Heroes of Reformation

(John Wycliffe)

A KEEN DETECTOR OF ERROR: Wycliffe was a keen detector of error, and he struck fearlessly against many of the abuses sanctioned by the authority of Rome. While acting as chaplain for the king, he took a bold stand against the payment of tribute claimed by the pope from the English monarch, and showed that the papal assumption of authority over secular rulers was contrary to both reason and revelation. The demands of the pope had excited great indignation, and Wycliffe’s teachings exerted an influence upon the leading minds of the nation. The king and the nobles united in denying the pontiff’s claim to temporal authority, and in refusing the payment of the tribute. Thus an effectual blow was struck against the papal supremacy in England.

A GALLANT WARRIOR AGAINST HUMAN TRADITIONS: Another evil against which the reformer waged long and resolute battle, was the institution of the orders of mendicant friars. These friars swarmed in England, casting a blight upon the greatness and prosperity of the nation. Industry, education, morals, all felt the withering influence. The monks’ life of idleness and beggary was not only a heavy drain upon the resources of the people, but it brought useful labor into contempt. The youth were demoralized and corrupted. By the influence of the friars many were induced to enter a cloister and devote themselves to a monastic life, and this not only without the consent of their parents, but even without their knowledge, and contrary to their commands. One of the early fathers of the Romish Church, urging the claims of monasticism above the obligations of filial love and duty, had declared: “Though thy father should lie before thy door, weeping and lamenting, and thy mother should show thee the body that bare thee and the breasts that nursed thee, see that thou trample them under foot, and go onward straightway to Christ.” “By this monstrous inhumanity,” as Luther afterward styled it, “savoring more of the wolf and the tyrant than of the Christian and the man,” were the hearts of children steeled against their parents. Thus did the papal leaders, like the Pharisees of old, make the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition. Thus homes were made desolate, and parents were deprived of the society of their sons and daughters. The Great Controversy, 1888, pp. 81 - 82.