

sayd Bishop, and M. William Vghtrd monke of Duresme, and M. John Shepie to the see Apostolicall: And hereof to make full relation of all things done and past in the sayd assembly, that all such things which may tend to the honor of holy Church and the advancement of our crowne and this our realme may by the assistance of God and the wisdom of the see Apostolicall bee brought to good effect, and accomplished accordingly. Witness our selues &c. at London dated the 26. day of Iuly in the 48. yeare of our raigne.

By the which it is to be noted, what good wil the king then bare to the sayd wickliffe, and what smal regarde he had to the sinful sea of Rome.

Of the whych John Wickliffe, because we are now approached to his tyme: remaineth consequently for our story to entreat of, so as we haue heere to fore done of other lyke valiant foundours of Chrystes Church before him.

¶ John Wickliffe.

After all these heretofore recited, by whome (as ye haue heard) it pleased the Lord something to worke against the Bysshop of Rome, & to weaken the pernicious superstition of the Fryers. Howe remaineth consequently following the course of yeares, orderly to enter into the story and tractacion of John Wickliffe our countreyman, and other moe of his tyme, and same countrey, whom the Lord (with the like zeale and power of spirit) rayled by here in England, to detect more fully and amply the poison of the popes doctrine, & false religion set up by the Fryers. In whose opinions and assertions, albeit some blemishes perhaps may be noted: yet such blemishes they be, whych rather declare him to be a ma that might erre, than which directly did fight against Christ our Saviour, as the popes proceedings and the fryers did. And what doctoz or learned man hath ben from the prime age of the church, so perfect, so absolutely sure, in whome no opinion or hath sometyne swarued awry? And yet be the sayd articles of hys, neither in number so many, nor yet so grosse in themselves and so cardinall, as those Cardinal enemies of Christ perchance doe geue them out to be: if his bookes whch they abolished, were remaining to be conferred to those blemishes, which they haue wraisted to the worse, as euill will neuer sayde the best.

This is certain and can not be denied, but that he being the publike Reader of Diuinitie in the Vniuersitie of Oxford: was for the rude tyme wherein he liued, famously reputed for a great clerke, a deepe scholeman, & no lesse expert in all kinde of philosophie. The which doth not onely appeare by his owne most famous and learned wytyngs and monuments, but also by the confession of walden hys most cruel & bitter enemy, who in a certain Epistle wyrtten vnto pope Martin the first, sayth that he was wonderfully astonysed at his most strong arguments, with the places of authority whych hee had gathered, with the vehemency and force of hys reasons, &c. And thus much out of walden. It appeareth by such as haue obserued the order and course of tynes, that this wickliffe flourished about the yeare of our Lord, 1371. Edward the thrid raigning in England: for thus we doe finde in the Chronicles of Carrot. In the yere of our Lord 1371. (sayth he) Edward the thrid, king of England in his Parliament, was against the popes clergy: He willingly hartened and gaue eare to the voicess and tales of heretikes, with certayne of his counsell: conceiuing and following limister opinions against the Clergy. wherefore (afterward) he tasted and suffred much aduersity & trouble. And not long after, in the yeare of our Lord (sayth he) 1372. he wrote vnto the Bysshop of Rome, that he should not by any meanes entremedde any more in his kingdom as touching the reseruacion, or distribution of benefices: and that all such byshops as were vnder hys dominion, should enioy their former and ancient liberty, and be confirmed of the metropolitanas, as hath ben accustomed in tynes past, &c. Thus much wyrteth Carrot: But as touching the iust number of the yere and tyme, we will not be very curious or carefull about, at this present. Thys is out of all doubt, that at what tyme all the world was in most desperate and vile estate, & that the lamentable ignorance and darkness of Gods his truth had ouershadowed the whole earth: this man stepped forth like a valiant champio, vnto whom it may iustly be applyed that is spoken in the booke called Ecclesiasticus of one Simon the sonne of Dijas. Euen as the morning star being in the midst of a cloud, & as the Moone being full in her course, and as the byght beames of the Sunne, so doeth he shine and glister in the temple and Church of God.

This doth almighty God continually succor & helpe, wher all thinges are in dispaire: being alwaies (according

to the Prophecy of the psalme) a helper in tyme of need. The which thing neuer moze playnely appeared, than in these latter dayes and extreme age of the Church: when as the whole state & condition (not onely of worldly things, but also of Religion) was deprauid and corrupted. That like as the disease named Lethargus among the Dymitions, euen so the state religion amongst the Diuines, was past all mens helpe and remedy. The onely name of Christ remainned amongst Christians; but his true & iustly doctrine was as farre unknowne vnto the most part, as his name was comon vnto all men. As touching sayth, consolacion, the end & vse of the law, the office of Christ, of our impotency and weaknes, of the holy ghoist, of the greatnes & strength of sinne, of true workes, of grace and free iustificacion, of liberty of a Christian man, wher in consider and resteth the summe and matter of our profession: there was no mention or any word almost spoke of Scripture; learning & diuinity, was knowne but vnto a few, & that in the scholes onely: & there also turned & conuerted almost all into sophistry. In stead of Peter & Paule, men occupied theyr tyme in studying Aquinas and Scotus, and the maister of sentece. The world leaunting & forsaking the lively power of Gods spirituall word and doctrine, was altogether led and blinded with outward ceremonies & humane traditions; wher in the whole scope, in a maner, of all christian perfection did consist & depend. In these was all the hope of obtaining saluation fully fixed: hereunto all thynges were attributed. In so much, that scarcely any other thyng was sene in the temples of Churches, taught or spoken of in sermons, or finally intended or gone about in theyr whole life, but only heaping vp of certain shadowed ceremonies vpon ceremonies, neither was there any end of theyr heaping.

The people were taught to worship no other thing but that which they did see, and did see almost nothing whiche they did not worship.

The Church being degenerated from the true Apostolick institutio aboue all measure (reseruing onely the name of the Apostolick Church, but farre from the truth thereof in very deede) did fall into all kinde of extreme ryanity: where as the pouerty and simplicity of Christ was chaunged into cruelty and abomination of life. In stead of the Apostolicke giftes and continuall labours and trauciles, slothfulness & ambitio was crept in amongst the priefes. Besides all this, there arose & sprung vp a thousand sectes and fashions of strange religions, being the onely root & well head of all superstition. How great abuses and depriuations were crept into the Sacramentes, at what tyme they were compelled to worship similitudes and signes of thinges, for the very things themselves: and to adoze such thinges as were instituted and ordeined onely for memorials? Finally what thing was there, in the whole state of Christian religion so sincere, so sound and pure, which was not defiled and spotted with some kind of superstition? Besides this, with how many bondes & snares of dayly newe fangled ceremonies, the sely consciences of men redeemed by Christ to liberty, were snared and snarled? In so much, that there could be no great difference almost perceined betwene Christianitie and Iuithnes, save onely the name of Christ; so that the state and condition of the Jewes, might seeme somewhat moze tolerable than ours. There was nothing sought for out of the true fountaines, but out of the dirty puddes of the phisicians. The christian people were wholly caried away as it were by the noles, with mere decees and constitutions of men, euen whether as pleased the bishops to lead them, and not as Chrystes will did direct them. All the whole world was filled and ouerwhelmed with errors and darknesse. And no great maruel, for why the simple and vnlearned people being far from all knowledg of the holy Scripture; thought it sufficient inough for them, to know onely these thinges which were deliuered them by their pastoros and shepherds; and they on the other part taught in a maner nothing els, but such thinges as came forth of the Court of Rome, wherof the most part tended to the profite of their order, moze then to the glory of Christ.

The Christian faith was esteemed or counted none other thing then, but y eury man should knowe that Christ once suffred; that is to say, that all in euery should knowe and vnderstand y thing which the deuils themselves also knew. Hypocritie was counted for wonderful holines. All men were to addit vnto outward shewes, that euen they themselves which professed y most absolute & singular knowledg of the scriptures, scarcely did vnderstand or know any other thing. And thys euidently did appere, not only in the common sort of doctours and teachers, but also in the worthy heades and captaines of the Church; whose whole religion

A description of Wickliffes tyme.

All good things defiled & spotted with superstition.

The captaines of the church seduced as well as the inferior sort.

Here beginneth the story of John Wickliffe.

The blemishes of Wickliffe made worse than they be.

The testimonie of Walden an enemy in commendation of Wickliffe.

Ann. 1371. The tyme of I. Wickliffe.

Anno. 1372.

Ex Cantono.