

Q. When was the Statute of "Provisors" passed?

A. In the reign of Edward iii, 1351. It made all persons receiving papal preferment liable to imprisonment.

Q. What was the Statute of "Præmunire"?

A. It enacted that whoever procured at Rome or elsewhere any translations, bulls, instruments or other things affecting the King or his crown and realm should be put out of the King's protection and their lands and goods forfeited.

Q. Did these attempts at reform accomplish anything?

A. Very little. Owing to the desire of the Kings to connive with the popes that they might carry out their own purposes, these laws were too often merely a dead letter.

Q. What grievances still existed?

A. Rome still gathered enormous tribute, despite the plain prohibition of 1366. There were constant demands from Rome for money for bulls and dispensations and first fruits, and for carrying on crusades against Turks or heretics. Over £160,000 was paid as the first-fruits of bishoprics alone from 1486 to 1531.

Q. What was the state of religion?

A. The degradation of the people continued; there were terrible abuses in doctrine and practice, ignorance prevailed and humanity was sunk low in the depths of vice, cruelty and superstition.

Q. Who was raised up to attempt a reformation and bring light from the middle of gloom?

A. John Wycliffe, born at Richmond in Yorkshire, about the year 1324. In 1340 he went to Oxford and became one of its most faithful scholars. In 1360 he denounced the mendicant friars. Shortly afterwards he was made a King's chaplain, and in 1366 he publicly declaimed against the Romish claims for tribute.

Q. What great work did he originate?

A. Besides numerous pamphlets denouncing the pretensions of the popes, the abuses of the clergy, and the ignorance of the people, he translated the sacred Scriptures into English, giving the people the entire Bible in a language they understood.

Q. Who was his friend and defender?

A. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

Q. In what was Wycliffe engaged in 1374?

A. He was sent as an envoy to France, where he presented a list of grievances under which the Church suffered to the papal nuncios.

Q. What did he do on his return?

A. Feeling satisfied that the papal system was thoroughly demoralizing and that there was no hope of redress, he employed his vast learning to write, lecture and preach against its pretensions.

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