

William's Rule

William punished rebellion against his rule with great harshness and cruelty. In the north of England he burned crops and villages and killed the inhabitants when they rebelled against him. The old Saxon barons were removed and Norman lords put in their place.

Wales

Harold of course had ruled only England, not Wales. But William was determined to extend Norman rule to Wales as well. When he turned his attention to Wales in 1050, he placed Norman barons on the Welsh border to conquer the country. If you look at a map of England and Wales, you will see that there are three river valleys along which invaders could enter the country from England: the Dee, the Severn and the Wye. Three cruel and merciless Norman barons were sent to these three valleys who pushed into the country, tightening their grip by building castles as they went. William himself tackled Cardiff and the South Wales coast was quickly conquered.

The Normans were expert trained soldiers and they were well armed. The Welsh were untrained, lightly armed and did not have any experience of besieging castles. Also they were constantly fighting among themselves for leadership. For these reasons, the Normans conquered all of Wales except the mountains of Gwynedd in North Wales and the forests of Deheubarth in South Wales within twenty-five years.

The Church

William was not timid about imposing Roman ideas on the church in England as Edward had been. Celibacy was forced on English church and Roman ideas were firmly established. In the state Norman lords replaced Saxon barons and in the church the native English Bishops and Abbots were replaced with foreigners. The new rulers of the English church emphasised two false teachings which are characteristic of the Roman church, the worship of the virgin Mary and the doctrine of transubstantiation.⁸ Thus the process that began at the Synod of Whitby in 664 was completed and spiritual darkness closed in on England.

Although the pope had given William his blessing in his conquest of England, once he was in possession of the throne, William wished to control the church in England himself, rather than accepting the pope's authority. Accordingly he required that all priests should make an oath of loyalty to him. He forbade the church to excommunicate⁹ any of his officers without his consent and declared that any decision reached by the synod had to be agreed by himself. The clergy were not allowed to recognise a new pope when he was appointed or publish a papal bull¹⁰ unless they first had William's permission.

The King's Council

8 This is the teaching that the bread and wine actually change into the body and blood of Christ. Christ is held to be sacrificed again every time the mass is celebrated. Only the priest is considered to have the power to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

9 To excommunicate is to throw out of the church. People believed that the church authorities, headed by the pope, had this power because they acted on behalf of Christ himself. They believed they could not get to heaven without the church. This gave the pope and the church authorities great power since people were terrified of being excommunicated.

10 A papal bull is an official letter from the pope giving his decision or instructions. "Bulla" is the Latin word for the lead seal which was fixed to the document. The pope expected his bulls to be obeyed without question.