The Edict the Queen Promulgated against Our Sacred Religion, and against the Pope, and the Catholic King, Who Defend it

The Queen

A declaration of the great disturbances being plotted against the commonwealth by a horde of seminary priests and Jesuits, who have been dispatched in secret and dispersed throughout the kingdom to concoct strange treacheries under the false name of religion, and the provisions and necessary remedies for checking this wickedness, proclaimed by Her Majesty's command.

Although we had good reason to think that at the end of almost thirty-three years of our reign (throughout which Almighty God has preserved us in the peaceful possession of our kingdom) the cruel and violent malice of our enemies would have abated, weakened, and quieted, and especially that of the king of Spain, who for so many years and without just cause has worked to disturb our state (and not only him, but all his clients), that his enmity would have softened and turned to a more gentle and peaceable spirit, that this king would be disposed to live quietly and tranquilly with us and with other Christian monarchs, and that thus a universal peace might be established in Christendom, which is now disrupted and confounded by his wars and conflicts, and by no other cause, yet, observing his present actions, with greater expense and effort than ever before, we clearly perceive the opposite. But we believe that God, who is the Lord of Hosts, is pleased that such men, neither satisfied with what they have nor willing to live in peace, should fall and be ruined.

For the complexities of Chapter 16 across the editions of the Historia, see the introduction.

The text here is a slight abbreviation of the October 18, 1591 decree: see TRP, 3:86–93.

Ribadeneyra may have translated from the Latin text provided piecemeal by Robert Persons in the Philopater, or the full text appended to Thomas Stapleton's response. See Philopater, passim, and Stapleton, Apologia, n.p.

For the copious Catholic literature attacking Elizabeth's edict, see Houliston, "Lord Treasurer."

The Hebrew phrase יְהֹ וָה צְבָאֹות, translated as “the Lord of hosts,” appears frequently throughout the Bible, first used in 1 Kings 1:3.
and overthrown, and for this reason he has permitted this king, in his old age (better suited to peace than war), and in a time when he should be perfectly satisfied with his own territories without wanting to usurp those of others through force of arms (for his empire now commands more crowns, more kingdoms and peoples, greater and more abundant worldly riches than any of his predecessors or any other Christian prince has ever had), in this old age, I say, God has allowed him to initiate a perfidious war, most perilous for all of Christendom, against the reigning king of France; just as for the past two years he has obviously intended to wage against us and invade our realms, all the while treating with us of peace—but God has resisted him, and given him and his entire army cause for repentance and humility.

Therefore, having now learned with certainty that the king of Spain, to provide some pretext for his outrageous, violent actions, has arranged for a Milanese vassal of his to be elevated to the Roman pontificate, and prevailed upon him, without the consent of the College of Cardinals, to exhaust and waste the riches of the Church in raising soldiers in Italy (which had heard no noise of arms in a long time) and many other places, to dispatch them to France under the command of his nephew to invade that kingdom, which has always extended its hand to the Church in all its travails. Furthermore, this war, so broadly and vigorously waged against France, cannot fail to endanger our territories and realms, especially as numerous trustworthy reports inform us that this king’s preparations against our crown and lands, by sea and by land, for the coming year are greater than they have ever been.

Besides this, we know that to advance this enterprise the king, availing himself of the power of his henchman the pope (utterly dependent on his will), has negotiated with several conspirators and rabble-rousers, rebellious subjects of this realm (base and common men), who with enormous effort and at the expense of the same king incite a horde of dissolute youths who, partly for lack of wherewithal, partly for the crimes they have committed, have left their homeland and become fugitives, rebels, and traitors.

And whereas certain establishments for the sustenance and support of such persons have been founded at Rome and in Spain, under the name

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4 The Milanese Cardinal Niccolò Sfondrato (r.1590–91) was elected Pope Gregory XIV on December 9, 1590. Born a Spanish vassal (Philip II was duke of Milan), Gregory was a close ally of the Habsburg monarchy, and owed his election to Spanish influence. Pastor, History of the Popes, 22:351–55.