

## THE CHURCH OBSERVER

In the 13th and 14th centuries there appeared several morning stars, as it were, of the Reformation, heralds, precursors of that morning which the 16th century brought in.

Foremost among them was Wickliffe, Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Rector at Luttreth; who denounced many of the prominent errors of Rome. In the quiet of his country Rectory he busied himself with the most important work of his life—the translation of the whole Bible into English.

Wakeman, in his recently published "Introduction to the History of the Church of England," says,

"In its Latin translation—the Vulgate—the Bible had always been in the hands of the scholar: parts of it, such as the Gospels and Epistles, had been frequently translated into English since the days of Bede and Alfred. Every person who could read was able in the Middle Ages to procure without difficulty those parts of the Bible which were used in the Church services. But to Wickliffe England owes its first translation of the whole Bible, and the original of our present Authorized Version, which by its nerve and strength has done much to fire for ever the genius of the English language."

During the 13th. and 14th. centuries too the English Nation was being gradually prepared to take its part in the Reformation of the 16th. century.

By the passing of the Great Charter in the Reign of King John at the opening of the 13th. century the foundation of the liberty of the English Nation was laid. Let us not forget that we owe that Charter of our National Liberties to the far-seeing-statesmanship of the patriotic Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton: nor let us forget that the most powerful Popes of Rome, Innocent III, and others, denounced the provisions of that Charter again and again.

The fabric of our English liberty was secured by the organization under Edward I, at the close of the 13th. century, of the Parliament of the Realm.

The strong anti-papal legislation of the 14th century under Edward the 3rd and his successors, as seen in the Statutes of Provisors in the successive and more and more stringent statutes of Præmunire, and in the enlargement of the Acts of Mortmain, all witness to the gradually

growing determination on the part of the English nation to protect itself from the encroachments, the tyranny, and the greed of the Papacy.

Very early in the 16th century an effective impulse was given to the Reformation in England, as an orderly ecclesiastical work, by the great Cardinal Wolsey, the promoter of sound learning, the reformer of monasteries, and the founder of numerous schools and colleges. Feant justice has been done to Wolsey. The State papers, however, which have been published in England during the past 50 years, show that it was that eminent statesman that broke up in England the Mediæval system, and laid the broad foundations of National Reform.

A few years later came the work of Henry VIII, carried out for his own selfish, and most unworthy, yea, wicked ends; but none the less, under God's over-ruling Providence.

In A. D. 1534, our Church, by her Convocations of Canterbury and York; and our English Nation by her Parliament abolished the usurped supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over the nation and Church of England.

This was the turning point historically of our English Reformation: Then came the work of our reformers, Cranmer, Ridley, and other Bishops and Divines of the English Church, who gave the first authorized version of the Holy Bible in the English language to the English people: and who gave beside to England, a book only second in value to the Bible, our first English Book of Common Prayer, compiled largely from the old Service-books of the Mediæval Church of England, and from more ancient sources.

Then came the work of our later Reformers, Archbishop Parker, Bishop Jewel, and others in the reign of Elizabeth, who consolidated the work of Reformation which had been somewhat hastily and crudely carried out in the brief reign of Edward VI.

Finally, in the 17th century, came the work of our Revisors, first at the Hampton Court Conference, A. D. 1601, in the reign of James I: and then at the Savoy Conference, A. D., 1662, in the reign of Charles II. To the advice and labors of our Revisors at these two Conferences we owe our present Authorized Version, which has been accepted by the large majority of