

Rome and Civil Liberty – The Edict From The Flaminian Gate



Introduction to this section:

The “Flaminian Gate” is apparently a metaphor for Rome.

Cardinal Wiseman in the article is Nicholas Patrick Stephen Wiseman (3 August 1802 – 15 February 1865), an English Catholic prelate who served as the first Archbishop of Westminster upon the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850. He was made a cardinal in 1850. (From Wikipedia)

Please understand that the author, J.A. Wylie uses sarcasm from time to time. If you don't see the sarcasm, you may not understand what he's saying.

IN 1850, Cardinal Wiseman, arriving from Rome, published in England an “Edict from the Flaminian Gate.” The form of the deed was imperial, and its import was not less imperial than its form. By the same formality did old Rome signify to the countries which her legions had overrun, that they had passed under her yoke, and were become part of her empire. Adopting the style of the haughty mistress of the Old World, the yet haughtier mistress of the New told England that she had been taken back into the empire of Catholicism, and was henceforward to hold herself the subject of the pontifical see. *The “Edict” joined Great Britain to the Seven Hills* (Rome). Such was held to be its legal import. All law, authority, and rule in the country opposed to that of Rome, or not holding of it, was virtually abrogated, although meanwhile suffered to exist. The only valid authority in Great Britain in the eyes of Romanists henceforward was the Vatican.

The first intimation (declaration) given to the nation of the new Roman policy was in the *Tablet* of October 5th, and was to the following effect: – “It appears now next to decided, that Cardinal Wiseman will return to England for a short time, and will hold a Synod, and establish the hierarchy.” This, of course, meant that the mask or guise which the Popish bishops in Britain had long worn as merely “missionary bishops” of “Melipotamus,” “Trachonitis,” “Liunyra,” and so forth, would be thrown off, and Romish territorial sees established in the country.

We next learnt from the *Gazetta di Roma*, that on the 30th of September a consistory was held in the Vatican, that a Cardinal’s hat was bestowed on Dr Wiseman, that the city of Westminster was erected into an archbishopric, and placed under the new Cardinal, who was appointed to govern the kingdom with the aid of twelve suffragan bishops, among whom England was distributed into territorial dioceses! An entire change had been decreed upon the Popish Church in Great Britain.

The selection of Westminster as the seat of the government of the new Cardinal had an arrogant and offensive look. Westminster is the spot of all others most associated with the glories of our past history. Within its time-honored precincts are the tombs of our kings, the monuments of our statesmen, the trophies of our warriors. There our Parliament sits, and our courts administer justice. It had never been a bishopric in Papal times, but simply a monastery. But the offense lay not in that this act disturbed the cherished associations of the nation, but in that it encroached upon the country’s independence. It bore the character, not of an ecclesiastical arrangement, but of a temporal usurpation.

Semi-regal fêtes (festivals) celebrated the event at Rome. The new owner of the purple held a levee in the Quirinal (the location of the official residence of the Italian head of state), the Princess Doria doing the honors. Princes, ambassadors, and consuls crowded the anti-chamber of the Cardinal. After this, departing from Rome, not now as when a simple student, but full of honors, and charged with a great mission, he traveled by easy stages to England; and, resting on his way at the despotic courts of Tuscany and Vienna, he slowly approached our shores.

In the end of October the Cardinal and the “bull” appeared in England together. The document was immediately published. The essential truculence (ferociousness) of the “bull” was masked by an affluence of high-flown professions of tender solicitude for “the flock of the Lord in England.” Under the guise of deepest spiritual humility, it aimed only at earthly power. In it the Pontiff informed us that, having “besought the assistance of the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and of the saints whose virtues have made England illustrious,” to be enabled to help us, he now, in virtue of that “plenitude of apostolic power” entrusted to him “by our Lord Jesus Christ, through the person of St Peter, Prince of the Apostles,” “decreed the re-establishment in the kingdom of England, and according to the common laws of the Church, of a hierarchy of bishops deriving their titles from their own sees.” The bull went on to partition England into territorial dioceses, and to appoint bishops in each, with jurisdiction, – the full and complete jurisdiction of the Roman Church, – the same which she exercises in the most

Catholic countries.

"In the sacred government of the clergy and people," said the bull, "and in all that which concerns the pastoral office, the archbishops and bishops of England will enjoy all the rights and faculties which bishops and archbishops can use, according to the disposition of the sacred canons and the apostolic constitutions." The government now set up was declared to be "such as it exists, freely exists, in other nations." And, added the Pope in conclusion, "we likewise decree that all which may be done to the contrary by any one, whoever he may be, knowing or ignorant, in the name of any authority whatever, shall be without force." So far the edict from the Flaminian Gate.

We do not possess the gift of infallible interpretation. It is equally undeniable that Cardinal Wiseman does. Therefore, instead of offering any opinion of our own, let us hear the Cardinal on this great edict of annexation. Here, at least, he cannot err. He was present when Infallibility took counsel in this matter; he knows its secret purposes, which are hidden from ordinary mortals; and he is entitled to all credit when he interprets the mind of the Pontiff, as embodied in his bull. A "Pastoral Letter" from "Nicholas (Cardinal Wiseman), by the Divine mercy, of the Holy Roman Church Cardinal Priest, Archbishop of Westminster, and Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Southwark," instantly followed the promulgation of the pontifical bull. "We govern," quoth Nicholas of the Holy Roman Church, "and shall continue to govern, the counties of Middlesex, Hertford, and Essex, as ordinary thereof, and those of Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Berkshire, and Hampshire, with the islands annexed, as administrator with ordinary jurisdiction."

Let us mark the words of "Nicholas," not spoken at random, but spoken in the full foresight that they would be carefully weighed and narrowly criticized; and therefore, we may be sure, selected because they were the terms of all others best fitted to announce the fact of his assumed jurisdiction, without appearing unnecessarily to insult our independence or ignore our rights. But, cautious as the terms are, the fact stands out in unmistakable prominence.

"We govern," said the Cardinal, not the members of the Roman Church in the counties of Middlesex, etc., but the counties themselves. "We govern, and shall continue to govern, the counties of Middlesex, Hertford," etc. The Cardinal knows nothing of any other authority, from that of the Queen down to her humblest functionary. All comment of ours is superfluous. "Peter" hath spoken, and "Nicholas" hath interpreted. The Cardinal and his suffragans govern, not English Papists, but England.

To show that he regarded his acquisition as neither visionary nor ephemeral (a brief time), but, on the contrary, solid and durable, this man in purple lifts up a paean of triumph so loud, that the whole realm rings again. We seem to hear the shout of some old warrior, as, dragging his captives after him, he slowly climbs the Capitol. So sits Cardinal Wiseman in his triumphal car, as he proudly climbs the "Capitol" from which he was to sway the scepter of government. He drags behind him an illustrious captive, — England; and he sees the celestial hierarchy bending from their seats to gaze on the grand spectacle which made this a day of glory to his Church. "Truly," he continues

in his Pastoral, "this day is to us a day of joy and exultation of spirit, the crowning day of long hopes, and the opening day of bright prospects. How must the saints of our country, whether Roman or British, Saxon, or Norman, look down from their seats of bliss with beaming glance upon this new evidence of the faith and Church which led them to glory! and all those blessed martyrs of those latter ages which have fought the battles of the faith, how must they bless God, as they see the lamp of the temple again enkindled and re-brightening, – as they behold the silver links of that chain which has connected their country with the see of Peter in its vicarial government, changed into burnished gold!" Let it be marked that it is the country which is bound to the see of Peter, although, adds the Cardinal considerately, not with a chain of steel, but of "burnished gold." Ah! fetters! But then they are of "gold." It were unreasonable, surely, to complain of such fetters.

Equally jubilant were the notes pealed forth in the Romish cathedral at Birmingham on occasion of the enthronization of one of the "twelve" (the same number as of old, seeing it is a second planting of Christianity), Dr Ullathorne, now styling himself "Lord Bishop of Birmingham." The preacher was the English pervert, Dr Newman. "The mystery of God's providence," he exclaimed, "is now fulfilled. I do not recollect of any people on earth but those of Great Britain who, having once rejected the religion of God, were again restored to the bosom of the Church. But what has God done for them? It is wonderful in our eyes. The holy hierarchy has been restored. The grave is opening, and Christ is coming out."

We give but one specimen more of those vauntings, regarded as hallucinations at the time, the fumes of Roman pride, the maunderings (driveling speech) of Papal dotage (deterioration of mental faculties associated with aging.). Alas! it has since been found that the maundering was on the side, not of Rome, but of some of our own statesmen and ecclesiastical dignitaries, who then spoke and wrote some very valorous things, but afterwards could find nothing to back up their big words except little deeds, or no deeds at all. "The Pope," said the *Tablet* of that day, "has made Westminster an archiepiscopal see; and he has given to Dr Wiseman, now a cardinal, jurisdiction over the souls of all men living within the limits of his see, excepting Jews, Quakers, and unbaptized Protestants."

Thus did the Romanists, holding that a work of this sort so well begun was as good as finished, deem that the schism of three centuries was now healed, – that the hydra of British heresy was crushed, – that the first sovereign on earth was virtually converted into a subject of the pontifical throne, and the mightiest of existing empires legally annexed to the empire of Rome.

Fifteen years have since passed away. Do these vauntings now appear groundless? Have these hopes been shown to be illusions? Has Rome slackened in the work; and, having begun, does she despair of making an end? Have the foundations of the new Papal temple in Britain, laid in 1850, been razed by the authority of British law and the strength of British Protestantism? Are they rotting in the ground amid the faint hearts and feeble hands of the Romish builders? Far from it. Whoever has retreated, these men have not Their hopes are as high and their boastings are as bold at this day as they were

then. And with reason too; for the building then begun has neither been stopped nor gone back, but is advancing to its completion from one day to another.

(To be continued.)

All sections of Rome and Civil Liberty – by James Aitkin Wylie

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