

TWO LECTURES AT BATH:
THE REV. M. HOBART SEYMOUR
AND CARDINAL NICHOLAS WISEMAN
AND THE NUNNERY QUESTION

In 1829, George IV gave royal assent to Catholic Emancipation. By this act, promoted by Wellington's Tory government, Roman Catholics were admitted to Parliament. It appeared that the country had finally welcomed Catholics as loyal citizens after centuries of suspicion and mistrust, and some historians interpret this legislation as an example of liberty and political maturity in England. John Wolffe, however, sounds a note of caution. « Such judgements on Emancipation must not obscure the fact that its effect was, if anything, to strengthen active anti-Catholicism. »⁽¹⁾ Prejudice against Catholicism, always present since the Reformation, became more public. « Early in 1831 a Catholic writer complained of the polemical onslaught which was being waged against the faith, on platforms and in the press, associated with the gross misrepresentations of Catholic practices and principles. »⁽²⁾ But the Catholic Church continued to grow and expand, and Rome recognized this spiritual maturity. On September 29, 1850, Pope Pius IX restored the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales. This act of « papal aggression » insulted and enraged many non-Catholics, who expressed their angry feelings in public demonstrations and secured a piece of legislation, the Ecclesiastical Titles Act. The words and actions of the newly appointed Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman (1802-65), did nothing to ease the growing hostility against Catholicism. One Roman Catholic institution, convents, attracted scrutiny. *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, published in 1836, had started a tradition of books, pamphlets, and personal testimonies which critiqued the conventual life and

(1) J. WOLFFE, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1.

(2) *Ibid.*