

supreme authority of the Word of God, and the inalienable right of each individual to judge for himself in all matters of religion. These two doctrines, it is scarcely necessary to say, are the fundamental principles of all true Protestantism, and lie at the very basis of religious liberty. I suspect it is a very general impression that these principles were not wrought out and announced until the Reformation. But this is a mistake. We find them not merely hinted at in Wycliffe's writings, but brought into prominence in his instructions to the people and in his conflicts with the Papacy. The belief of them made him bold and firm, and their announcement struck a chord in many prepared hearts among the people, who had become restive and consciously humiliated under their long ecclesiastical bondage.

Wielding in his firm grasp the 'sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God,' and refusing deference to the authority of Pope, or king, or prelate, where God had spoken, Wycliffe did not shrink from assailing the Romish doctrine of the Mass, which concentrates in itself all the worst and most characteristic elements of papal error. It was a bold thing to do in his days, but his brave heart did not quail from utterances, which, while true, were dangerous to speak. His great intellect saw more clearly on this matter, even than Luther's. He had no quarter for unscriptural mysticism, whether in the form of transubstantiation or of consubstantiation. The bread and the wine were emblems, and nothing more. The 'real presence' was a spiritual presence. The Puritan formula on this matter could scarcely be more simple and spiritual than that which has been spoken and written by Wycliffe six centuries before.

Those who have studied with average diligence the life of Wycliffe, will agree with us in regarding as one of the most important services of his public life, his fearless and persistent exposure and opposition to the various orders of preaching friars. These men, under a vow of poverty, travelled in great numbers over every part of the kingdom, begging for alms, and often obtaining large sums of money, by which they enrich the monasteries and convents, whiled, by various expedients they also succeeded, in some degree, in restoring the waning popularity and influence of the Papacy. Their voluntary poverty seemed to many to relieve them of all suspicion of selfishness, while the gifts which they received were often the price of indulgences for sin, or

the people were taught to regard them as so many steps to salvation and heaven.

Wycliffe saw the certain tendency of all this, and hastened to unmask and counteract these mischievous workers. But like a true reformer, he met and drove back the tide of error, by sending forth, in great numbers, the teachers of the opposite truth. These were his 'poor priests,' who wore a simple uniform to distinguish them as his evangelists. They were poor without the vow of poverty, coming with no promise of indulgences as the barter for alms, or teaching that donations to the monastery would be a passport to paradise, but preaching the doctrine of forgiveness on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, which, whenever it is believed, becomes the root and germ of holy affection and of a Christ-like life. And this message spread like lustral fire. It awakened a revival over large districts of England, resembling in depth, extent, and influence that which was produced by the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley in the eighteenth century.

One who was unfriendly to the work acknowledged that, were you to meet two men on a road, it was almost certain that one of them would be found to be a disciple of Wycliffe. The influence spread into Scotland, especially into its western countries, such as Ayrshire, where his disciples were known under the name of 'Lollaris,' and continued from generation to generation, until the trumpet of the Reformation sounded, and they became part of the great Protestant communion.

And far over into Eastern Europe, especially in Bohemia and neighbouring regions, the health-giving power was borne, for although Huss and Jerome did not receive their first kindling from our Reformer, his writings, and probably also his correspondence, quickened the flame and supplied much of the fuel. Huss translated many of Wycliffe's writings into the language of Bohemia; and Jerome, on his second trial, with the martyr's stake and the faggots almost in sight, confessed, himself to be a disciple of Wycliffe.

The last public act of Wycliffe was not his least. The two closing years of his life, spent by him in his quiet rectory at Lutterworth, to which he had retired, were employed in translating the Scriptures into the English language. It was his high and unique honour to have been the first to give to his fellow-countrymen the whole Bible in their native tongue,