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Scottish Philosophers in France: The Earlier Years

Alexander Broadie

Scottish philosophers had a prominent role in French academic life up to and beyond the Scottish Reformation in 1560. Until the Reformation the fact that the French universities were in large measure part of the intellectual life of the Catholic Church was no obstacle to the Scots. Thereafter the Scottish presence within the French universities diminishes sharply though they did enrol in Protestant colleges in France and also taught in them. That access to French academe, narrow as it was after 1560, became narrower still in 1685 with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the effective withdrawal of citizens' rights from the French Protestants, including their right to maintain denominational colleges. Scottish non-Catholic philosophers did continue to visit France and, for example, were present in spectacular fashion in the eighteenth-century salon-culture, as witness the reception of David Hume and Adam Smith. But after 1685 Scots are barely visible within the French education system. This essay shall focus however on the Pre-Reformation period when they were a highly visible force within French universities.

Scotland's first three universities, St Andrews, Glasgow, and King's College, Aberdeen, were all founded in the fifteenth century. Prior to that century therefore Scots had to travel abroad for their university education. Some went to Oxford or to Cambridge, but the great majority went further afield, most commonly to France, and especially to Paris whose university was pre-eminent in Continental Europe. The first major Scottish philosopher to work at the University of Paris was the Franciscan friar John Duns Scotus (c.1266–1308), and his philosophy can be shown to have impacted significantly on the Scots who came after him at that university. Indeed, there is a sense in which Scottish philosophy since his day has been predominantly Scotistic.[1] This cannot be demonstrated here, but some aspects of the character of his philosophy may be noted. First, however, a word about his career, especially in France.

Duns Scotus was born in the village of Duns in Berwickshire, in the

[1] There are arguments for this claim in Alexander Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 2009).

Scottish Borders, and aged about twelve was taken by two Franciscan friars down to Oxford where he began the study of philosophy and theology. In due course he taught at Oxford, but by 1302 he was in Paris lecturing on theology. In June of the following year he was exiled from France for siding with the Pope in an argument with the French monarch, Philip the Fair, regarding Philip's wish to tax Church property. But by 1304 he was back in Paris where he resumed his lectures on theology. He remained there for a further three years before going to Cologne. The reason why he left Paris is not entirely clear but was probably related to the hostility he kindled through his teaching on the immaculate conception of Mary, Mother of Jesus. There is evidence that his departure from Paris was precipitate. He died in Cologne in the following year, 1308, and was buried there in the Franciscan Church.

Duns Scotus was the great philosopher of freedom of the Middle Ages. He held that the mind is a unity in the sense that though it has several faculties, such as intellect, will, memory and imagination, these different faculties are different forms that a person's mind takes when he engages in a mental act, such as thinking, willing, remembering and so on. So the different faculties are not in reality different from each other; they are simply different ways in which the mind acts. Does that mean that when the intellect has thought up a plan of action the will must determine the implementation of the plan? Scotus says no, for he believes that we have free will, and that if the will must do what the intellect proposes, then the will is not free but necessitated. Being reasonable, we cannot help noting what our intellect proposes, but the will, as a free faculty, can always do otherwise. The point is not that had the situation been different, the will could have willed something else instead, but rather that in that very same situation it could have willed something else. Being reasonable, we in general no doubt will as the intellect dictates, but we can (and sometimes do) will something that is utterly crazy, and do so despite being presented with a perfectly reasonable proposal by our intellect.[2]

This very strong libertarian doctrine emerges repeatedly in the contingent of Scottish thinkers who worked in Paris during the Pre-Reformation period and arguably was prominent in Scottish philosophical thinking long after. It was certainly a major feature of the Scottish common sense school of philosophy that was dominant in Scotland in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and given the circumstance that Scotus taught his doctrine of freedom in Paris it is perhaps especially appropriate that the dedicatee of the first

[2] See Alexander Broadie, *The Shadow of Scotus: Philosophy and Faith in Pre-Reformation Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1995), chs 2, 3.

Works of Thomas Reid, leader of the common sense school, was the French minister of education Victor Cousin.[3]

St Andrews University, founded 1411–14, was linked in a variety of ways to the University of Paris. One is organisational–St Andrews was in many ways modelled on Paris. But, more importantly for us, significant Scottish thinkers associated with St Andrews were at both universities. The first of note was Lawrence of Lindores (1372–1437), Master of Arts (1393) and Bachelor of Theology (1403) at the University of Paris, where he also taught in the Faculty of Arts. He was also among the first teachers at St Andrews, where he lectured both in arts subjects and in theology, besides twice occupying the post of rector. Aside from his academic life, but closely related to it since he was a professional theologian, Lindores was also Scotland's first inquisitor-general. In that capacity he was, shaming to relate, directly responsible for the burning of two men, one the English Wycliffist James Resby and the other the Hussite Pavel Kravar, whom Lindores judged guilty of heresy. Since St Andrews was founded expressly as a bulwark against heresy and 'errors', Lindores no doubt saw himself, *qua* inquisitor-general, as a faithful servant of the university's values.

Perhaps of greater importance however was John Ireland (Johannes de Irlandia) (c.1440–95), possibly a native of St Andrews, and certainly a student there, though he left in 1459 without a degree. He immediately enrolled at the University of Paris from which he gained his MA in 1460. Thereafter he rose through the ranks at Paris, teaching arts subjects and then also theology, and twice holding the post of rector. In 1474 Louis XI of France prohibited the teaching of nominalist texts at Paris, and a deputation which included Ireland went to the king to argue for the withdrawal of the prohibition – without success.[4] The ban was lifted in 1481. In the latter years of the seventies and the first two or three of the eighties Ireland wrote a great deal, mainly in the field of theology, and much of it now lost, though of his massive commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard books three and four survive.[5] By late 1483

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[3] *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D. with Notes and Supplementary Dissertations*, William Hamilton (ed.) (1st edition, Edinburgh, 1846) (and all subsequent editions).

[4] The decree, probably instigated by the king's confessor who no doubt thought, as many did, that nominalism had heterodox theological implications, banned many authors, but not Duns Scotus. See A. R. Burns, 'John Ireland and "The Meroure of Wyssdome"', *Innes Review*, 6 (1955), 77–98 and idem, 'John Ireland: Theology and Public Affairs in the Late Fifteenth Century', *Innes Review*, 41 (1990), 51–81.

[5] The sole extant copy is in Aberdeen University Library, MS 264. The work has never been edited.

Ireland was back permanently in Scotland. Amongst his several positions were those of confessor to James III and to James IV and it was to the latter that Ireland dedicated his *Meroure of Wyssdome* (*Mirror of Wisdom*). This very large book, written in Scots, is in the 'Advice to princes' genre, and is the work for which he is now best known.

Underlying Ireland's advice on good governance is the belief that human beings have free will, which he, as a moral theologian, would have understood in the context of the Church's teaching that an act cannot be sinful unless freely willed. The teaching is motivated partly by the thought that sins are punishable and that we would not be punished by a just God for an act that we had no choice but to perform. Yet this prompts a question as to whether God could have so made us that, though free, we were by nature not free to sin.[6] This was a question that Ireland answered in the negative, perhaps surprisingly since his answer seems to imply a rejection of the doctrine of divine omnipotence. For apparently there is at least one thing that God cannot do, namely create a being with free will whose nature prevents it sinning. Ireland was not explicit as to why he took this line but it is probable that he thought the alternative incoherent. Faced with a divine commandment our freedom is really no freedom at all if we are not free to say no. God can certainly prevent us from sinning but if he does then the principle of prevention is directly from God, not from the nature that he has given to us. If our very nature prevents us sinning then our freedom is not true freedom. Ireland's concept of free will is remarkably similar to that of Duns Scotus, and in the circumstance it is of interest that Ireland cited Duns Scotus more often than he cited any other medieval thinker, and that Scotus is the only medieval thinker who is cited in all the extant writings of Ireland.

Ireland was active in Paris during a time of transition for the European universities, as humanistic values began to encroach on late-medieval modes of thinking. Shortly before Ireland left Paris to return to Scotland there arrived in Paris another Scot, James Liddell of Aberdeen, who graduated Master of Arts in Paris and immediately took up a teaching post, becoming examiner to the Scots students in 1486. Liddell is especially noteworthy because, while still a regent in arts at Paris, he became the first Scot to have a book published during his lifetime. The book, *Conceptuum et signorum* (*On concepts and signs*, Paris, 1495), is on the varieties of mental act, particularly those that find expression in linguistic acts, such as affirmations and denials.[7] The subject was a common

[6] John Ireland, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, J. F. Quinn (ed.), vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1965), 115.

[7] The sole extant copy is in the National Library of Scotland.

one among Scots in Paris, and in the generation after Liddell a number of them wrote extensively on the subject.

That next generation of Scots at Paris included a remarkable group of scholars. The dominant figure was John Mair (c.1467–1550), whose name appears in his lifetime, whether in print or in his own hand, as Mair, Maior and Major.[8] Among the Scots were George Lokert (c.1485–1547), William Manderston (c.1485–1552), Robert Galbraith (c.1483–1544), and (more briefly in Paris) Hector Boece (c.1465–1536), all of whom returned to Scotland to take up major posts and thus in one form or another continued at home the work they had conducted in France. The first three of the four aforementioned scholars were members of a circle that formed around Mair in Paris. Three other Scots who were in the circle of John Mair in Paris were David Cranston (d.1512), Gilbert Crab (c.1482–1522) and William Cranston (c.1513–62). Of these only one, William Cranston, returned to Scotland where he became part of the new beginning that came with the encroachment of Renaissance Humanism into Scotland. David Cranston did not return to Scotland; he died in his early- to mid-thirties some weeks after receiving his doctorate in theology at Paris, and was buried in the chapel of the College of Montaigu, on the rue d'Écosse in Montmartre. Gilbert Crab took his master's degree in Paris in 1503 and taught there for some years before taking up a position at Bordeaux where he died, a member of the Carmelite order.

John Mair, professor of theology at the University of Paris, principal of Glasgow University, and provost of St Salvator's College, St Andrews University, was a central figure in the flowering of logic that took place in the first half of the sixteenth century. Born into a farming family in the village of Gleghornie, south east of Edinburgh, in all probability he attended a school in his village before going on to the grammar school at Haddington. Sometime thereafter, perhaps not immediately, he went up to university. So far as is known his first taste of university was at God's House (to become known in 1505 as Christ's College), Cambridge, where he spent one year c.1491.

Mair then transferred to Paris, to the College of St Barbe, receiving his master's degree in 1494 and the following year incepted as regent in arts, at the same time beginning his studies in theology under the Flemish scholar Jan Standonck at the College of Montaigu, where Erasmus was one of his fellow students. Mair, with his colleague Noel Beda, took charge of the college in 1499 when Standonck, its principal, was banished from Paris. At about

[8] See Alexander Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair* (Oxford, 1985).

this time Mair also became attached to the College of Navarre, a wealthy and prestigious college which boasted among its fifteenth-century members Pierre d'Ailly, bishop of Cambray, and Jean Gerson ('*Doctor Christianissimus*'), both men distinguished for their work on behalf of the idea that in certain circumstances a general council of the Church can overrule the Pope. This conciliarist position, extolling the authority of the Council as opposed to the authority of the Pope in certain defined circumstances, was a distinctive feature of the culture of the College of Navarre, and this point is of significance here for Mair also was a conciliarist. Questions, with a strong theological undertow, concerning the authority of the papacy in relation to a general council, and also in relation to the authority of civil institutions, must already at that early stage of his career have been exercising Mair, who in 1501 became bachelor in theology.

In 1506, while still at Navarre, Mair took his doctorate in theology, and began to teach theology at the College of Sorbonne, one of the great centres in Europe in that field – hence the fact that Henry VIII sought the Faculty's opinion in connection with his prospective divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The Faculty membership, which consisted of doctors of theology of Paris, was a conservative body, as witness the fact that as late as August 1523, and therefore at a time when the humanist movement was well-established in the universities of western Europe, the Faculty passed judgment that translations of sacred texts from Greek into Latin, or from Latin into French, should not be tolerated. Mair himself was a conservative on doctrinal matters, even though on occasion he strongly criticised the behaviour of the Church. It should however be added that he was not wholly opposed to the encroachment of Renaissance Humanism. When the Italian scholar Girolamo Aleandro introduced the teaching of Greek to Paris Mair was one of his pupils. Aleandro tells us: 'There are many Scottish scholars to be found in France who are earnest students in various of the sciences and some were my most faithful hearers – John Mair, the Scot, doctor of theology and David Cranston, my illustrious friends.'[9]

Almost all the editions of virtually all of Mair's many books were printed and published in Paris. He began publishing in 1499, with a logic text book, and in the course of his long career published well over forty books, covering logic, metaphysics, ethics, theology, biblical commentary and history, most of them appearing between 1499 and 1518 when he left Paris to take up the

[9] Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1517)* (2nd edition, Paris, 1953), 614n.

principalship of the University of Glasgow. His reputation, by then immense, was due to three things. First, there was the quality of his writings, many of which went into several editions, and were widely used as text books in France and beyond. Secondly, he knew how to inspire his students. Juan Gomez, writing to the Spanish king's envoy in France, said: 'I am following the theology course of John Mair with great interest as he is a deeply knowledgeable man whose virtue is as great as his faith.'[10] Thirdly, he was leader of a team of scholars, in most cases former pupils of his, the majority from Scotland or Spain, including the aforementioned Scots, David Cranston, George Lokert, Robert Galbraith, William Manderston and Gilbert Crab, and also the Spaniards Antonio Coronel (d. c.1521), Fernando de Enzinas (d. 1523), Gaspar Lax (1487-1560) and Juan de Celaya (c. 1490-1558).

At the end of this period in Paris Mair, as leader of a three-man team, published an edition of one of Duns Scotus's chief works, the *Reportata Parisiensia*, a set of commentaries that Scotus had compiled, while teaching in Paris, on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Mair was in important ways very close to the philosophy of Scotus, and this publication was clearly a mark of his admiration for Scotus as well as a teaching aid for his students. It is noteworthy that throughout his career he referred to Scotus not only as 'Scotus' and *doctor subtilis* ('the subtle doctor'–his honorific title), but also, and commonly, as *conterraneus*, my fellow-countryman. In his *History of Greater Britain* Mair wrote, with evident pride: 'Near to [Richard Middleton] in date, only later, wrote John Duns, that subtle doctor, who was a Scottish Briton, for he was born at Duns, a village eight miles from England, and separated from my own home by seven or eight leagues only.'[11]

Despite his administrative duties in Glasgow, Mair found time to write the book for which he is now best known, *Historia majoris Britanniae tam Angliae quam Scotiae* (*A History of Greater Britain as well England as Scotland*, which may also be translated *A History of Mair's Britain*, though 'Greater Britain' is also to be understood as contrasted with 'Lesser Britain', that is, Brittany). It is probable that it was written with the intention (among others) of promoting the idea of a union of the two countries; and the dedicatee, James V, son of James IV and (as son of Margaret Tudor) grandson of Henry VII, was an appropriate symbol of the closeness of the relations between the two countries. The book, which is very large, was printed in Paris since there was no printing press

[10] See Dedication in Gaspar Lax, *De oppositionibus* (Paris, 1512).

[11] John Mair, *A History of Greater Britain as well England as Scotland*, Archibald Constable (ed. and trans.) (Edinburgh, 1892), 206–7.

in Scotland that could cope with such a work, and Mair himself interrupted his work in Glasgow to oversee the volume's passage through the printing process.

In 1523 Mair transferred to St Andrews where for two years he was assessor to the dean of the arts faculty and in this capacity he served on a committee which revised along Parisian lines the St Andrews forms of examination. Thereafter he returned to Paris where he resumed his teaching career. Among the many who must have attended his lectures during this latter period were John Calvin, Ignatius Loyola, François Rabelais and George Buchanan. He was also active in the Faculty of Theology. However, he returned to Scotland in 1531, taking up in due course the provostship of St Salvator's College, St Andrews, a post he retained until his death in 1550 at the age of about eighty three. He published no more works, so far as is known, during this long final period in Scotland. Almost all his many works were published during his Paris days, and most indeed appear to have arisen directly from his lectures there. The centrality of Paris for the life and work of John Mair is manifest and the benefit to Scotland of his Parisian experience, in terms of his teaching and administrative skills, is no less obvious.

Among Mair's close colleagues in both Paris and St Andrews was George Lokert. Born in Ayr, on the south west coast of Scotland, to John Lokkart and Marion Multray, he studied arts at the College of Montaigu in Paris under David Cranston. He took his master's degree in 1505 and in the same year gave his inaugural lecture as regent in arts. He then started to study theology, graduating bachelor of theology in 1514, and in that same year published his first book, *Scriptum in materia noticiarum* (*Writing on the subject of notions*), a 'notion' (*noticia*) being 'a quality which immediately represents something or in some way to a cognitive power'.[12] In seeing something one forms a concept of the visual appearance of the thing, in hearing something one forms a concept of the sound, and so on for the various sensory modalities. In thinking about numbers and geometric shapes one forms concepts of numbers and geometric shapes. These concepts were termed 'notions' by Lokert. Their status is that of mental acts; they are not the objects of mental acts, what the acts are directed to, but are instead the acts themselves, and these acts were described by Lokert as representing the objects with which one is in cognitive contact. The concept of a notion was a topic of widespread interest among philosophers of the time, but few subjected it to such extensive and close analysis.

[12] George Lokert, *Scriptum in materia noticiarum* (Paris, 1514), sig.a recto, col.1.

Two years after the publication of his book on notions, Lokert brought out an important edition of writings on physics by Buridan, Thimon and Albert of Saxony, and thereafter a series of large volumes on technical questions in formal logic flowed from his pen. His intellectual achievements were noticed when in 1519 he was elected prior of the College of Sorbonne, a promotion that was followed a year later by the award of a doctorate in theology. But his thoughts were evidently turning towards Scotland. He returned to his native country in 1521 to take up a post as provost of the Collegiate Church of Crichton, in the village of Crichton some miles south of Edinburgh, and a year later was elected rector of St Andrews University, a post in which he deployed his skills to produce a grand revision of the examining procedures at the university, a revision that brought St Andrews quite closely into line with Parisian practices. Among those with whom he worked while in St Andrews was John Mair.

Around the start of 1525 Lokert returned to Paris, resumed his fellowship of the College of Sorbonne and his membership of the faculty of theology, and took up in addition the headship of the Scots College in Paris, an institution founded in 1325 by the bishop of Moray, who arranged for funds to be provided to enable scholars from the diocese of Moray to study in Paris. Meantime he became involved in an attempt, masterminded by Noel Beda, administrative head of the faculty of theology, to have certain of Erasmus' works condemned as heretical. This put Lokert in a difficult position, since Erasmus had the support of François I, and Lokert no doubt felt his vulnerability as a foreign national criticising a man whom the king was trying to attract to the newly founded Royal College in Paris.

It may have been this consideration that led eventually to his return to the west coast of Scotland where he had his roots. For a brief period, 1533 to 1534, he was archdeacon of Teviotdale, and in March 1534 he was appointed dean of Glasgow, a post he held until his death. As dean he was required to be in Glasgow for six months each year and to preside over chapter meetings. He died on 22 June 1547. The Register of Decisions of the Sorbonne Community for 8 June 1549 records that 'with the consent of all' it was agreed that on the day after Quasimodo Sunday an obit was to be said for 'our master Loquart'.[13]

Robert Galbraith (c.1483–1544) was, like Lokert, a Scottish member of the circle of John Mair. In 1505 Mair mentioned Galbraith as one of the

[13] John Durkan, 'George Lockhart', *Innes Review*, 9 (1964), 191–2.

members of his circle who persuaded him, despite his suffering from bouts of fever and an overwhelming workload, to prepare his logic lectures for publication. Some five years later Galbraith published the only book he wrote that is now extant, a four-part work on propositional opposites, propositional conversions, hypotheticals and modal propositions called the *Quadrupertium*. On the title page he claims to have resolved almost all problems of dialectic. Another book of his, the *Liber Caubraith*, which was probably on his legal decisions, has vanished.

The *Quadrupertium*, which bears a dedication to the Scottish justice clerk James Henryson of Fordell, is one of the great logic works of the late-scholastic period. Galbraith did not, however, devote himself to logic. Instead he took up a post as professor of Roman Law at the College of Coqueret in the University of Paris, and it was to law that he dedicated the rest of his life. Galbraith was in addition a poet, with his name appearing in the list of poets in the poem 'Testament of the Papyngo' by David Lindsay, a point that gives additional significance to the fact that Galbraith moved in an intellectual circle which included the poets Gavin Douglas and John Bellenden. Galbraith's poetic interests are reflected in the fact that his *Quadrupertitum* contains a poem in praise of Galbraith written by James Foulis and dedicated to Henryson of Fordell.

Galbraith may have lived longer had he stayed with his *alma mater*; but he returned to Scotland, became a senator of the College of Justice in Edinburgh and, in 1528, advocate to Margaret Tudor. For four years from 1528 he was also treasurer of the Chapel Royal in Stirling (in which role he was John Mair's successor). Galbraith was murdered on 27 January 1544 in the kirkyard of Grayfriar's Church in Edinburgh. The murderer, John Carkettill, was fined, perhaps a rather mild punishment for a judge to mete out to a fellow judge's killer.

No less close to Mair than were Lokert and Galbraith was William Manderston, who matriculated at Glasgow University in 1503, graduated three years later, and then studied in Paris under Mair, before becoming a colleague of his. He was elected professor at the College of St Barbe and then, in 1525, rector of the University of Paris. By this point Parisian publishers had brought out at least three works by him. The largest, an enormous book, is in effect a grand summary of the state of the art of logic in the year the book was printed, 1517. In that same year he also brought out an interesting book on moral philosophy, a work which bears close comparison with the doctoral thesis of his pupil Patrick Hamilton, proto-martyr of the Scottish

Reformation.[14] Finally, he published in 1522 a short treatise on future contingent propositions, a topic that had held the attention of philosophers from the time that Aristotle had argued it was highly problematic whether such propositions could be said to be either true or false. Manderston's period as rector of Paris was short-lived. A charge of plagiarism was levelled at him by the vigorously anti-Lutheran Dutch theologian Jerome de Hangest. It may be speculated that Hangest's animosity had less to do with any real plagiarism than with some remarks Manderston made in his moral philosophy book on the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. Manderston's position may not have been tough enough to satisfy Hangest. Be that as it may, Manderston left the University of Paris, took up a position at St Andrews and in due course became the university's rector.

I should like to comment briefly on one more of the many Scots who were educated in France and who taught there before returning to Scotland to make a contribution to the country's high culture. William Cranston (c.1513–62), a student at Paris, was then appointed regent in arts there, and finally rector of the University. He transferred to the University of St Andrews where he was Provost of St Salvator's College from 1553 to c.1560. This friend of John Mair remained a Catholic after the Reformation in Scotland in 1560. His most prominent contribution to logic and philosophy is probably *Dialecticae Compendium* (*A Compendium of Logic*, 1540) which he dedicated to David Beaton, cardinal archbishop of St Andrews. In the book, which was only seven folios long, Cranston made a determined effort to discard his medieval heritage. At the start we are told, diagrammatically, that a term is a subject or predicate of a proposition and that it can 'usefully' be classified under one or another of only five headings. Cranston added that he omitted all other divisions and definitions because they are of little use to philosophers. This last is a truly extraordinary claim, especially coming from a man who had been brought up on the powerful logic which Mair and his Scottish colleagues at Paris had done so much to advance. With the *Compendium* Cranston returned to the *Organon*, the collection of logical works by Aristotle, though there are some non-Aristotelian elements in the book, such as the exposition of the so-called 'hypothetical syllogism'. This is an inference in which at least one of the premises contains a complex proposition, that is, one composed of two propositions linked by 'and', 'or', or 'if'. While in the first edition of the *Compendium* there is no reference to the later logicians who dealt with

[14] Alexander Broadie, 'William Manderston and Patrick Hamilton on Freewill and Grace', *Innes Review*, 36 (1986), 25–35.

hypothetical syllogisms, in the second edition (published 1545) Cranston stated both that Aristotle did not discuss hypothetical syllogisms, and also that he, Cranston, was basing his remarks on Boethius.

In Cranston's day logic was a compulsory part of the Arts curriculum, and if the compulsion was to remain then the subject had to prepare the students for the new age of rapid economic expansion in which more and more students were aiming to become merchants, secular lawyers and holders of civic office. William Cranston was in tune with the new mood. No one moved faster than he did to provide the new sort of logic book required in the changed climate.

Many Pre-Reformation Scots who went to France for their education did not return to Scotland, and here one might note Florentius Volusenus, Gilbert Crab and David Cranston. I have attended here primarily to some few of the many Scots who benefited greatly from the incomparable education available in the University of Paris, and who then returned to enrich those great institutions, the Church, the universities and the law, in their native land.

The fact that by the end of the fifteenth century Scotland had three universities, in St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen, naturally prompts a question regarding the immense attraction that the University of Paris had for Scots, an attraction demonstrated by the many who were there as students, and the many there as regents and professors. The answer is that the University of Paris was the greatest university in Europe, a centre to which large numbers of students flocked from all over Europe and at which they were taught at as high a level as was available anywhere. The teaching staff were assured the attention of students of the highest quality, they had on their doorstep many printing presses that could cope with books of whatever size, and they knew that their ideas would be transmitted far and wide via their books and via their students. The teachers also of course had colleagues of the highest calibre. These things are all blessings for dedicated and ambitious academics. The attractions of the University of Paris are therefore not far to seek. It should be added that the fact that so many Scots who went to Paris distinguished themselves as students and then as teachers is impressive testimony both to the schooling available in Scotland during those Pre-Reformation decades and also to the high value attached by Scots to education. That so many then returned to Scotland to enrich the culture that had nurtured them is no less impressive testimony to the intense loyalty that that same culture could engender in its beneficiaries.

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