

evening or two before the *Ne Temere* discussion he distinguished himself by rating seventy of his brethren—for which he was deservedly cried down—and Catholics had, therefore, little reason to be surprised when they, too, were subjected to violent abuse. Some one has said that temper is three-fourths of Christianity. Tried by that test, this protagonist of Protestantism cuts anything but an impressive figure. It is a significant fact that since the unlamented departure of these two worthies from our midst the Presbyterians of Dunedin have lived in unbroken peace and unity with their Catholic neighbors.

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'My object in writing is very briefly to correct a few of the misstatements made in the course of the discussion—not for the enlightenment of those who made them, but for the benefit of the non-partisan, fair-minded portion of your readers who are capable of taking a sane and reasonable view on this subject. (1) It is absolutely incorrect to say that the McCann story 'has never been shaken.' On the floor of the House of Commons, in the debate on the address-in-reply on February 7, it was riddled through and through; and Mr. J. Devlin, after challenging any one of the purveyors of the story to publicly name the priest against whom the sinister insinuations were made, intimated that if this were done an action for slander or libel would promptly follow. Not one of the glib declaimers had the courage to take up this challenge. (2) It is entirely incorrect to suggest that Germany was exempted from the *Ne Temere* decree because of 'Kaiser Wilhelm and his warriors.' The facts are that by the Bull *Provida*, of January 18, 1906—about a year and a-half before the issue of *Ne Temere*—Rome had already issued marriage regulations for the German Catholics. These regulations differ essentially from the *Ne Temere* decree only in one point, namely, that a mixed marriage is valid, but not licit, without the assistance of a duly authorised priest. When *Ne Temere* was promulgated the Holy See did not wish, as a matter of convenience, to disturb the regulations which had been so recently given to the Catholics of the German Empire. For German Catholics, however, as for New Zealand Catholics, the validity of Catholic (and mixed) marriages is determined absolutely by legislation from Rome, and the German Government has offered no opposition to such legislation. (3) It is absolutely untrue to say that the decree 'shows itself as a weapon of conversion by coercion.' It is obvious to the most elementary common-sense that a forced or unwilling convert is no convert at all, and would only be a nuisance to any Church. *Ne Temere* declares that a mixed marriage—celebrated by a priest—is just as valid as if both parties were Catholics, so that the decree not only is not, but cannot be, used as 'a weapon for conversion by coercion.' I challenge Mr. Wood to state publicly the names of the Canterbury priests, who, he alleges, have used the decree in this way; or, if he has not the courage to do that, I invite him to send full particulars as to priests and parties to me privately, and I will undertake to place the priests' version of the matter before your readers with the least possible delay.'

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'(4) Dr. Gibb was vehement to the point of hysteria regarding some mysterious 'servitude' or 'dominion' which he professed to believe the Pope is attempting, through *Ne Temere*, to 'impose upon free-born Englishmen.' Just as, a couple of days before, his 'spirit had waxed hot within him' because some of his brethren claimed the right to have an opinion of their own, so now we read how it 'made his blood boil,' etc., etc. Evidently he is ready to effervesce on the slightest provocation. It is mere rhetorical nonsense to say that the Pope through this decree is attempting in any degree to impose any sort of dominion upon any but his own people. In the *Ne Temere* decree the Pope has legislated for his own spiritual subjects alone, prohibiting them, under pain of nullity, from entering upon marriages among themselves or with non-Catholics, except on the conditions prescribed by the Church. It is true that in the case of a mixed marriage the non-Catholic is in-

directly affected by the decree; but the responsibility for that rests, not with the Church, but with the non-Catholic party himself. He is a perfectly free agent. He is under no compulsion to enter into the contract, and if he enters into it he does so quite voluntarily. If he has conscientious objections to the presence of the priest, let him be loyal to his principles and decline to be married to a Catholic partner. That is the remedy—a sufficiently simple one—for any possible trouble so far as non-Catholics are concerned, and the non-Catholic party has the matter entirely in his own hands.

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If a further opportunity presents itself I will hope to refer in detail to the fact that in the past both the Presbyterian Church of Otago and the Anglican Church have adopted strict regulations, absolutely forbidding, for example, marriages with a deceased wife's sister; and a Catholic who chose to marry a Presbyterian or Anglican within the prohibited relation would of course bring himself within the scope of these enactments. Never once has the Catholic Church in any way interfered with these regulations. Catholics have recognised to the full the right of every Church to frame its own domestic legislation on these subjects; and this right they claim—and will continue to claim—for themselves.'

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'I notice that included in the Assembly overture is an appeal to the Government for protection. As matters already stand, the law of the land in no way recognises, or gives the slightest legal effect to, the *Ne Temere* decree. If Catholics or non-Catholics choose to get married at the registry office, or by a non-Catholic minister, the State declares their marriage absolutely and unimpeachably legal. That is the utmost that any Government can do. The Catholics of New Zealand number, roughly, one-seventh of the population. In view of this fact, and of the existing state of the law, the phenomenon of two Presbyterian 'stalwarts' going round the country clamoring for 'protection,' and tremblingly proclaiming that 'every moment of time is precious,' is a spectacle for gods and men.—I am, etc.,

EDITOR N.Z. TABLET.

ABOUT THE NE TEMERE DECREE

By X.

V.

It assures Catholics of the validity of their marriages and surrounds these with befitting religious ceremonial.

It is not easy to discover what the Orange chaplains are demanding of the State in the matter of the marriage laws of the Catholic Church. Civil marriage is already legal in New Zealand, and any one can have it who wants it and is otherwise unimpeded. Even a Catholic can have it, and at the hands of an Orange chaplain. What more, then, do these chaplains want? They have more than their rights; they can marry not only Orangemen, but even such Catholics as prefer their ministrations to those of a priest, and they ought to be content. But in addition to this, to endeavor to silence the voice of the priest, to make it criminal for him to tell those Catholics that they are not married in the sight of God or of the Church, this would be tyranny and would seriously hamper the Church in favor of Orangeism; and tyranny so brutal that even the staunchly Nonconformist *British Weekly* cries out against it: 'The State cannot punish the Church for saying that certain legal forms of union are not Christian marriage, and that those who treat them as if they were are living in sin.' Therefore, unhindered by the law of the State, the priest can approach the Catholic who has been content with a civil marriage and tell him that he is living in sin, urge him to ask mercy of God and pardon of the people he may have scandalised, and to do common justice to his partner, not by separating from her, but by entering into a marriage with her which will be valid not only in the eyes of the State,