

AN AMERICAN BISHOP ON IRELAND

[The Right Rev. William Turner, D.D., Bishop of Buffalo, is chairman of the Board of Directors of the *Catholic Union and Times*, Buffalo, N.Y. That paper, in its issue of March 17, comments editorially on the stand taken by the Right Rev. Michael J. Gallagher, Bishop of Detroit, and National President of the Friends of Irish Freedom, with reference to the pronouncements of Cardinal Bourne, Bishops Cohalan, Gilmartin, and other Irish bishops condemning the activities of the Irish Republican Army. It affords us much pleasure to reproduce the editorial in full.—*Old Ireland*.]

"Among the speeches delivered at the banquet of the 'Committee of One Hundred for the Irish Republic' in Chicago on February 22, that by Bishop Gallagher, of Detroit, was by far the most notable and impressive. We wish that this splendid discourse could be brought to the attention of many in this and other lands who have followed with sympathetic interest the Irish struggle for independence, but who have some misgivings as to the moral rectitude of some of the methods employed by the Republican forces in their efforts to achieve it. The pronouncement of the Bishop on this point could not be more explicit and fearless. In face of the recent fatuous edict launched by Cardinal Bourne and of the excommunication fulminated by Bishops Cohalan and Gilmartin, the words of Bishop Gallagher acquire an added importance. We shall let him speak for himself, which he does in the following telling manner:

"The papers here tell us that Cardinal Bourne has come out and put under the ban in his diocese those who are friends of Irish freedom, and also that a few bishops in Ireland have put under excommunication the members of the Irish Republic in Ireland for carrying on a guerilla warfare against the forces of the Crown. Now, I am a Catholic Bishop also, as well as Cardinal Bourne, and Dr. Gilmartin and Dr. Cohalan, and I am President of 'The Friends of Irish Freedom.' Now, I suppose that if I were over there I would be struck by excommunication. But, nevertheless, on the basis of American principles, these churchmen have no right whatever to put the ban on the Republican soldiers in Ireland for endeavouring to drive the invaders from their native land.

"If you go to the very highest English authorities on international law you will find that their definition of sovereignty resides in the people, and that the Government is merely the agency which exercises that sovereignty; but originally the authority to govern rests with the people themselves. Therefore it follows with absolute necessity that only that Government possesses any authority that has received it from the people who are governed. The Government of England has received from the people of England the right to govern England, and therefore it is the legitimate authority there, because originally the authority rests in the people of England. But there is no authority in the people of England to govern the people of Ireland. According to all definitions, according to natural right, that authority rests in the people of Ireland, and in December, 1918, by a vote of 80 per cent. of the people, which was again ratified in the Urban and County elections by a vote of 90 per cent., they handed over that authority to the Dail Eireann, and therefore, according to the principles of international law, that is the only legitimate Government in Ireland. Therefore, when these bishops condemn the action of the Republican Army as sedition, as rebellion, as sinful, they are making a grave mistake.

Government Not Legitimate.

"If the so-called rebels were Englishmen fighting against the British Parliament, if we here in America were fighting against our own legitimate Government, then would we be guilty of sin and rebellion; but in Ireland the Foreign Government, the Alien Government, is not the legitimate Government, and therefore the people have a right to throw it out of Ireland, the same as Washington threw it out of these shores of America. The only basis for excommunication would be that it was rebellion against

lawful, against legitimate Government, but the legitimate Government of Ireland, according to all principles of international law, is that Government that received authority from the people, and that is Dail Eireann.'

"Thus does the fearless Bishop of Detroit elucidate a point which has disturbed many a delicate conscience. Let his authoritative decision in the matter now allay all fears.

"We have but to appeal to the clear evidence of history to sustain the contention that the British Government has no just claim to sovereignty over Ireland. Britain has maintained her usurped authority there by force, and force alone, not by the will of the Irish people, who for more than seven centuries have contended, to the extent of their power, against the invader.

Source of Authority.

"The principle upon which our great republic was founded, a principle clearly enunciated by Suarez and now commonly granted by moralists, is that civil authority in a nation depends upon the will of the people. All authority is indirectly from God, directly from the choice of the people. Applying this principle to Ireland we cannot fail to see that even if the British authority there had been in the beginning a legitimate one it has long since been invalidated by the expressed will of the Irish Nation. The circumstances attending the British rule in Ireland have been so calamitous to the Irish people that, even if it were legitimate, the rebellion against it is fully justified. The primary purposes of all government, the maintenance of good order, and the common good of the people have constantly been defeated there by tyrannous oppression and merciless persecution.

"The several conditions which are required by moralists to justify rebellion against legitimate authority are clearly exemplified in the case of Ireland. Dr. Murray in his *Essays, Chiefly Theological* enumerates them as follows:—

1. The tyranny must be excessive—intolerable.
2. The tyranny must be manifest, manifest to men of good sense and right feeling.
3. The evils inflicted by the tyrant must be greater than those that would ensue from resisting and deposing him.
4. There must be no other available way of getting rid of the tyrant except by recurring to the extreme course.
5. There must be a moral certainty of success.
6. The revolution must be conducted or approved by the community at large . . . the refusal of a small party in the State to join with the overwhelming mass of their countrymen would not render the resistance of the latter unlawful.

"The only one of these conditions about which there can possibly be any doubt in Ireland's case is the fifth. But in the minds of those who are best informed concerning the progress of the struggle in Ireland there is no doubt of its ultimate success. In the minds of the Irish people themselves there is no doubt, for their very determination to succeed precludes all doubt. Hence we contend that even if the British rule in Ireland were based on legitimate grounds the Irish people would be fully justified by the manifold and protracted iniquities of that rule in rebelling against it.

"But the British rule in Ireland is not a legitimate one. It is a usurpation against the will of the Irish people. It was begun in invasion and has been maintained by a tyrannous combination of treachery, bribery, favoritism, and force. The Irish people therefore have the right and perhaps the duty of overthrowing it, and of using every possible and legitimate method of warfare to accomplish this end. 'An insurrection,' says Mackintosh, quoted by Dr. Murray, 'rendered necessary by oppression and warranted by a reasonable probability of a happy termination is an act of public virtue always environed with so much peril as to merit admiration.'

"We heartily agree therefore with Bishop Gallagher's views on the Irish struggle for freedom. The guerilla warfare as pursued by the Irish patriots is in no sense criminal."

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