manners" (Foxe, ii. 559). They seem to have been a fanatical religious sect.

1263

Councils held at London in 1290, and at Winchelsea in 1296, deplored the increasing prevalence of heretical doctrines, especially with regard to the Eucharist. (See Beckett's *English Reformation*, pp. 45, 46, where most of the foregoing cases are collected.)

1290–1296

In 1306 an eremite was committed "for disputing in St. Paul's Church against certain sacraments of the Church of Rome" (Baconthorpe, quoted by Foxe, i. xxii.). An extraordinary and scarcely credible statement made in the French *Chronicle of Meaux* is mentioned by Mr. Arnold in his introduction to the *Select Works of Wycliffe* (p. x.). It is said that fifty-five men and eight women, members of a sect which had branched off from the Franciscans, were burned alive "in a certain wood in England" about 1330. No native writer mentions so

1306

ghastly a holocaust; but the record seems to point to the existence of some amount of "heresy," and of persecution too, about this time. Bishop Stubbs mentions the case of an apostate Franciscan who was brought as a heretic before the Bishop of London in 1336, and imprisoned at Stortford, where he died.

Evidently the "ages of faith" were not marked by such undisturbed acquiescence as is sometimes taken for granted. Here and there men and women were beginning to discern the errors of a corrupt Church. Before long a pioneer of further enlightenment was to appear.

II

THE EVANGELICAL DOCTOR

(1320–1384)

THE reign of Edward III. is one of the most important epochs in the development of the English nation. It marked the period when the Saxon and Norman elements finally became blended into one harmonious whole. In literature, it witnessed the birth of English poetry in Chaucer and Langland; in art, the consummate productions of mediæval architecture; in social life, the most brilliant days of chivalry at one end of the scale, and at the other the first stirrings of agrarian and democratic movements, which have told on our history ever since.

Religiously, too, this period was one of mighty import. There can be no more fundamental misconception than to regard

Protestantism in England as though it sprung suddenly into being from the caprice of Henry VIII. or the covetousness of his nobles. The Reformation was the inevitable resultant of a series of forces—spiritual, intellectual, and political, which had been developing themselves for ages, and which had found an embodiment a century and a half before in the life and teachings of John Wycliffe.

"John Wiclif," says Dean Hook (*Lives of the Archbishops*, iii. 76), "may be justly accounted one of the greatest men that our country has produced. He is one of the very few who have left the impress of their minds, not only on their own age, but on all time." And, it may be added, he is one of those, fewer still, the estimate of whose greatness has steadily increased with the lapse of time. Perhaps he has received greater justice from Continental scholarship than from his own countrymen, and writers like Lechler and Loserth have seen in him the master-mind, not only of the English, but of the European Reformation. A Hussite MS. at Prague (described in Lechler's *John Wiclif and his English Precursors*, p. 466, English edition), has an illumination which represents in three medallions Wycliffe striking a spark, Huss

kindling the coals, and Luther brandishing the lighted torch—a fit emblem of the relation of the three reformers.

We know next to nothing of Wycliffe's early life. He was born about 1320 (the precise year is uncertain) at or near the village of Wycliffe, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Sent at an early age to Oxford, he studied with such success that in or about 1360 he was appointed Master of Balliol. In 1361 he was presented by that college to the living of Fillingham, in Lincolnshire. It has been supposed that in 1365 he became Warden of Canterbury Hall by the appointment of Simon Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury, and that he was deprived of his position in 1367 by the succeeding Archbishop, Simon Langham. On the strength of this, Romanist writers have not hesitated to ascribe Wycliffe's revolt against ecclesiastical authority to spite at being deprived of his Wardenship. But the researches of Dr. Shirley and Mr. R. L. Poole have rendered it very probable that the Warden of Canterbury Hall was quite another John Wycliffe, or Wyclyve, who had been presented by Islip, in 1361, to the living of Mayfield, in Sussex. It is certain that Islip was at Mayfield, and most probably in Wyclyve's house, at the

time of the appointment, having been seized with a paralytic attack while on a journey.

In 1368 Wycliffe exchanged the living of Fillingham for the less valuable rectory of Ludgershall, in Buckinghamshire, so as to be nearer Oxford.

A great struggle was now going on between England and the Papal Court at Avignon, the influence of which had been more than ever weakened by the French victories of Edward III. In 1350 the Statute of Provisors had made it illegal to obtain presentation to any benefice from the Pope. In 1353 the Statute of Præmunire had forbidden appeals to the Papal Court on questions of property, and had affirmed the right of the State to prohibit the execution of Papal bulls throughout the realm. In 1366 Parliament repudiated the demand made by Pope Urban V. for the payment of the tribute paid by John, with thirty years' arrears, and declared John's surrender of the Crown null and void. Wycliffe has given what seems to be an outline of some of the speeches delivered, and seems to have been present, though it is not likely, as some have suggested, that

1350

1353

1366

he was one of the members. In 1371 Church property was made subject to the war-tax; in 1372 ecclesiastics were removed from the chief offices of State; and in 1374 a Royal Commission was issued to inquire into the number of alien priories and of livings held by foreigners. In the same year the King appointed another Commission to treat with Papal delegates at Bruges on the points at issue between England and the Pope. There were seven commissioners, and Wycliffe's name stands second on the list. Earlier in the same year he had accepted the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire.

1371-1374

Wycliffe's visit to Bruges has been compared to Luther's visit to Rome, as marking a turning-point in his attitude towards the Papacy. Lechler shows that his views on the Papal power, the Eucharist, and the religious orders underwent a marked change towards the close of his life. At one time he acknowledged the Pope's authority, but latterly he denounced him as Antichrist. But as, after 1378, each of the two Popes (at Rome and Avignon) said that his opponent was Antichrist, Wycliffe could appeal to high authority for regarding them both in that light.

It was probably the example of the preaching friars which led Wycliffe at this period to send out as preachers some of the graduates, students, and others who sympathised with him at Oxford and elsewhere. At first, probably, they were priests alone, but afterwards laymen as well (see Lechler, p. 195), and towards the end of his career, significantly enough, Wycliffe calls them "evangelical men," instead of "poor priests." We cannot fail to be struck by the striking parallel with Wesley's "local preachers," four hundred years later. These preachers journeyed from town to town in long russet gowns (*i.e.*, gowns of dark, undyed wool), barefooted, and with staff in hand. According to the account given in Wilkins' *Concilia* (p. 202), if they found a church open for prayer, they went in and preached in it; if it was closed they preached in the churchyard, or, like the early Methodists, in the public street or market-place. Later on, when persecution had commenced, they preached more privately, in mansions, dwelling-houses, gardens, and orchards.

Wycliffe was in the line of succession from many scholars of the English Church who had sought for reform—practical administrators like Grossetête, bold and subtle thinkers like

Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ockham, and liberal theologians like Bradwardine and Richard of Armagh, at whose feet he may have sat at Oxford. But these spoke and wrote mainly for scholars. Wycliffe was a man of broader popular sympathies, and was perhaps the first to perceive the importance of influencing the common people, especially those of the rural districts, in the direction of religious reform. Speaking of Christ, he says: "The Gospel relates how He went about in the places of the country, both great and small, in cities and castles, or in the small towns; and this He did that He might teach us how to be profitable to men generally, and not to forbear to preach to the people because they are few, and our name may not in consequence be great. For we should labour for God, and from Him hope for our reward. There is no doubt that Christ went into such small uplandish towns as Bethphage and Cana of Galilee; for Christ went to all those places where He wished to do good. He was not smitten either with pride or covetousness" (*Tracts and Treatises*, p. 85).

It was by men imbued with this spirit that the doctrines of Wycliffe were spread throughout the country. There were but ten years of life left to him when he settled at Lutterworth

in 1374; but they were years filled with almost incredible activity, the results of which, by God's blessing, are felt to-day wherever the English language is spoken. During them he was superintending the translation of the Bible into English, and sending forth his "poor priests"; and thus he gave the English people the opportunity of becoming acquainted in their own tongues both with the written and the spoken Word.

Wycliffe first came into collision with the hierarchy through his teaching that the temporalities of the Church might be confiscated in case of their being misused. In 1377 he was summoned to appear before the Convocation of Canterbury at St. Paul's Cathedral, and did so under the escort of John of Gaunt, the King's son, and Lord Henry Percy, the Marshal of England (the Percy of *Chevy Chase*). A disturbance arose on a side issue, and the assembly broke up in confusion. His opponents next sought the aid of Pope Gregory XI., to whom they sent a list of propositions extracted from Wycliffe's works, which appeared to them to be of dangerous tendency. The Pope sent letters apostolical to the authorities in Church and State, demanding that proceedings should be taken against Wycliffe.

Feb. 19, 1377

A few days after these reached England, however, Edward III. died, and the demise of the Crown, followed by the outbreak of the Papal Schism next year, gave Wycliffe a period of comparative quiet. Early in 1378, it is true, he was cited before the bishops at Lambeth; but the Court intervened to stay farther proceedings, and Wycliffe was discharged with a caution. All through the early part of Richard II.'s reign, Wycliffe enjoyed the support and sympathy of several of the Royal family. Not only was he favoured by John of Gaunt, but by the King's mother, Joan, Princess of Wales and Aquitaine, and at a later date by the young Queen, Anne of Bohemia. Some of his writings are known to us by Latin MSS., found a few years ago in the Imperial Library at Vienna. These were probably taken to Prague by the followers of Queen Anne after their return to their native land, and helped to give rise to the Hussite movement. Afterwards, when Bohemia became subject to Austria, they were removed to Vienna. One of these MSS., examined by Mr. R. L. Poole, bears in the margin memoranda in the Czech language, showing that it was transcribed in England at various places in the Midland counties.

1378

It is impossible to give here an outline of the theological system of the "Evangelical Doctor," as he was called; but it may be well to emphasise a few points which specially influenced the development of the Lollard movement. The original passages will be found for the most part in Lechler, English edition, 232–361.

Wycliffe taught that the authority of Holy Scripture was sole and supreme, as opposed to all traditions of men. "To be ignorant of Scripture is to be ignorant of Christ." "Jesus Christ our Lawgiver has given a law sufficient in itself for the government of the whole militant Church." "Believe in the faith of the Scripture, and believe no other in anything except as it is founded in Scripture." "The gist of what Wyclif has to say on every point is practically this," says Mr. L. Sergeant: "that where the Church and the Bible do not agree, we must prefer the Bible; that where authority and conscience appear to be rival guides, we shall be much safer in following conscience; that where the letter and the spirit seem to be in conflict, the spirit is above the letter."

He clearly recognised the right of private judgment. "Every man ought to be a theologian and a legist; for every man ought to

be a Christian, which yet he cannot be unless he know the law of God's Commandments."

Wycliffe's doctrine of "dominion founded in grace" was a peculiar feature of his system. He taught that God, as the great feudal superior of the universe, allotted to all earthly authorities their rule in fief as subject to Himself. The priesthood was not an office of dominion, but of service, and its prerogatives ceased when service was not rendered. Dominion was not granted to one person as God's Vicar on earth, but the King was as much God's Vicar as the Pope; nay, every Christian held his rights immediately of God.

As regards justification, he was very far from recognising the truth of justification by faith as clearly as it was held by the later Reformers. His view of election was what we should now call intensely Calvinistic, and this fact coloured his doctrine of the Church. "It is necessary," he says, "to lay down one metaphysical truth—namely, that the Holy Catholic Church is the whole body of the elect." So in one of his English works, "Alle that schullen be saved in blisse of hevene ben membris of holy Chirche, and ne moo." He maintains in one of his latest works—the *Cruciata*—that a

time might come when the militant Church might consist of poor believers, scattered through many lands, but following Christ more faithfully in their moral walk than Pope or Cardinals. He even says, "Neither do I see but that the aforesaid ship of Peter (the Church) may consist for a time of the laity alone." Even in this he did not go so far as Ockham, who had declared it possible that the time might come when "the whole male sex, clergy as well as laity, might err from the faith, and that the true faith might maintain itself only among pious women" (Lechler, p. 47). It need not be pointed out how diametrically these assertions are opposed to that mechanical theory of "apostolical succession" which is often quietly assumed as having been held without question throughout the Middle Ages.

As to the orders of the ministry, he says: "One thing I boldly assert—that in the Primitive Church, as in the time of Paul, two orders of clergy sufficed, namely, those of priest and deacon. Secondly I affirm that in the time of the Apostle presbyters and bishops were one and the same, as is manifest from 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i." Again he says: "In order to the existence of such a ministry in the Church, there is requisite

an authority received from God, and consequently power and knowledge imparted from God for the exercise of such ministry; and where a man possesses these, although the bishop has not laid hands upon him according to his traditions, God has Himself appointed him." This tallies with Wycliffe's action in sending out lay preachers towards the close of his life. His theory of the ministry, carried to the logical issue, commends itself to the modern Nonconformist rather than to the Romanist or the Anglican.

He condemned the worship of images and relics, pilgrimages, excessive adornment and misleading symbols in churches, and other corruptions of the Church of his day, such as the celibacy of the clergy and the mendicancy of the friars. Yet, in other respects, as in regard to purgatory, he was far from being so advanced as later reformers. In his earlier works he strongly inculcated the duty of homage to the Virgin, but modified his position in later life.

But the views which created the greatest amount of opposition to Wycliffe were those he held on the relation of Church and State, and on the Sacraments. He taught that an unjust excommunication became of none

effect; for no excommunication could injure a man who had not first excommunicated himself by evil conduct. He seems also to have held that the Church had no right to the exercise of coercive power. On the other hand, he says: "The laity may, on occasion given, both diminish and take away Church property from those set over them, as bishops and clergy." He traced the corruptions of the Church to her abounding wealth, and taught that it would be better for her to be reduced to "evangelical poverty." Thus he anticipated to a certain extent modern Liberationist views on Church endowments.

He held that baptism was not absolutely essential to salvation. As to the Eucharist, he did not publicly repudiate the doctrine of transubstantiation till towards the close of his life (1381). His view of the Lord's Supper approximated to the Lutheran consubstantiation. The body and blood of Christ, he said, were present in the elements, but the bread and wine were also there.

Having thus gradually passed from the position of a reformer of outward abuses in the Church to that of a protestant against her errors in doctrine, Wycliffe now began to stand alone. He had alienated the four

orders of Friars by his attacks on their corruptions. The Court party withdrew their patronage, and John of Gaunt peremptorily bade him be silent. The prevalent idea that Wycliffe's "poor priests" had prepared the way for the peasant rising (see next Chapter) intensified the opposition which now arose. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury, having been murdered by the insurgents, was succeeded by Wycliffe's strenuous antagonist, William Courtenay, who united all the pride and all the prejudices of the noble and the prelate. He set himself with inflexible determination to crush Wycliffe and his doctrines. A synod was assembled at the Blackfriars monastery.

May 21, 1382 During the proceedings of the council the city of London was shaken by an earthquake, and some present suggested that this might show the Divine displeasure at the proceedings. But the resolute Archbishop answered that as an earthquake expelled ill-humours from the earth, it was of good omen for the expulsion of false doctrines from the Church. The synod accordingly proceeded to condemn as heretical or erroneous twenty-four propositions from Wycliffe's works. Some were identical with those condemned

five years before. Most of the others condemned the begging friars, or the doctrine of transubstantiation. But even Courtenay and his "Earthquake Council" did not venture on any extreme measures against Wycliffe himself.

Wycliffe's influence had been felt most intensely at Oxford, where his academic career had now lasted for more than forty years. Oxford was then the great home of liberal thought, as opposed to the more cautious and conservative University of Paris, and here the new revolt against traditional teaching found its rallying-point. "Of all the so-called Oxford movements that have taken place," to quote Professor Montagu Burrows (*Wyclif's Place in History*, p. 112), "this is incomparably the greatest." Oxford, Prague, Wittenberg—the names of these three Universities mark three successive stages in the development of Reforming principles.

Though the University had condemned Wycliffe's doctrine on the Eucharist, and ordered him to desist from lecturing, a reaction in his favour set in with startling rapidity. At the date of the Earthquake Council, the Chancellor, Robert Rygge, and the two Proctors, were among his supporters.

Courtenay demanded the banishment from Oxford of Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repyngdon, John Aston, and Lawrence Bedeman —four preachers who had publicly declared their adhesion to Wycliffe. But his agent, Peter Stokes, a Carmelite friar, had to leave Oxford in bodily fear. By means of Royal writs, however, and of threats of excommunication and forfeiture of the University privileges, Courtenay procured the banishment of the Wycliffite leaders and the destruction of all their writings. "Within Oxford itself," says Mr. J. R. Green (*History of the English People*, i. 492), "the suppression of Lollardism was complete; but with the death of religious freedom all trace of intellectual life suddenly disappears. The century which followed the triumph of Courtenay was the most barren in all its annals, nor was the sleep of the University broken till the advent of the New Learning restored to it some of the life and liberty which the Primate had so roughly trodden out."

On the 18th of November, 1382, Wycliffe is stated on doubtful authority to have personally appeared before Courtenay at Oxford.

A statement of his views was undoubtedly

presented; but this was in no sense, as Knyghton represented it, a recantation. About this time he had a stroke of paralysis, and during the remainder of his life he remained quietly at Lutterworth. During these last years he was perhaps completing and revising his translation of the Bible, and was writing some of his most powerful controversial treatises. Pope Urban VI. summoned him to Rome, but Wycliffe calmly replied that "God had put His constraint upon him to the contrary." On December 28, 1384, he was seized by another stroke of paralysis while hearing mass in Lutterworth Church, and died on the 31st. So passed away a man whom even the bitter and prejudiced Antony à Wood could not but describe as "a most illustrious theologian, of transcendent and altogether divine ability, who has left behind him immense and almost innumerable monuments of his learning."

d. Dec. 31, 1384

III

LOLLARDY UNDER RICHARD II

(1377–1399.)

THE first trace of the name "Lollard," as applied to Wycliffe's followers, occurs in 1382. An Irish Cistercian monk named Henry Crump, who was suspended from a lectureship at Oxford as a disturber of the peace, but afterwards reinstated at Courtenay's bidding, had called them by this name, which had previously been applied to a society suspected of heresy on the Continent (Lechler, 395). One Walter Lollard, or Lolhard, was burned at Cologne in 1322, according to some authorities, but the statement has been questioned. He may have been "Walter the Lollard." The name seems at the time to have been regarded as

connected with the word *lolium*, tares. Walden calls his treatise against Wycliffe *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wycliffe* (Master John Wycliffe's Bundles of Tares). But the etymologies of that time are notoriously fanciful. The German word *lollen*, to sing softly (compare our words "lull" and "lullaby") is a more likely origin than *lolium*, or than "loll," to lounge. It has been objected that the Lollards do not seem to have been addicted to psalm-singing; but the word may have been intended to hit off some peculiarity of speech like the alleged "nasal drawl" of the Puritans. In any case, the word had something of the vague contempt of the modern name "Ranter." In the *Political Poems and Songs* (Rolls Series, ii. 244) occur the lines :—

> And pardè, lolle thei never so longe
> Yut wull lawè make hem lowte.[1]

It must be borne in mind that just as the word "Methodist" at the close of the eighteenth century was applied to some who were still in full or partial communion with the Church, and to others who had separated from it, so the word "Lollard" was used to

[1] *I.e.*, Yet will law make them submit.

include wide varieties of opinion and ecclesiastical position.

Wycliffe's grandest legacy to his countrymen was his translation of the Bible. Before his time there had been various attempts to render parts of the Scriptures into Anglo-Saxon or into "Middle English"; but these had been only fragmentary, and rather paraphrases than translations. Wycliffe first translated the Apocalypse, then the Gospels, and then the rest of the New Testament, completing it about 1380. To this was added a translation of the Old Testament by one of his friends, probably Nicholas Hereford, though Wycliffe seems to have translated some of the later books. The whole Bible was completed about 1382. The version is racy and idiomatic, but it must be borne in mind that it was not made from the original Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate.

In 1388 one of Wycliffe's followers, supposed to have been John Purvey, issued a carefully revised translation, generally known as the "second Wycliffite version." This soon took the place of the earlier one, and had a wide circulation. In spite of all the efforts made to destroy it, about 150 copies of the whole or part are known to exist.

1388

It may be well here to refer to Chaucer and Langland, the two great contemporary writers whose productions assisted in fixing the English language, along with Wycliffe's Bible and English sermons. Foxe characterised Geoffrey Chaucer as "a right Wiclevian, or else there was never any;" but the conclusion was mainly based on the ascription to Chaucer of works which were not his. Though the father of English poetry condemned plainly enough the Church corruptions of his time, his graceful fancy rather played lightly over the surface than awakened any profound thought on religious matters. It was very different with William Langland. Although he shows no trace of any objection to the doctrines of the Church, it is a question whether his *Piers the Ploughman* did not do more to mould some of the later developments of Lollardy than the works of Wycliffe himself, apart from his version of the Bible. His allegory became to the new sect almost what the *Pilgrim's Progress* afterwards was to Puritanism. Dean Milman well says: "The poet who could address such opinions, though wrapped up in prudent allegory, to the popular ear, to the ear of the peasantry of England; the people who could listen with delight to such strains, were far advanced

towards a revolt from Latin Christianity. Truth, true religion, was not to be found with, it was not known by, Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Clergy, Monks, Friars. It was to be sought by man himself, by the individual man, by the poorest man, under the sole guidance of Reason, Conscience, and the Grace of God, vouchsafed directly, not through any intermediate human being, or even sacrament, to the self-directing soul. If it yet respected all existing doctrines, it respected them not as resting on traditional or sacerdotal authority. There is a manifest appeal throughout, an unconscious installation of Scripture alone as the ultimate judge; the test of everything is a moral and purely religious one, its agreement with holiness and charity." The broad democratic tone of some later Lollards bears more trace of the influence of Langland than of that of Wycliffe. For the latter was intensely conservative in his political ideas, and anticipated Thomas Carlyle's famous saying about the English people being "mostly fools," by the sage remark, "Since there be few wise men, and fools be without number, assent of more part of men maketh evidence that it were folly. For as multitude of wise men is confirming of their deed, so more multitude of fools is evidence that they do evil." (English Works, ii. 414.)

This conservative tendency in Wycliffe must be borne in mind when we come to consider the question whether he and his "poor priests" were in any degree responsible for the great Peasant Rising of 1381. That rising was surely the almost inevitable result of the economic conditions of the time. The depopulation of the country by the Black Death in 1349 and subsequent years (1361, 1369, and 1375) had deranged the whole relations between capital and labour. The authorities had blindly sought to stay the social changes which were taking place by means of harsh and oppressive statutes, regulating the rate of wages and the price of food. The war in France had been followed by the usual sequels of aggressive war, increase of taxation and demoralisation of the national character. The sufferings of the time are reflected only too clearly in the pages of Langland. At last, maddened by the imposition of a poll-tax, the peasantry rose over half the country, and thousands of them marched on London. The excesses which followed are only too well known. But not only did Wycliffe himself strongly denounce these excesses; the acts of the rioters themselves show how diverse was their standpoint from

June, 1381

that of the Reformer. They wrecked the palace of his patron, John of Gaunt; they murdered the Archbishop of Canterbury, and thus made way for the elevation of Courtenay. It must be borne in mind, too, that Sudbury was beheaded not as Archbishop, but as Chancellor of the ministry which imposed the tax; and one of the grievances of the Kentish men against him was that he had discouraged pilgrimages. This does not look like Wycliffism! Nor does the fact that the mob showed favour to the friars, whom Wycliffe denounced. Thorold Rogers, in his *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, 254, 255, suggests that the "poor priests" were the secret agents who organised the plans, the subscriptions, and the communications of the serfs. He pictures them as making use of the "new world" of thought to which Wycliffe's translation of the Old Testament had introduced them to win their way to the hearts of their hearers, by telling them of the simple life in the primeval garden, of the "palmy days" of the Jewish people before God "gave them a king in His wrath," of the woe denounced on the land whose king is a child, and of the prophets who had rebuked monarchs and nobles in God's name. It would only have been creditable to the

"poor priests" that they should sympathise with the wrongs, the sufferings, and the hopes of the down-trodden peasantry. Even some of the beneficed clergy joined the movement, and suffered for doing so. But it is difficult to see how if the poor priests had thus "honeycombed the minds of the upland folk with religious socialism," they could have gained the support which was accorded them by knights and nobles. The followers of Wycliffe, judging from the authentic records of their views, rather tended to exalt secular authority at the expense of priestly claims than to reduce society to a dead level. Of the three "estates" of knighthood, priesthood, and commons, they held that it was the duty of the first to resist the encroachments of the second, and to protect and wisely rule the third. The relation between the two movements was not unlike that between Luther's Reformation and the German "Peasants' War"—a movement which, while undoubtedly aided by the influence of his teachings, was but the renewal of a strife waged before he was born.

John Ball, the "mad priest of Kent," was said to have been one of Wycliffe's followers. But Ball had been accused of "many errors and scandals" as early as 1366, and a writ

had been issued for his arrest five years before the revolt. He was probably an older man than Wycliffe, and Knyghton (col. 2644) calls him the latter's "precursor," not his follower.

But the alleged results of the teaching of the "poor priests" were speedily made the pretext for a rigorous suppression of their work. In Courtenay's letters to the University of Oxford, he not only styles himself "Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and legate of the Apostolic See," but also adds, "through our whole province of Canterbury inquisitor of heretical pravity." He also constituted each of his suffragans an "inquisitor" in his own diocese. These significant and ill-omened words mark the commencement of a new era. "The Earthquake Synod," says Professor Burrows, "may be said to commence the history of the English Inquisition—a bloody and terrible history, which did not terminate until the Long Parliament put an end to the High Commission Court in 1640" [1641].

Courtenay also obtained from the young King and the House of Lords an ordinance for the arrest and imprisonment of the itinerant preachers, wherever found, and of their favourers and abettors. This ordinance

was entered as an Act of Parliament, though the Commons had never consented to its passing. Their protest during the ensuing session elicited a promise of repeal. This was never fulfilled, but it proved no easy matter to put the so-called statute in force. Numerous nobles and knights had embraced the new doctrines, and some of these displayed all the bluff independence of the English squire in their attempt to free themselves from priestly trammels, and to protect the "poor priests." Knyghton (col. 2661) tells us that when one of these "so foolish preachers" visited the estate of one of the Lollard knights, he would insist on all his tenants coming together to hear his preaching, on pain of punishment, and would stand by the preacher armed with sword and shield for his defence. This account must be taken with a good deal of reserve, but no party understood the principles of religious toleration at this period, and it is quite possible that the Lollard knights may have been at times too Mohammedan in their methods of endeavouring to convert their tenants.

5 Rich. II. st. 2 c. 5

John de Montacute, afterwards Earl of Salisbury, was one of the most influential supporters of the Lollards. Lancastrian writers like Walsingham and Knyghton heap

upon him all manner of uncomplimentary epithets; and he is accused of taking home the consecrated host and eating it with his ordinary food. The French Chronicler, the Monk of St. Denis, on the other hand, calls him "humble, gentle, and courteous in all his doings," "loyal and chivalrous in all places," "bold and courageous as a lion"; and adds, "so gracious were all his deeds, that never, I think, shall that man issue from his country, in whom God has implanted so much goodness as was in him."

Another leader was Sir Lewis Clifford, who had been a gentleman of the household of the Princess Dowager of Wales, the King's mother. It was he who, in her name, had forbidden the assembled prelates at Lambeth to carry further their proceedings against Wycliffe. Sir Richard Story, Sir Thomas Latimer, and Sir William Neville, were other conspicuous figures. John Northampton, Lord Mayor of London in 1382, was an avowed Wycliffite, and signalised his year of office by sanctioning a crusade against the hideous immorality which had been fostered by his predecessor, Sir William Walworth, perhaps the most undeservedly honoured man in English history. The wretched inmates of Walworth's dens of infamy in

Southwark, with their male accomplices, were carted through the streets of London with their hair cut short. No wonder that such a man as Northampton made enemies, who brought against him charges of raising disturbances, on the strength of which he was banished, first to Corfe Castle, and then to Tintagel.

Nicholas Hereford, who had assisted Wycliffe in his translation of the Bible, is said by Knyghton to have recanted in 1382; but the truth of this has been called in question. He went to Rome, was cast into prison by Urban VI., but escaped in 1385, when the prison was broken open in a popular tumult. Then he took the lead of the party for a time, but seems at last to have recanted. He was made chancellor of Hereford Cathedral, and died a Carthusian monk.

John Purvey, Wycliffe's curate at Lutterworth, and as we have seen, the completer of the work of translating the Bible, was also a zealous itinerant preacher. The sad story of his recantation belongs to a later period.

Philip Repyngdon, who had taken such a prominent place at Oxford in 1382, recanted his Wycliffite views before the end of that year, and became a persecutor of the Lollards. He was afterwards made Bishop of Lincoln (1405), and died a cardinal. But

John Aston, who had recanted along with Repyngdon, soon repented of his weakness, and held to Wycliffe's teaching "right perfectly until his life's end."

Perhaps the most popular preacher among the early Lollards was William Swynderby, known as "William the Hermit," who along with one "Richard the Chaplain," took possession of the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Leicester, and there preached the Lollard doctrines. He also preached in Leicester market-place, in defiance of the bishop's interdict, from a pulpit made of two mill-stones, throngs of people crowding to hear him. Another leader was Walter Brute, a learned Welshman, who recanted at Hereford in 1393.

The spread of Lollardy was looked on by the clergy with the utmost alarm. Writ after writ was issued for the arrest of "apostate friars" and "vagabond preachers," as well as for the seizure of Wycliffe's books. Henry of Knyghton (col. 2664) declares with panic-stricken exaggeration that they had won over half the people to their side. But Knyghton wrote at Leicester, in the immediate neighbourhood of Lutterworth. Nine persons were charged with heresy at Leicester in 1389, and four at Nottingham in 1396. Walsingham

(*Hist. Angl.* ii. 182–189) significantly records how miracles wrought by roods and images increased with the failing credit of the clergy. Yet he complains that the bishops took little heed to the spread of Lollardy, but "went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." An exception is made in favour of "the Bishop of Norwich, blessed be his name for evermore, "who swore and did not repent" that he would burn or behead the first Lollard preacher who set foot in his diocese. This was the notorious "fighting bishop," Henry Despenser.

1389–1396

Walsingham adds one statement of peculiar interest. He tells us how, about 1390, the Bishop of Salisbury, in his manor-house at Sonning, near Reading, received a confession from a Lollard who told him that the Lollard priests had taken upon them to ordain him and others, as though they were bishops, and that they taught that priests thus appointed had as much power to bind and loose and to administer sacraments as the Pope himself! It seems simple enough to us now, but the horror with which Walsingham speaks of the "audacity, perfidy, and wickedness," as he politely styles it, could hardly be surpassed if the poor Lollard

had been guilty of cannibalism or wholesale poisoning.

Chancellor Massingberd, in his *English Reformation*, hesitates to believe the Sonning story, and says that if correct it would be the earliest instance of Presbyterian ordination. Not to go back to Scriptural precedents, however, there was something very like it among the Waldenses, and probably at an earlier date still. The Chancellor's hesitation may point to the real significance of the incident. The beautiful Thames-side village cannot exactly be called the cradle of English Nonconformity, but it was there that its birth was registered five centuries ago. Since then there have never been wanting those who for conscience' sake have stood apart from the Established Church of this country, whether pre-Reformation or Reformed. Like Wesley, Wycliffe had never severed himself from the Church; but as in Wesley's case, the leader was no sooner removed than his followers began to carry his teachings to their logical issue, and to organise a new form of Church life for themselves.

Though a succession of ministers cannot be proved, and is not required on the Free Church theory, which is content to postulate a transmission of spiritual life and truth, it is

pretty certain that in some instances there is an actual hereditary connection between the Nonconformity of to-day and the ancient Lollardy. The Baptist Church at Hay, in Brecknockshire, claims to be able to trace its origin to the Lollard period—a claim which affords a striking parallel to that of the Protestant "Olive-tree Church" at Hoorebecque Ste. Marie, in Belgium, which is said to have been originally Waldensian, and to have survived through all the persecutions of Alva and the other tyrants of the Netherlands. The Nonconformists living round Amersham, in Buckinghamshire, cherish many quaint traditions of the Lollard days, and in some instances bear the same names as those who were charged with heresy there four centuries ago. And an original Lollard MS. was unexpectedly discovered a few years ago among the records of Friar Street Congregational Church, at Sudbury, the oldest church of that denomination in Suffolk.

One curious fact may be added here. In the wild region of Deerfold Forest, in West Herefordshire, is a homestead known as Chapel Farm, or the "Lollard's Chapel." It seems to date from the fourteenth century, and bears traces of having been possibly

used for worship. This is locally believed to have been the "chapel not hallowed" in which William the Hermit, just now referred to, was charged with having conducted service in 1391. Another charge referred to a chapel at Newton, near Leintwardine, and here also the foundations of an ancient building are visible at a place called Chapel Meadow.

In the later years of Richard the Lollards met with varying fortunes. The influence of the Duke of Gloucester, the King's uncle, who had at one time been favourable to them, secured the banishment from Court of their principal supporters. But when Richard himself took the reins of government in 1389, their position was somewhat improved. John Northampton was recalled from his Cornish exile, and Nicholas Hereford received a small Crown grant. Meanwhile the itinerant preachers were making their way into Wales, as well as various parts of England.

In 1395 there came a crisis in the Lollard struggle. Sir Thomas Latimer and Sir Richard Story presented a memorial to Parliament, setting forth in "Twelve Conclusions" the reforms demanded by the Lollards. It denounced

1395

Church endowments, vows of chastity, transubstantiation, exorcism and blessing of inanimate objects, the holding of secular offices by priests, prayers for the dead, pilgrimages, image-worship, auricular confession, war, capital punishment, and the practice of unnecessary arts, such as those of the armourer and goldsmith. Copies of the "Conclusions" were affixed to the doors of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and insulting placards were set up on the houses of some of the higher clergy. Great excitement arose, and the Archbishop of York, Thomas Arundel, went with the Bishop of London to the King in Ireland, and implored him to return and suppress the movement. The "Good Queen Anne," who had been a constant reader of Wycliffe's Gospels, had died the year before; and Richard, feeling the growing insecurity of his position, and harassed by the importunities of the clergy, changed his attitude. He summoned before him Montacute, Clifford, Story, Latimer, and others, and threatened them severely. Story especially was compelled to renounce his Lollardy by oath on the Gospels, after which the King, laying his own hand on the book, said, "And I swear to thee that if ever thou dost break thine oath, I will cause thee to die

the death, and that a shameful one." "The rest," says the monkish chronicler exultantly, "hearing a trumpet voice of this sort, drew in their horns, and hid themselves within their shells" (*Annales Ric. Sec.*, p. 183, Rolls Series).

It was a testing-time for the sincerity of the adherents of Lollard principles. Boniface IX. had issued a bull against the heresy. The ominous words, "death by fire," were more and more frequently on the lips of their opponents. (Burning was the doom of heresy by common, not yet by statute law.) But Richard II., with all his faults, was too moderate both for the nobles and the clergy. The former wanted a king who would renew the war with France, and the latter one who would crush the Lollards. Arundel, who had succeeded Courtenay as Archbishop of Canterbury, returned with Henry of Lancaster, and soon Richard was a prisoner, and Henry sat upon his throne. It is significant that the very last document issued in the name of King Richard, after he had been brought a captive to London, appears to have been an ordinance against the Lollards.

IV

THE BLOOD-RED ROSE OF LANCASTER

(1399–1422.)

THE accession of Henry IV. was followed by a terrible reaction. He at once ordered the prelates to take measures for the suppression of heresy, and the arrest of the wandering preachers. An Act was next passed empowering them to arrest on common rumour, to put the accused to purgation, and to punish with imprisonment. At the beginning of 1400,

1400 John de Montacute, now Earl of Salisbury, with some other nobles, attempted to seize Henry at Windsor Castle, and restore Richard. The plot failed, and the conspirators fled to the West, and were seized and beheaded at Cirencester. The

heads of the Lollard Earl and seven of his companions, borne aloft on spear-points, were brought into London to the sound of trumpets, and were met by the Bishop and clergy in their robes, chanting the *Te Deum*.

The year 1401 saw the statute-book defiled by the infamous Act *De Hæretico Comburendo*. By this the bishops were empowered to arrest all preachers of heresy, all schoolmasters infected with heretical teaching, all writers and owners of heretical books, and to imprison them as long as their heresy should last. Refusal to abjure, or relapse after abjuration, rendered the heretic liable to be handed over to the secular authorities, by them to be "burned on a high place before the people." Yet the authorities seem to have shown some reluctance to make use of their new and terrible powers; and the only two persons whose martyrdom is recorded in Henry's reign, Sawtre and Badby, suffered, not under the provisions of the Statute of Heretics, but by virtue of the King's writ.

1401
2 Hen. IV. c. 15.

William Sawtre, or Chatrys, the protomartyr of Lollardy, was priest at St. Margaret's, Lynn. Charged with heresy in 1399, he recanted before the Bishop of Nor-

wich. He afterwards became priest at St. Osyth's Church, in London, was charged before Convocation with relapse, and was burned in Smithfield early in March, 1401. The next victim was John Badby, a tailor of Evesham, who was charged with heresy concerning the Eucharist, and sent by the Bishop of Worcester to London for further examination. He was chained in a cask set upon a heap of wood and burned in Smithfield on March 5, 1410. The Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V., was present, and vainly offered him life on the condition of his recanting. John Resby, a Wycliffite from England, was burned in Scotland in 1407, showing how wide was the spread of the new creed.

As may be supposed, the new statute had a tremendous effect on the courage of many. John Purvey recanted about the time of Sawtre's death, though he afterwards repented of his weakness and was again charged with heresy in 1421. Sir Lewis Clifford, who was now nearly eighty years of age, abjured and confessed to Archbishop Arundel that the belief among the Lollards had come to be that the Church was the synagogue of Satan, that her sacraments were but dead signs, and that even marriage might be solemnised by mutual consent without the intervention of

a priest. They abstained as far as possible, he said, from attending church services and from having their children baptized by a priest, holding that a child was "a second Trinity," whatever that may mean, and that the priest would only make him worse instead of better! (Walsingham, ii. 252). The terms of Clifford's will, "probably the result of mental and bodily infirmity," express the most abject contrition for his heresy, and he styles himself "false and traitor to his Lord God."

Other leaders were more steadfast. John Aston, one of Wycliffe's friends, and William Thorpe, are supposed to have died in prison. The latter defended himself before Archbishop Arundel with marked skill and ability, and the record of his examination was treasured among the Lollards for a century. One John Edmonds, of Burford, in Oxfordshire, was charged with having a copy in 1521.

As one after another of the old leaders passed away by death or abjuration men of less learning and moderation came to the front. The hunted Lollards found comfort in apocalyptic and astrological calculations of the approaching end of their troubles. They held secret meetings, known as "schools,"

and passed from hand to hand controversial writings, some of which were imitations of *Piers the Ploughman.* In one of these, the *Plowman's Prayer*, preserved by Foxe, the writer, after a brief statement of his belief, appeals to Christ Himself against His so-called representatives in language which is not without a rude grandeur of its own. He denounces the priestly arrogance which usurps Christ's prerogative of forgiveness, and the spiritual selfishness which leads men to withdraw themselves from the world and seek their own perfection, unmindful of the needs of their toiling and uninstructed brethren. The tears and cries of the penitent are more acceptable in God's sight, he says, than "never so many quaint prayers," or singing of God's words on the plea of doing Him service. The poor man's soul is more truly the house of God than "the great stonen house full of glasen windows," now called the church. It is a monstrous anomaly that God's living images should be left in cold and heat, in hunger and thirst, while "mawmets" (idols) and relics are adorned with gold and silver. The age has reversed the teachings of Christ, and blesses the rich while it despises the poor. The shepherds have excluded His sheep from His sweet

pastures and fed them with a "sorry sowre pasture" of lying tales. In short, the world is turned "upse down" (a phrase still used in Berkshire), and were Christ to come to earth again He would be done to death as a heretic. Foxe ascribes this composition to the reign of Edward III., with which Mr. Arnold seems inclined to coincide; but internal evidence seems to date it subsequent to the Statute of Heretics. Other writings of a similar type are *Jack Upland*, *The Poor Caitiff*, *Piers the Ploughman's Creed*, and *The Ploughman's Tale*. The *Lantern of Light* was a greatly valued treatise containing the articles of Lollard belief.

The present writer has had the opportunity of examining and submitting to an expert a hitherto unpublished Lollard MS. in the possession of Mr. J. J. Green, of Tunbridge Wells, entitled *Conclusiones Lollardorum*. It contains thirty-seven articles dealing with such subjects as clerical corruptions (simony, impropriations, fighting prelates, holding secular offices, &c.); also the subjection of the clergy to the civil law, the limits of coercive power, both in Church and State, oaths, images, the Eucharist, the limits of papal authority, &c. The tone is moderate and judicial, but strongly coloured by the

doctrine of "dominion in grace." The article relating to images is specially interesting. Images and pictures of Christ and the saints depicting them in humility and suffering, it is laid down, are permissible, but those representing them in worldly pomp and splendour are false and ought to be destroyed. One thinks of Holman Hunt's saying that one of the greatest hindrances to artistic progress in our day is "a Church not wanting anything but sham art; I mean, representing saints and the Founder of our religion in costume and under conditions altogether unacceptable to the intelligence of the men of this age."

Although many Lollards were arrested and imprisoned during Henry IV.'s reign, some being confined for life; although Archbishop Arundel issued a series of "Constitutions" against heresy (1409), and proscribed Wycliffe's version of the Bible; and although continual efforts were made to stamp out Lollardy at Oxford, the work of repression was far from being entirely successful. There were still persons of influence who sheltered the wandering preachers; and there was a strong tendency even among the orthodox laity to withstand the encroachments of the clergy. In 1410, for instance, the Commons petitioned for

Jan. 14, 1409

the relaxation of the Statute of Heretics, and also that the Crown might resume the superfluous revenues of the Church; but neither request was granted.

When Henry V. was crowned at Westminster on a stormy Sunday in April, 1413, a few days after his father had expired in the Jerusalem Chamber, it was felt on all hands that a decisive crisis was at hand. Henry was so thoroughly under clerical influence as to be called "the Prince of the Priests," and he had urged on his father to even more rigorous measures against the Lollards. A synod of the clergy was immediately held, and it was resolved to take proceedings against Sir John Oldcastle, Lord of Cobham in Kent, a wealthy knight, the husband of a peeress, a personal friend of the King, and one of the most distinguished soldiers of the time. The condemnation of such a man, it was felt, would strike far more terror into the Lollards than that of an obscure parish priest like Sawtre, or a working man like Badby. Moreover, Oldcastle was reputed to have been the author of the *Twelve Conclusions*, and had certainly sheltered the "poor priests," and was in correspondence with the reforming party in Bohemia. His support of the

April 9, 1413

new doctrines had brought on him bitter contempt and hate. For a knight, "the chief of chivalry," his opponents said, to "babble the Bible day and night," and "carefully away to creep" to the nocturnal meetings of the Lollards, was "unkindly," and such "lust of Lollardy" was deserving of the severest punishment. (See *Political Poems and Songs*, ii. 244.)

Oldcastle, when at his fortress at Cowling, near Rochester, received a summons to appear before Archbishop Arundel. He at first treated it with cool disdain; but on the King intervening, he surrendered himself, and was brought before the Archbishop. Refusing to abjure in spite of Henry's entreaty, he was excommunicated, and delivered over to the secular power; but while awaiting the execution of the sentence, he escaped from the Tower, and took refuge on his ancestral estates in West Herefordshire, or in the adjoining part of Wales.

Three or four months after Oldcastle's escape a mysterious event took place in London, which must, perhaps, ever remain among the insoluble problems of English history. The City gates were suddenly occupied by a strong force of troops, and the egress of the citizens was

Jan. 7, 1414

forbidden. The young King rode in from his palace at Eltham, raised the banner of the cross as in a solemn crusade, and went forth with his men-at-arms on Sunday evening, January 7, 1414, into St. Giles's Fields. It was given out that 20,000 Lollards were marching on London from the country, and that a much larger number, mostly servants and apprentices, were ready to join them within the City itself. They intended, it was said, to kill the King and his three brothers, with all the prelates and nobles; to make Oldcastle regent of the kingdom; to rase to the ground all cathedrals and abbeys, and to compel all monks and friars to work for their living. The King seems to have met with no armed resistance, but numerous arrests were made, not only at "Thicket Field" in St. Giles's, but at Harringay, near Hornsey. Five days later thirty-nine persons were hanged and burned in St. Giles's Fields after a hasty trial. This is Fabyan's account. Gregory speaks of certain persons who had plotted to seize the King, and who were arrested at the Axe in Bishopsgate-street. The only names given by the chroniclers are those of Sir Roger Acton, William Murle, a rich brewer of Dunstable, John Beverley, a preacher, and John Brown. Foxe adds that of Richard Silbecke.

Some Protestant writers have maintained that the gathering of St. Giles's Fields was nothing more than a peaceable religious assembly to listen to the preaching of Beverley; but it seems more likely that the Lollards, driven to despair by the violence of the measures against them, had formed some wild and ill-planned scheme of revolt. The rule of the House of Lancaster was a usurpation in the eyes of a vast number of its subjects; and the feeling of the Lollards especially towards it would be that expressed by the words put by Tennyson into the mouth of Oldcastle:—

> "Rose of Lancaster,
> Red in thy birth, redder with household war,
> Now reddest with the blood of holy men,
> Redder to be, red rose of Lancaster."

May not the movement really have been, like the risings of 1402 and 1405, and the Earl of Cambridge's plot in 1415, in favour of young Edward Mortimer? It is at least suggestive that places in Herefordshire, pointed out as refuges of the Lollards, are close to the old stronghold of the Mortimers at Wigmore, and it is surely just as likely that the movement was a Legitimist one as that it had the levelling and Socialistic tendency ascribed to it by some writers.

From various sources, especially from the Close and Patent Rolls, we are able to trace the names of sixty persons who were charged with complicity in this rebellion, most of whom were pardoned. Five at least were of gentle birth, and ten were priests. But what is most remarkable is the geographical distribution of their places of abode. Nearly all came from the districts lying between London and Wycliffe's Leicestershire; six at least seem to have belonged to that county, eleven to Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, and eleven more to the district round Wycombe and Amersham, in Buckinghamshire. This is certainly suggestive of a rising in the Midlands, and a march on London in growing numbers as the band passed through sympathising districts. Oldcastle himself is said to have been near London, to have had a narrow escape from arrest close to St. Albans, and to have fled again into Wales; but the accounts are vague and confused.

Henceforth Lollardy was branded with the stigma of treason as well as of heresy. A Parliament was summoned at Leicester in April of the same year, and passed a crushing Act for the suppression of Lollardy, known as the "Merciless Statute." Every one convicted of the heresy

2 Hen. V., c. 7

was to forfeit all his possessions. Every magistrate, from the Lord Chancellor downwards, was compelled to swear that he would endeavour to extirpate "all manner of heresies, errors, and lollardies," and would give every facility to the spiritual courts for dealing with them. Strange to say, this oath was administered down to 1625, the word "Lollardy" being construed of any doctrines dangerous to public order. In that year the word was disused, because the great Sir Edward Coke, on being appointed High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, declined to take the oath in this form, on the ground that the doctrines of the Lollards had been substantially endorsed by the Church of England.

There are two points not a little remarkable in this Parliament. It was called at Leicester, rather than at Westminster, "for the great favour that the Lord Cobham had in London," and perhaps also to overawe the Midland heretics; and though so opposed to the Lollards, it renewed the old petition for the disendowment of the Church.

1415 The clergy were accused, perhaps unjustly, of stirring up the war with France in order to avert this danger. The valour of the English soldiers at Agincourt has cast a

halo of unreal splendour around the flagrant injustice, the atrocious cruelty, and the ultimate miserable failure of Henry's "spirited foreign policy." He knew that he was fighting for his hold on England, as well as for the Crown of France. His victories strengthened his position by appealing to that unthinking lust of conquest which always characterises certain sections of English society, and they have almost caused posterity to forget his cruel and reactionary home policy. Chichele carried on the persecuting work which Courtenay and Arundel had begun. Two London tradesmen, John Claydon and Richard Turming, were burned in Smithfield on August 20, 1415. Oldcastle's chaplain, Robert Chapel, abjured at Paul's Cross, and others followed his example. In 1417 or 1418 Sir John Oldcastle himself, who had at last been captured in Wales, was executed in St. Giles's Fields. He was suspended in chains, with a fire lighted beneath him, so that he might be "hanged as a traitor and burned as a heretic."

Some of the Lollards fled to Wales and Scotland, and others to various parts of the Continent, especially to Bohemia, where the work of John Wycliffe had borne unlooked-for fruit. The books taken back by the fol-

lowers of Anne of Bohemia had been eagerly perused, and the writings of John Huss are little more than a commentary on those of Wycliffe. Dr. Loserth, in his *Wiclif and Hus*, not only shows how completely the Prague reformer was the disciple of the Oxford "doctor," but points out that his followers were long known in Bohemia as "Wiclevists" rather than "Hussites." When the Council of Constance set itself to crush heresy in 1415, it not only ordered that Huss and Jerome should be burned, but that the bones of Wycliffe, "if they could be distinguished from those of the faithful," should be dug up and committed to the flames. But in 1417 Peter Payne, principal of St. Edmund's Hall in Oxford, fleeing from the reign of terror in England, was welcomed by the University of Prague, and began that remarkable career so well described by Mr. J. Baker in his book, *A Forgotten Great Englishman*, which made him, next to Rokycana, the recognised theological leader of the Bohemians after Huss's death.

1415

1417

But the English Lollards were not yet crushed. They held their meetings in woods, fields, and caves. Walsingham (ii. 317) tells us that Lollard tracts were left secretly at the

principal houses in Reading, St. Albans, and Northampton. And when the able and brave, though bigoted King passed away at Vincennes in 1422, the "heresy" was not extinguished, but only driven below the surface. Foxe tells us (i. xxiii.) that Archbishop Chichele, writing this year to Pope Martin V., expressed a fear that nothing short of military force would suppress the Lollards. The same year Henry Webb, of Batheaston, one of the Lollard preachers, was sentenced to be flogged through London, Worcester, and Bath.

Aug. 31, 1422

V

THE DARKEST DAYS OF LOLLARDY

(1422–1485.)

THE year after the accession of the child-king, Henry VI., William Taylor, a priest, who had been charged with heretical preaching and writing in 1420–21, was burnt in Smithfield on March 1, 1423, for rejecting the invocation of saints. From 1424 to 1430 more than one hundred persons were prosecuted for heresy in the diocese of Norwich, principally from the towns and villages of the Waveney Valley. (See Foxe, iii. 584–598.) The opinions ascribed to these good people are somewhat like those of the Society of Friends, and Foxe was evidently somewhat puzzled and scandalised by them; but they seem to suggest the influence of some teaching like that of the "Friends of God," which is not

impossible, as we know that at this time there was constant intercourse between Norfolk and the Low Countries. Their leaders were three travelling priests called William White, John Waddon, and Hugh Pie. White, who had resigned his benefice, and married, was burned at Norwich in September, 1428. Waddon was burned about the same time. Both seem to have fled from Kent. Foxe says that Pie abjured, but the Norwich Corporation records show that he, as well as William Qwytt (White) and Waddon, was burned at the Bishop's Gate, loads of wood being purchased for the execution. The records seem to indicate that several unnamed persons had been burned in the previous year (1427). Many others had to do penance by being whipped round the market-places of their native towns in their shirts. One of these was Nicholas Canon, of Eye, who had openly mocked at the services in church. An increasing bitterness and coarseness is noticeable from this time in some of the Lollards, the inevitable rebound from a cruel persecution. In 1426 some inhabitants of Kingston-on-Thames were convicted of Lollardy for having pulled down a cross at Cheam, and "cast it into a base and disgraceful

place." About the same time a man named "Father Abraham" was burned, apparently at Colchester.

In 1427 Richard Fleming, Bishop of Lincoln, founded Lincoln College, Oxford, with the express purpose of counteracting the spread of Lollard doctrines. Little could he foresee that a fellow of that same college, John Wesley, was in so striking a manner to resume and complete the work of Wycliffe and his itinerant preachers, after the lapse of three centuries. The same prelate, in the following year (1428) carried out the mandate of the Council of Constance thirteen years before, and caused the ashes of Wycliffe to be disinterred, burned to ashes, and the ashes to be cast into the little river Swift. Thomas Fuller's saying is well known—that the Swift carried them into the Avon, the Avon into the Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas, and the narrow seas into the main ocean, thus typifying the spread of Wycliffe's doctrines throughout the whole world. The delay in carrying out this impotent and silly piece of revenge may have been due to the fact that at the time of the Council, Philip Repyngdon was Bishop of Lincoln. It may be hoped that some lingering sentiment of reve-

1427

rence for the memory of his illustrious master had kept him from insulting his remains. Fleming, however, had no such scruples.

The same year (1428) Convocation was asked by the Pope's legate, Conzo de Zwola, for a subsidy in aid of the crusade which Cardinal Beaufort, the King's uncle, was waging against the Wycliffites in Bohemia. Two campaigns were carried on without success by the warlike prelate, and during a truce he met Peter Payne in disputation at Zebrak—the son of John of Gaunt and the disciple of Wycliffe facing each other in that far-off land. The same convocation which voted the subsidy had before it Ralph Mungin, a priest who appears to have been a friend and correspondent of Payne, and who was sentenced to imprisonment for life. The vicar of Chesham, in Buckinghamshire, and the parish priest of "Heggeley," probably the neighbouring village of Hedgerley, recanted about the same time, as did others, including two of Oldcastle's servants.

Richard Hoveden, a citizen of London, was burned on Tower Hill in 1430. The next year, during Lent, Thomas Bagley, priest of Manewden near Saffron Walden, was burned in Smithfield. He had bluntly said that if a

1430–1431

priest made the consecrated wafer into God, he made a God that can be eaten by rats and mice. Just after Easter, according to Stow and Hall, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, the young King's uncle and Protector of the kingdom, rode with his men-at-arms to Abingdon, having heard of an assembly of "certain lewd persons under pretence of religious-minded men." He arrested the bailiff of the town, William Mandeville, who was accused of boasting that he would make the heads of priests "as cheap as sheeps' heads, three or four a penny." Mandeville was hanged, drawn, and quartered, and his head set on London Bridge. A still more formidable agitator, one Jack Sharpe (though Fabyan makes the two one and the same) is said to have been arrested at Oxford, and was also put to death. He is said to have been called "the Captain of Wigmore Heath," which looks as though, like Jack Cade a few years later, he had been trading on the popularity of the House of Mortimer. Other risings took place in Kent, under one Sir Nicol Conway, and at Coventry. In the *Archæologia* (xxiii. 342) are letters written in the young King's name to the Abbot and the Corporation of Bury St. Edmunds, ordering them to suppress "all privy gatherings or

conventicles" by day or night, and laying all the blame of the recent disturbances on the Lollards, who are charged with setting up "seditious bills." The child-king is made to say, "As God knoweth, never would they be subject to His law nor to man's, but would be loose and free to rob, reave, and destroy all men of estate, thrift, and worship, as they purposed to have done in our father's days, and of lads and lurdains would make lords, and generally would use, do, and fulfil all their lusts and wills."

It is impossible to say how far these movements were really of Lollard origin, or whether, if it were so, considerable deductions ought not to be made from the statements put forward as to their objects. Those who recall the fact that so learned and able a prelate as Bishop Horsley, only a century ago, and in a public charge, denounced Dissenting Sunday Schools and preaching stations as French revolutionary agencies, or who remember some of the statements put forth by panic-stricken canvassers before the General Election of 1895 as to the supposed intentions of the Liberationists, will not attach too much importance to the assertions of a suspicious Government or a prejudiced clergy in a rude and ignorant age.

Some of the Lollards seem to have held the doctrine of non-resistance; and if others erred in taking up the carnal sword, they terribly atoned for their error. Anyhow, it is remarkable that no accusation of treason or disloyalty is brought against them after 1431. As with the Puritans after the Reformation, another work lay before them, more pacific, more obscure, but not less important.

The year 1431 saw the second Wycliffite martyr in Scotland, in the person of Paul Craw, a Bohemian student, burned at St. Andrews.

Some writers have spoken of the persecution of the Lollards as ceasing in this year, but this was hardly the case, though we hear comparatively little of Lollardy for the next fifty years. Mr. Froude (i. 502) speaks of the Lollard movement as a mere "prologue" or "rehearsal" of the drama of the Reformation, and asserts that in the sixteenth century there remained no trace of Lollardy save "a black memory of contempt and hatred." Trench much more justly estimates the facts when he speaks (*Lectures on Mediæval Church History*, pp. 322, 323) of the Lollards as living on in secret, and adds: "When the Reformation came at last, these humble men did much, as we may well believe, to contribute to it that element

of sincerity, truth, and uprightness without which it could never have succeeded; while yet, as must be sorrowfully owned, this element was miserably lacking in many who, playing foremost parts in the carrying of a Reformation through, yet sought in it not the things of God, but their own."

It must be borne in mind that there are few periods of our history of which we know less than of the fifty years from 1430 to 1480, except as regards the long dynastic struggle of the Wars of the Roses; and doubtless the preoccupation of men's minds with this was a source of protection to the Lollards. In Fuller's words, "The very storm was their shelter."

We find, however, an "heresiarch" who appeared before Convocation in 1433, and was committed to prison. On Easter Sunday, 1438, one John Gardyner was detected in the act of concealing the host in a handkerchief, when he had received it in the church of St. Mary Axe. He was convicted of heresy, and burned on May 14th. In the same year John Boreham, parish priest of Salehurst, in Sussex, was charged with heresy, and afterwards abjured.

On June 17, 1440, Richard Wyche, doubtfully described as parson of "Hermetsworth"

(probably Harmondsworth, near Staines), said
1440 to have been formerly vicar of Deptford, was burned on Tower Hill. Some of the chroniclers state that his man-servant suffered with him. Wyche must have been an aged man, if he were the same who was charged with heresy before Bishop Skirlaw, of Durham, in 1405 or earlier, and again arrested in the north, sent up to London, and imprisoned in the Fleet in 1419. Mr. R. L. Poole, in an article in the *English Historical Review* for April, 1892, has shown that there is reason to believe that he was no other than the Richard Fitz, or Vuchewitze, who is mentioned in Bohemian history as having written a letter to Huss in 1410, of which the latter declared that if all other writings in the world should be blotted out by Antichrist, this letter of his "dear brother" would suffice to the believers for their spiritual health. Wyche was evidently deeply reverenced by many in London. A rude cross was erected over the place of his martyrdom. Pilgrimages were made to the spot until forbidden by Royal proclamation. It was given out that a miraculous fragrance was exhaled by his ashes; but this was traced to the action of a cunning priest who had mingled spices with them, in order to sell them to

the people. Loserth found a MS. account of Wyche's trial at Prague.

The same year (1440), the King received a letter from Johann Burian, Lord of Gutenstein, in Bohemia, informing him that he had in his custody the great English Wycliffite Peter Payne, and offering to send him to England. The King, however, evidently felt that Burian's object was to extort a sum of money, and declined to advance any. He wrote to the Pope, suggesting that Payne should be sent to Italy; but Payne was ultimately ransomed by his followers for a very large sum. He was evidently held in high honour among them, as well he might be, considering that in 1433 he pleaded their cause for three days before the assembled prelates and princes of Europe at the Council of Basle.

In Richard Wyche the Lollards probably lost the last of their great leaders in England —a man who may have sat at the feet of Wycliffe, and who had corresponded with Huss. The shades of obscurity gather around the movement more and more thickly, but it was by no means extinct.

1441 Five persons from Chiddingfold and Ockley, in Surrey, were charged with heresy in 1441. In the same year, and

again in 1454 and 1457, certain inhabitants of Bristol were tried and abjured before the Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1447, according to an anonymous chronicle published by the Camden Society (vol. xxviii., n.s., p. 66), a "heretyk" was "brent at the Towre Hill." Mr. Froude has well said (iii. 398) that "the word 'heretic,' which to contemporaries was the one fraught with the deepest associations of horror, is sought for eagerly among the records by the modern historian as the green blade of promise bursting out of the barren soil." It must be borne in mind, however, that in a few cases, unhappy persons were charged with heresy who seem to have been the victims of half-insane delusions.

1447

In 1454 an ex-chaplain of the Bishop of Bath and Wells was tried for heresy and made abjuration; and in 1457 three cases are recorded in Cambridgeshire and one at Hertford. In 1459 two persons were accused of heresy in Somersetshire.

The clearest light we get on the position of Lollardy at this time is from a work written by Reynold Pecock, Bishop of St. Asaph, and afterwards of Chichester, under the curious title of *The Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*.

Cir. 1450

Unlike earlier controversialists like William of Woodford and Thomas of Walden, who had attacked the Lollards with violence and bitterness, Pecock reasons with them in a fair and respectful manner, which is surprising when we consider the spirit of the age. Avoiding the reproachful term "Lollards," he calls them "the lay party," or "the Bible-men." His tone is anything but that of one who has to do with the remnants of an all but extinct sect; but incidentally he shows that divisions had arisen among the Lollards themselves. Some of them, he says, were called "Doctor-mongers" (probably the more conservative section); some "Opinion-holders," and some "Neutrals." Pecock calls Wycliffe a "heretik," but he quotes the Scriptures from the second Wycliffite version. He tells us that the Lollards objected to image-worship, pilgrimages, the landed endowments of the Church, degrees of rank among the clergy, the authority of tradition, the monastic orders, the invocation of the saints (and every practice based on the doctrine of the transference of merit), the use of ornaments in Divine service, the mass (and the doctrine of sacramental grace generally), oaths, war, and capital punishment. We have here the outlines of a system

approximating in some respects to modern Quakerism, and the likeness is enhanced by something like the doctrine of the "inward light." Pecock ascribes to the "Bible-men" three fundamental principles, or "trowings," as he calls them :—

1. That nothing is to be esteemed a law of God, unless it is founded on Scripture.

2. That every Christian "meke in spirit" shall without fail understand the true sense of the Bible.

3. That he should then heed no arguments of "clerks" to the contrary.

Further on in the book he adds a fourth "trowing" of theirs—that the clergy were so blinded by self-interest that it was impossible for them to arrive at the true sense of Scripture.

Pecock's able book, perhaps the earliest philosophical treatise in the English language, has a surprisingly liberal, one might say Broad Church, tone. He evidently felt that he was writing, not for ignorant fanatics, but for intelligent objectors; and it is easy to see that he regarded the points in dispute as mainly non-essential, and that he was disgusted with his brethren's attempts to subdue the Lollards by "fire, sword, and hangment," though he cautiously adds that these coercive

means might be lawful, provided they had first tried "by clear wit to draw them into the consent of true faith." But the rationalistic bishop's failure to take the high ground of priestly authority was intensely distasteful to his fellow-prelates. Other works and sermons of his brought him still more under their displeasure. In 1457 he was cited before Archbishop Bourchier, and was compelled to recant at Paul's Cross, and to commit his books to the flames with his own hands. His writings were also publicly burnt at the Carfax at Oxford, and he was imprisoned at Thorney Abbey, in Cambridgeshire, where the use of writing materials was denied him, and where he died soon after.

Nov. 11, 1457

The Inquisition had done its work. Every outward protest was silenced; all discontent was "driven under the surface"; and even a bishop must be ignominiously put to silence rather than tolerate any departure from the dead level of uniformity which characterised the time. The intellectual life of England was scarcely ever at a lower level, or the Church more corrupt, as shown by the terrific picture drawn of it by Gascoigne. There is a striking parallel between the situation and that in France after the revocation of the

Edict of Nantes. Thorold Rogers states that the strength of Lollardy at this time lay largely among the wealthy burgesses in large towns, whom he pictures as "sour and contemptuous," largely absorbed in making money, thrifty, with nothing to spare for monk or priest, cautious, vigilant, and reserved; yet keeping alive more than any other class the eternal truth of the connection between religion and morality. But we might naturally suppose that, as with the Huguenots, there would be rural districts where Lollardy survived among the peasantry, and which would become known as refuges in time of danger. Such seem to have existed in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, as well as in the Lollard districts in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Lollardy had scarcely had a footing north of Trent, west of Severn (except for a time in Herefordshire), or in the extreme south-western counties. In the dynastic struggle it is likely that the sympathies of the Lollards would be with the House of York. They had assuredly no cause to love the Lancastrian kings; and it is remarkable that the strength of the Yorkist party lay in the parts of England where Lollards were most numerous.

Early in the reign of Edward IV. (in 1462) several cases of heresy are recorded in the register of Bishop Chedworth, of Lincoln. Four of these were at Amersham, and two at Henley-on-Thames. The Amersham cases were of the ordinary type — rejection of pilgrimages, image-worship, and transubstantiation. In one of them mention is made of one James Wylly, who had been burned in London as a heretic. William Aylward, one of the two Henley heretics, was a blacksmith, and evidently a man of coarse and vulgar nature, who had used disgusting language against the clergy and the doctrines of the Church. He had nothing of the martyr spirit, and readily abjured his reckless utterances, which seem to have been prompted by a love of shocking his neighbours. His case and some others of this period are instances of that blind and ignorant fanaticism which is generally fostered by persecution, as in the days of Laud, and of the Camisard "prophets" under Louis XIV., or in Russia at the present day. Whenever a religious community is deprived of its natural leaders by the stern hand of repressive authority, no wonder if their followers left as "sheep without a shepherd," plunge into all manner of excesses, especially

1462

when, as Aylward seems to have been, they are totally ignorant of Scripture. It is only another proof, were any needed, of the utter folly of a persecuting policy.

In 1465 a very curious incident took place, which may have had a tendency to check the persecution. A Kentish farmer, John Keyser, who had been excommunicated for some offence, pointed to an exceptionally fine crop of wheat as a proof that he was "not excommunicated before God." For this utterance the Archbishop cast him into Maidstone Gaol; but, appealing to the Court of King's Bench, the secular tribunal ruled that the Archbishop had no right to imprison him as "suspect of heresy," and he was discharged. Edward IV. certainly seems to have been less opposed to the Lollards than his predecessors; but there were two instances at least of martyrdom during his reign. William Balowe, of Saffron Walden, was burned on Tower Hill in 1466; and in August, 1473, John Goose also suffered there, meeting his fate with a quiet heroism which seems to have made a profound impression. Urged by the Sheriff of London to recant, he calmly replied that he was "sore hungred," and would like something to eat. "I eat now a good and competent dinner," he

1465

said to the bystanders; "for I shall pass a little sharp shower ere I go to supper." Mr. Pratt, in his notes on Foxe (iii. 863) maintains that Goose suffered in 1483, under Richard III.

During the later years of Edward IV., and under Richard III., there are few or no further cases of proceedings against "heretics"; but it is evident that this period was marked by a quiet, but deep religious revival among the Lollards themselves. From henceforth Lollardy is seen to be bolder, more Scriptural, and less fanatical; and several of those charged with heresy later on fix this period as that of their conversion to Wycliffe's views.

VI

THE LATER LOLLARDS

(1485–1559.)

HENRY VII. copied the kings of the House of Lancaster rather than the more tolerant Edward in his religious policy. He had been on the throne but four months when, as appears from the registers of the diocese of London, an unnamed Lollard of an extreme type, who seems to have held that the Church had apostatized immediately after the Ascension of Christ, was burned at the stake. The next year (1486) nine Lollards abjured and did penance at Coventry. They had denounced not only pilgrimages and image-worship, but the doctrine of purgatory. In 1488 a woman at Ashbourne was charged with heresy. Lollard doctrines, too, had once more found

1486

1488

their way into Oxford; and in 1491 Bishop Russell of Lincoln, visiting that city, declared himself "harassed and fatigued with the multitude of heretics" he found there.

1491

In Scotland as well as in England Lollard principles showed signs of revival. In 1494 the Archbishop of Glasgow prevailed on James IV. to bring before the Council thirty men and women from the districts of Kyle, Carrick, and Cunningham, who were charged with condemning the mass, and the worship of saints, images, and relics. The milder policy of the Scottish king dismissed them with a caution.

In 1494 Joan Boughton, the first English female martyr, was burned in Smithfield. Her daughter, Lady Young, suffered at an unnamed date in like manner. In 1496, and again in 1498, several "Lollers" did penance at St. Paul's, bearing faggots as the sign of the death they had deserved. A priest suffered at Canterbury in 1498, and in 1500 another victim at London and one at Norwich closed the record of the century. In the diocese of Salisbury numerous persons were compelled to do penance in various parts of Berkshire in 1499. Their confessions, pre-

1496–1498

served in the Diocesan Register, are of the ordinary Lollard type. Some confessed that, while outwardly adoring the host, they had secretly directed their worship to God in heaven. Eight cases are recorded at Reading, six in and around Faringdon, five in Wantage and the neighbourhood, and one at Hungerford. Thomas Boughton, of Hungerford, shoemaker and wool-winder, made an exceedingly clever recantation, in which he managed to restate and argue in favour of his views. Richard Smart was burned at Salisbury in 1503 (Foxe, iv. 207).

The spread of the "New Learning" at this period was watched with interest by the Lollards. Many of those in Buckinghamshire went up to London to hear the preaching of Dean Colet. Though Colet calls the Lollards "men mad with strange folly," he was not the first nor the last ecclesiastic who was far nearer than he suspected in spiritual affinity to despised sectaries whose real standpoint he scarcely understood.

In 1506 inquiries were made into the prevalence of heresy at Amersham. It seems

1506

that the revival of religion referred to in the last chapter was connected with the labours of a remarkable set of men, the itinerant teachers who were so

active at this time. We constantly find references to them; they were "the doctors," "the holy men of the sect," "the only true priests." According to the statement of one Berford, of Great Coxwell, in 1499, they sometimes heard confessions. Whether they had been secretly ordained, as Walsingham says the Lollard teachers were in Richard II.'s time, can only be a matter of conjecture; but one thinks of the heroic "Pastors of the Desert" among the later Huguenots, solemnly set apart to their labours and to almost certain martyrdom in quarry, or cave, or mountain glen. Mr. Trevelyan, in his *England in the Time of Wycliffe*, speaks of the Lollard ideal of Church government as Presbyterian; but in days of persecution a Presbyterian Church is very apt to become practically Congregational. At any rate, there was a "conventicle" at Amersham, with three "principal readers or instructors" —William Tylsworth, Robert Cosin, and Thomas Chase. Tylsworth was sentenced to be burned, and the sentence was carried out in a field called Stanley's Close, still pointed out on a slope north of the town. About sixty Lollards, the names of over twenty of whom are given by Foxe (iv. 123), were "put to bear faggots for his burning."

But not only were the last moments of the Lollard teacher embittered by the spectacle of the members of his flock abjuring the faith which he had taught them, and actually taking part in his execution. By a refinement of cruelty, his own daughter, Joan Clerk, "a faithful woman," was compelled to set fire to the wood with her own hands. Thus Tylsworth met his end with every aggravation of physical and mental agony, and of apparent utter failure in his work; but in his case, as in that of countless others, "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." Robert Cosin was burned about the same time at Buckingham, and Thomas Chase died in the bishop's prison at Wooburn, not without suspicion of foul play. Some of the Lollards had to do public penance in the market-places of Aylesbury and other towns, and were compelled to wear badges of green cloth on their sleeves as a perpetual mark of disgrace. Others were branded on the cheek with a hot iron.

The wholesale recantation at this time was long known in the district as "the Great Abjuration." It must be confessed that it is somewhat disappointing, all through the history of the Lollards, to notice the large proportion who abjured their belief when it

came to the test. But it is not easy for us to estimate the courage required to stand against the force of Church authority and almost universal belief. The Marian martyrs were sustained by the consciousness that a widespread and influential public opinion, which often manifested itself in active sympathy, was on their side. The earlier witnesses for truth had no such support, and must often have doubted whether, after all, they, a few unlettered people, could be right in holding a belief which seemed contrary to that of all the wise and learned of the land.

Foxe (whose accuracy on minor points has often been justifiably challenged, but whose substantial truthfulness is continually confirmed by modern research) records numerous martyrdoms during the next few years—those of Thomas Norris, at Norwich, in 1507; and of Lawrence Guest, at Salisbury, and an unnamed woman at Chipping Sodbury, being the last in the reign of Henry VII. Numerous persons in London were compelled to abjure by Bishop Fitzjames at this time. After the accession of Henry VIII. Foxe records in 1511 the burning of William Sweeting and John Brewster at Smithfield, and of John Brown at Ashford. Four cases in the Eastern counties are more doubtful (iv. 773). John

Stilman and Thomas Man suffered in London seven years later. The latter was one of the wandering teachers, and was said to have made seven hundred converts. Six more men and one woman suffered at Coventry, a Lollard centre from Oldcastle's days, on April 4, 1519. One man who escaped was burned two years later at the same place.

Foxe (iv. 217–246) gives a description of an inquiry issued by John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, into the prevalence of heresy at Amersham and elsewhere. Nothing like it occurs in the extant registers of Lincoln, and its genuineness has therefore been called in question, but the internal evidence of its substantial truth is overwhelming. Inimitably simple in its delineations of life and character, consistent in all its parts, full of minute local and family details, which are capable of confirmation from all kinds of sources, it bears every mark of genuineness. With all due respect to Foxe, that worthy and eloquent but terribly rambling writer could never have forged such a document. At least fifty surnames occur which are still known in the district, and seventeen which occur in the Amersham registers and churchwardens' accounts of the sixteenth century.

1521

1521 was the year in which Luther stood

before the Diet of Worms, and his views could as yet be known to very few in England, and besides, were only partially formulated. We have here, therefore, the latest picture of English Lollardy. A year or two later, and it was greatly modified by Lutheran influences. Foxe, with all his inaccuracies, had a keen perception of the broad aspects of history. He shows this when he points to these records as a complete answer to the question, "Where was Protestantism before Luther?" Foxe goes on to say: "Although public authority then lacked to maintain the open preaching of the Gospel, yet the secret multitude of professors was not much unequal; certes, the fervent zeal of those Christian days seemed much superior to these our days and times, as manifestly may appear by their sitting up all night in reading and hearing; also by their expenses and charges in buying of books in English, of whom some gave five marks" (about £40 of present value), "some more, some less, for a book. Some gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. James or of St. Paul in English."

Numerous witnesses were examined on oath, for these men do not seem to have shared the objection of the earlier Lollards

to all oaths. Some of those who had abjured in 1506 were compelled "on pain of relapse," that is, of death, to denounce those who shared their belief, and as one after another was denounced, they also were summoned and examined, the subjects of inquiry going back some twenty or thirty years, till the number of those suspected of heresy amounted to some two hundred, the proceedings lasting apparently for several months. Husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers and sisters, were forced to betray one another. The evidence implicated persons in the dioceses of London and Salisbury, as well as in that of Lincoln; but two districts were specially affected. One was the Chiltern district in Buckinghamshire, around Amersham, Wycombe, and Beaconsfield, and including the Thames side from Henley down to Staines. The other lay some miles to the West, in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, taking in both sides of the Thames, with the valley of the Kennet. The northern parts of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire are never mentioned. South Bucks was largely Lollard, but North Bucks remained devoutly Catholic; just as in the next century, the former mainly took sides with the Parliament, and the latter with the King.

In the districts named it was found that there was a community called "the Justfast Men," or "the Known Men," who were believed to regard themselves as the only true Christians, "converted to grace and chosen to Almighty God," and to marry only among themselves. The name of "known men" was of old standing among the Lollards. Seventy years earlier, Bishop Pecock tells us that the test question which one would put to another, when he wished to learn if a third party was trustworthy, was, "Is he a known man?" He says that they used it in the sense of being "known of God"—"the Lord knoweth them that are His."

Similarly, one man, Thomas Africk, is described as inquiring about his relatives at a distance, "Do they keep the laws of God, as they were wont?" Now this is a way of speaking thoroughly characteristic of the Lollards. In all the remains of them which we have the word "Gospel" scarcely ever occurs, though it was constantly on the lips of the early Protestants a few years later than this. With the Lollards, the Old and New Testaments were "the old and new law." More than a hundred years before, Knyghton tells us (col. 2664) that they were constantly speaking of "Goddislawe," and

asserting that no one was acceptable to God who did not keep it as they set it forth.

The four great crimes on which the examinations mostly turned were:—

1. Reading the Scriptures in English.
2. Denying the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
3. Rejecting the worship of images.
4. Speaking against pilgrimages.

The views of these latest Lollards in Bucks and other counties show an advance on Wycliffe's teachings, especially with regard to the Eucharist. He had taught a kind of consubstantiation; but some of these people, we are told, held that "in the sacrament of the altar was not the true body of Christ, but only the substance of bread." It was "but a token of the Lord's body," "a certain figurative thing of Christ in bread." Otherwise, they argued, there must be as many Gods as there were hosts. The body of Christ was "in heaven till the day of doom"; and how was it possible for a man to make Him who, as the Creed declared, was "begotten, not made"? "He had been once in sinners' hands, and was ill dealt with, and would come there no more." They did not fast before the communion. Some of them, instead of joining

in the prayers at the elevation, "sat mum like beasts," as one of their Catholic neighbours expressed it. Others stayed away from Church for months. "All the world," they said, "was as well-hallowed as the Church; and it was as good to be buried in the field as in the churchyard." "Holy bread and holy water were but a vainglory of the world." The worship of images was "mawmetry," and against the Second Commandment. They were but "dead things," "stocks and stones," "carpenters' chips." Pilgrimages were kept up more "for the greenway" (the pleasant summer holiday), "than for any devotion." They were "ordained for gain and profit," and "only served to spend folks' money," and to maintain bad characters. The intercession of Virgin and saints was unnecessary. "What need to go to the feet, when we may go to the Head?" "The Pope had no authority to give pardon, and to release any man's soul from sin, and so from pain." "God made not priests, for in Christ's time there were no priests." Matrimony was not a sacrament. "In all things wherein a man offended God, he should shrive himself to God, and in what things he offended man, he should shrive himself to man." Finally, "all who died

passed straight to heaven or hell," and there was no such place as Purgatory.

These doctrines were spread in a variety of ways. The mother taught them to her children, sometimes adding that she had held them all her life. Parents sought to put their children under the care of those who would "teach them the law of God." Neighbours told their beliefs in strictest confidence to one another, and sometimes ventured to hold a "conventicle" or "conference" in house or barn, perhaps at night, when some person gifted with a retentive memory, it might even be a child, would recite long passages from Wycliffe's version. Books were "carried about from one to another," being sometimes purchased by subscription. Some were bound in boards, some in parchment, besides tracts on "sheets of paper" or parchment scrolls. We read of MSS. of each of the Four Gospels, of the Acts, of the Epistles of Paul (Romans is the only one specially mentioned), of James and Peter, and the Apocalypse. The Epistle of St. James was an especial favourite, nor can we wonder at this when we remember how exactly adapted the fifth chapter especially was to their persecuted condition. These fragments were of course all in MS.

Wycliffe's version never appeared in a printed form till our own day, and Tyndale's was not issued till four years after this inquiry.

Allusions to the Old Testament are scanty. One person had "a book of Solomon in English" (probably the Proverbs), and we read of "a book of the Ten Commandments," and "a book of the Ten Plagues." In one or two instances we read of a "gloss" or commentary—one on the Gospels, another on the Apocalypse, "fairly written." It is curious to find one charge of reading the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which had been translated by Wycliffe, and was printed in English before any portion of the canonical Scriptures. So highly was it esteemed that Erasmus, a few years later, saw a copy affixed to one of the columns of Canterbury Cathedral.

Other books mentioned are Wycliffe's *Wicket*, *William Thorpe*, *The King of Beeme*, *The Shepherd's Kalendar*, *Our Lady's Matins*, *A Dialogue between a Jew and a Christian*, and *The Prick of Conscience*, besides a treatise on the Paternoster, and another on the Seven Sacraments. It is interesting to note how the traditions of the older Lollardy were preserved by the reading of the *Wicket*

—the popular treatise on transubstantiation ascribed to Wycliffe—and also of a memoir of William Thorpe (tried for heresy in 1407), or more probably an account of his examination. The "King of Beeme" (Bohemia) may be conjectured to have been George Podiebrad (1458-1471), the first European sovereign to throw off the doctrinal yoke of Rome. *The Prick of Conscience* was the early English poem by Richard Rolle, the "Hermit of Hampole" (died 1349). It is curious to find a "Shepherd's Kalendar" long before Edmund Spenser's time, but I have not been able to trace its nature.

Large sums were given for some of these books. John Phip, a physician living at Hughenden, burned all his books when he found himself in danger. A neighbour told him that he was "foul to blame" for this, as they were worth a hundred marks (£600 or £700 of present value). "I had rather burn my books," sagely replied the doctor, "than that my books should burn me."

One quaint practice, very characteristic of the time, was the committal to memory of certain brief formulas or summaries of faith and practice. The Lollards followed their Catholic neighbours in this, but used English

instead of Latin versions. In addition to the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, with the Eight Beatitudes and the "Hail Mary," we read of the Five Marvels of St. Austin, the Four Signs of Salvation, &c. One young girl in Berkshire knew by heart the Epistle of St. James, the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes, and could also repeat "the seven deadly sins" (pride, envy, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, and sloth), "the seven works of mercy" (either the "bodily works" of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the prisoner, and burying the dead, or the "ghostly works" of counsel, instruction, reproof, comfort, forgiveness, endurance, and intercession), "the five bodily wits" (the five senses), and "the five ghostly wits" (reason, judgment, memory, conscience, and understanding).

Poor and ignorant people were these for the most part, like those first Christians who, in slave huts and catacombs, undermined the stately faith of Imperial Rome. The "known men" shared in the limitations and errors of their time; yet their faces were towards the light, and it was in the homes of these, and such as these, not in palace or

cathedral, that the promise and the potency of the coming change really lay.

A large number of those "detected" were abjured by an oath upon the Gospels. Some were condemned to perpetual penance in various monasteries, where they were kept in a kind of slavery and never allowed to pass the precincts. Others had to bear faggots in public penance in the market-places and churches of various towns, and to fast every Friday on bread and ale. Foxe gives the names of six persons—Thomas Bernard, James Morden, Robert Rave, John Scrivener, Thomas Holmes, and Joan Norman, who, having previously abjured, were now condemned for relapse and sentenced to death. The account as to Bernard and Morden, however, is decidedly confused, as Foxe gives two other dates, but this seems the most probable. Scrivener's children were compelled to light the faggots, but Fuller in his *Church History* tells us that this infamy was not allowed to pass without an indignant protest.

Foxe gives further extracts from the Lincoln Register of 1530 (iv. 582-585), which are chiefly interesting as showing how the Lollard districts were being gradually permeated by the

1530

influence of Lutheranism. The "known men" listened eagerly to those who could tell them of what was being done "beyond the sea in Almany," and the parchment scroll of the Lollard was superseded by the black-letter volume of the Gospeller, with its more modernised version.

In 1532 the aged Thomas Harding, who had been abjured in 1506, and had come under suspicion in 1521, was burned at Chesham. Local tradition points out his home at Dungrove Farm, the wood where he was arrested reading the English Bible, the site of the house where he spent his last night on earth, and that of his martyrdom. It is a curious fact that he suffered a hundred and fifty years all but a day, after Philip Repyngdon preached the sermon at Oxford which led Courtenay to take the first repressive measures against Lollardy. And in a sense, the story of that persecution ends with the burning of Harding, who may fairly be called the last of the Lollard martyrs—the last, that is, of purely Lollard training and sympathies.

1532

From this date the story of Lollardy becomes more and more merged in the growth of Protestantism. The Anabaptists first meet us in English

1535

history about 1535, and a German writer has shown that deputies from England were present at a synod which they held in Westphalia in 1536. There was every likelihood that some of the Lollards would join the new sect, whose more moderate leaders held views very similar to their own. And this may account for the fact that in some of the districts where Lollardy had been strongest, and notably in South Bucks, we find Baptists numerous in the next century.

The unhappy man Cowbridge, who was burned at Oxford in 1538, and who appears to have been insane, is said to have belonged to a wealthy family at Colchester, which had held Lollard views from the time of Wycliffe.

1538

In the reign of Edward VI., the Acts against Lollardy passed in the reigns of Richard II. and Henry V., and the famous Act of the Six Articles and other persecuting Acts passed under Henry VIII., were repealed. Under Mary, the laws against Lollardy were re-enacted, and it is a noticeable fact that a large proportion of those who suffered under her came from Lollard districts. This is well shown by comparing the maps given in

1547
1 Edw. VI. c. 12

1555
1 & 2 Phil. & Mary c. 6.

the late Rev. W. H. Beckett's *English Reformation* (R.T.S., 1890).

Immediately on the accession of Elizabeth, a "Commission of Lollardy," which had been issued by Philip and Mary in 1557, was called on to give in its report, but it was only in order to stay further proceedings. Early in 1559 the Acts against Lollardy were finally repealed, though, as we have seen, an oath against it continued to be taken by magistrates till 1625.

1558

1 Eliz. c. 1.

VII

THE PLACE OF LOLLARDY IN HISTORY

THE English Reformation is spoken of by many writers as though it had been the resultant of two forces—the Renaissance in Italy, and the work of Luther in Germany, while the surviving influence of the native Lollardy is ignored or dismissed in a sentence. This is to repeat the error complained of by Ullman in his *Reformers before the Reformation*—that of German writers who see the spiritual progenitors of Luther rather in foreigners like Huss and Savonarola than in Teutonic thinkers like Wessel, John of Goch, and John of Wesel. The error is all the more glaring in the case of an island kingdom like England.

Another most mischievous fallacy, is that which sees in the great religious movement

of the sixteenth century in England only the outcome of the action of the State. This is seen, not only in the shallow clap-trap with which we are all so familiar, about the moral character of the rulers who took the movement in hand for their own purposes, but also in the way in which the moderate character of the English Reformation is attributed merely to its being effected by the civil power. Its principles were no novelty to the inhabitants of a large portion of England. They did not receive a new Gospel with the enthusiasm of converts, but heard with approval, or at any rate without the shock of surprise, the public preaching of doctrines which had been more or less familiar for years. Somewhat in the same way, Englishmen were little affected by the doctrines of the French Revolution, because they had made acquaintance with many of them a century before. On the other hand, the counties to which Lollard teaching had not penetrated—Cornwall, Lancashire, Yorkshire—were just those in which the new Reformation ideas met with the longest and most stubborn resistance, loyal as those districts were to the Crown. But this is not all. On the religious settlement under Elizabeth, the problem to be faced by a person who had

been trained in the old-fashioned Lollard ways of thinking, was this—whether or not he could rest satisfied with it, as a sufficient approximation to his ideal of the Church. Some, no doubt, would accept it, thankful for what they would consider its vast superiority to the former state of things. Others would receive it as an instalment of what they hoped for; but others again would hold aloof from it as far as coercive laws would permit, for, in spite of Sir Edward Coke's dictum, Lollardy and Anglicanism were by no means identical. Under Edward VI., as recorded in the Privy Council Register, one Upcharde, of Bocking, in Essex, was examined touching an assembly of some sixty persons, who had met at his house one Sunday in 1551, for the study of the Scriptures, some of them having refused communion at the parish church for two years before. Under Mary, there was an organised separatist church in London, and others at Colchester, Much Bentley, Stoke in Suffolk, and elsewhere. These separate assemblies were continued under Elizabeth, and thus the same reign which saw the final establishment of Anglicanism saw also, and very early in its course, the rise of English Nonconformity. The Presbyterian, Congregational, and Bap-

1551

tist systems of the next century owed their origin to various obscure and persecuted bands of Christians, who were dissatisfied with the range of Elizabeth's ecclesiastical reforms. Fuller speaks of Nonconformity as conceived under Edward, born "beyond sea at Frankfort" under Mary, weaned under Elizabeth, a stripling under James, and attaining under Charles to "the full strength and stature of a man, able not only to cope with, but to conquer the hierarchy, its adversary." Undoubtedly, the influence of the Continental Churches—of Frankfort, Strasburg, Geneva—upon those Reformers who sought shelter with them during the dark days of Mary, had much to do with the moulding of English Puritanism. The example of Scotland, too, counted for something. Those Puritans who began to refuse conformity as early as 1566, and who formed a Presbytery as early as 1572 (at Wandsworth), looked to Calvin and Knox as their patterns and counsellors. But after all, to quote Thorold Rogers (*Work and Wages*, p. 273), "Geneva would have produced little effect on the minds of the better-off peasantry and citizens, unless it had found the soil already prepared by the teaching of Lollardy."

1566–1572

A further step in the same direction was taken by the "Separatists" who play so prominent a part under Elizabeth and James—the "Brownists" or Congregationalists (to whom belonged the earlier and more tolerant of the New England settlers), and the "Anabaptists" or Baptists. These were disowned and condemned by the Puritans as well as by the dominant party in the Church. But the Puritans were destined to be drawn more closely to the Separatists by their common sufferings under the ruling Anglicanism; the two parties were to combine in effecting its temporary overthrow, to grasp, each for a short period, the supreme power, and to fall before restored Anglicanism in 1660. It was not till the repressive laws which followed that event had fused them in the fires of a common suffering that Puritans and Separatists combined to originate English Nonconformity; but the seemingly weaker force ended by assimilating the stronger, and the Free Churches of to-day represent the views of the Separatists, the direct inheritors of Lollardy, rather than those of the Puritans strictly so called.

The Quaker movement of the seventeenth century had its points of contact with Lollard traditions. George Fox, himself of "the

stock of the martyrs," did not so much originate as emphasise certain ideas which were floating in the religious atmosphere of his day. The Quakers, and the early General Baptists who so much resembled them, perpetuated many even of the lesser peculiarities of Lollard life and manners—the objection to war and oaths, the studied plainness of dress, the light esteem of consecrated buildings and ordained clergy, the importance attached to the inner light, the avoidance of the Catholic formula "Our Lord" for the more Scriptural "The Lord." The very names of Lollard families survive among the Nonconformists of Amersham, which became a stronghold of Quakers and Baptists in the seventeenth century, and the traditions of Lollard days are still tenaciously preserved in that part of Bucks. There, and doubtless in other parts of England, the Lollard spirit has never entirely died out of its ancient haunts. It showed itself in the yeomen who marched to London to protect John Hampden on the threatened arrest of the Five Members, and in the Greencoats who marched under the same patriot's banner, with its haughty motto, *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.* It showed itself not less clearly in the patient endurance of persecution by the early Baptists, and by the

peaceful Quakers whose remains lie beneath the linden-trees of Jordans. It shows itself to this day in the deep-rooted love of religious freedom which marks the inhabitants of some of the upland villages—a love ingrained in their very nature by the habits and traditions of half a thousand years.

The connection between Lollardy and eighteenth-century Methodism, remote as it is, is most curious and interesting. John Wesley, a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, the very college founded by Bishop Fleming, to counteract the spread of Lollardy—the reformer whose career so much resembles Wycliffe's, especially in the army of itinerant preachers which he sent out over England—owed the spiritual impulse which emancipated him from the shackles of sacerdotalist Anglicanism to Peter Boehler the Moravian. And the Moravian Church, the missionary Church *par excellence* of Protestant Christendom, is the still surviving younger sister of English Lollardy, reorganised, it is true, by Jablonski and Zinzendorf in the eighteenth century, but tracing back the succession of its ministers to 1467. In that year the *Unitas Fratrum* was founded at Prague by the followers of Peter Chelczicky. The grounds on which they separated from the Hussites

and Calixtines were the distinctively Lollard tenets of the unlawfulness of war, oaths, and display in dress. Now Peter Chelczicky was a personal friend of Peter Payne, who resided in his house not long before his death (he died in 1455). Thus the truths which the Bohemians had learned from Wycliffe and Payne were carried from Bohemia into Saxony, and from Saxony back to England, to be the very breath of life to the great Methodist revival.

But the most lasting heritage bequeathed by the Lollards is not to be found in sects or denominations, or even in doctrinal protests against Romanism, but in the yet unspent moral force which resulted from their life and work. For after all, their protest was quite as much ethical as doctrinal. Many writers, yielding to the temptation so natural to us all "to write the story of those in whom we are deeply interested as we should like it to have been, rather than as it actually was," have overlooked the vital distinction between the Lollards and the later Reformers in regard to the doctrine of justification. As with the Waldenses, one searches their writings in vain for the freeness and fulness of the Pauline teaching, and finds instead a type of doctrine more like that of St. James than of St. Paul.

The movement was an endeavour, stimulated by the reading of Holy Scripture, after a higher form of Christian life, and one nearer to the primitive ideal. And it was just the corruptions standing in the way of a higher and holier living that called forth their most strenuous protests.

The very extravagances of the Lollards arose largely from their moral earnestness. It was this which, in view of the licentiousness of the clergy, led them to deduce from the doctrine of "dominion founded in grace" that the ministrations of a priest living in mortal sin were null and void. It was this which inspired the quaint excesses of the "Purity movement" under John Northampton, and which, if we may believe Walden (*Fasciculi*, p. 376), led some of the more extreme among them to assert that bastards could not be saved. It was this, too, which gave force to their protest against the frivolous and abundant oaths of which the English of their day were only too fond. Knyghton (col. 2708) tells us that the Lollard might be known by his use of the simple affirmation, "I am sykyr it is soth" (*i.e.*, sure it is true); and when the good parson in the *Canterbury Tales* objects to profound swearing, he is at once set down as a Lollard.

Their political ideals were characterised by the same earnestness of moral purpose, and were far in advance of their age. Their doctrine of "dominion founded in grace" is echoed in the present day in the demand for uprightness of life and conduct in our legislators. Their division of the community into the "three estates" of knighthood, priesthood, and commons, with the several provinces they assigned to each, has been practically realised in the gradual abandonment by the Church of all coercive power. Nor should it be forgotten that they were perhaps the earliest pioneers in the demand for universal popular education. In Pecock's *Repressor*, (p. 192), he represents them as meeting the argument that images were to the unlearned substitutes for books, by the reply, "It might be ordained that all men and women in their youth should learn for to read writings in the language in which they should live and dwell."

The Lollards not only served their own generation by the will of God. They are not merely worthy of our grateful remembrance as witnesses for Him in a dark and gloomy day—witnesses that had a little strength, and did not deny His name. If they had been no more, they would have served to "feed

the high tradition of the world," and this is one of the most precious bequests which any age can leave behind for the ages which follow. But they were more than this. They awakened thoughts and desires in the minds of men by their rough, unfinished schemes, which have ever since been bearing fruit in the growth of knowledge, liberty, and truth. All England owes them a debt of gratitude. And the members of the Free Churches especially have cause to cherish the memory of these earliest pioneers of the principles which are so dear and sacred to them.

INDEX

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