

but in the eyes of God, of Protestantism, of Catholicism, and of the whole world. Perhaps all this has been already done. Those little triumphs of which some non-Catholic clergymen love to boast are short-lived. Catholics sometimes forget themselves, but they always come back; they have been baptised, and the grace of repentance is always hovering over them.

But what would happen if Orangemen were sufficiently powerful to compel the State to invade the Church's domain and pass laws to silence her voice? Why, then she would do exactly what she did at the time of the so-called Reformation—she would speak all the louder. She then anathematised Luther and Calvin who had degraded marriage, and she openly spurned the iniquitous laws that legalised the gigantic lusts of the Royal adulterer, Henry VIII. She would speak once more with such Apostolic freedom that all who heard her would observe how her sanctity stands over against and reproaches the wickedness of the world.

The Church only desires to manifest to all men the contrast between herself and the world, and she thanks the Orangemen for accentuating that contrast and drawing the attention of non-Catholics to it. Free-love, 'lease' marriage, promiscuity, progressive polygamy, these are the natural progeny of marriages made by law, from which nothing can save the world but the sanctity of sacramentally wedded love. What, then, is the effect of the *Ne Temere* Decree on Catholic marriage? The answer is clear to all who have read the decree. It simplifies and secures the validity of Christian marriage, removing those difficulties which the law of the Council of Trent had not removed; it gives uniformity to the marriage law of the Universal Church, and prescribes a befitting religious ceremonial for a contract which is also a sacrament.

It states in the simplest possible language that a Catholic who is otherwise free from impediment is validly married provided his marriage is witnessed by the Catholic pastor of the place where it is celebrated and by two others. What a marvellous simplification this is, can only be appreciated by those who knew the difficulties that had been constantly arising from doubts about domicile, from doubts concerning the definition of parishes and the canonical institution of parish-priests, and so forth. Paragraph 2 of the decree removes these difficulties for ever.

'Here and in the following articles, by parish-priest is to be understood not only a priest legitimately presiding over a parish canonically erected, but in regions where parishes are not canonically erected the priest to whom the care of souls has been legitimately entrusted in any specified district, and who is equivalent to a parish-priest; and in missions where the territory has not yet been perfectly divided, every priest generally deputed by the superior of the mission for the care of souls in any station.'

Here at least there is no curtailing of the liberty of the subject, but the bestowing on him of a much larger freedom than he enjoyed before. Not only this, but when a person wishing to be married is in danger of death, and the priest of the place is not at hand, the presence of any priest will henceforth be sufficient for the validity of the marriage. Paragraph 7 says:

'When danger of death is imminent, and when the parish-priest or the Ordinary of the place or a priest delegated by either of these can not be had, in order to provide for the relief of conscience and (should the case require it) for the legitimation of offspring, marriage may be contracted validly and licitly before any priest and two witnesses.'

Furthermore, in extraordinary circumstances the decree declares that the marriage of Christians will be a lawful and valid Sacrament even without the presence of a priest:

'Should it happen that in any district the parish-priest or Ordinary of the place or a priest delegated by either of them, before whom marriage can be celebrated, is not to be had, and that this condition of things has lasted

for a month, marriage may be validly and licitly entered upon by the formal declaration of consent made by the spouses in the presence of two witnesses.'

Here surely the Pope is generous and grants to Christians a privilege the State refuses to citizens. The Church declares that such marriages are canonically valid, the State that they are legally null.

This decree does not touch the liberty of non-Catholics; these whether baptised or unbaptised, contracting among themselves are nowhere bound to observe the Catholic form. The Church holds that the marriage of the unbaptised is a valid marriage, and she declares the marriage of baptised Protestants, though not contracted according to the Catholic form, is not only legally valid but also a true and real Sacrament. Is this an interference with the liberty of Protestants? Nay, it is but to confer a dignity upon their marriages of which they themselves for the most part are unconscious, and which their clergy for the most part deny.

In the second place the decree secures its fitting and graceful ceremonial for that which has been raised by the Church's Founder to the dignity of a great Sacrament. The Sacraments are in the safe keeping of the Church; her children, for whom the Sacraments were instituted, are in her safe keeping too; and remembering how these children have been formed by God, and how within them the roots of spirituality and humanity are mysteriously entwined, she offers them no bare and empty worship, but surrounds her every ministrations with every form of beauty and of mystery that will appeal to them. They have natural life, but they have spiritual needs, and she takes up and spiritualises what is natural, and, giving it back to them, satisfies at once the needs of nature and the cry of the spirit. This she does in Baptism, in Confirmation, in the Eucharist, in Penance, in Extreme Unction, in Holy Orders, in Matrimony.

Behold this youthful pair wandering together hand in hand. Hard by a little village church they are met by a mysterious man clothed in mysterious robes. They say to him: 'Our Father we two have known each other from childhood until now, and from childhood have loved each other with an ever-growing love. But now a secret something has come into our hearts telling us that we ought to link our young lives together, but whence this secret voice has come we know not. Only this we know, that it has been an inspiring, an elevating, a purifying voice to us, and has been leading us not only towards each other but towards God. We seek more than happiness; we are in search of a force that will help us to fight for what is good and to despise and overcome together all that is base.' And the mysterious man calls together the parents of the youthful pair and their village friends, and he leads them all into the little village church, and under the shadow of the tabernacle where Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament reposes, he joins the two young hands, and he says: 'My children, God has given to you a rich and holy love. I who baptised you so seeming short a time ago, have prayed and prayed that such a love might be your dower; yours will be a union ideally human, ideally Christian, ideally beautiful. Your hands are now clasped not for a passing salutation, not for a dance, but for a sweet, life-long companionship. Were it otherwise you might have remained upon the green outside, or have gone before some secular man to secure some secular thing. But now it is God Who clasps your hands which are so sweetly joined together, and binds them in golden bonds that shall be for evermore unbreakable. And while He binds them He imparts to you the title of a proud nobility, and He bids you forth with the fragrance of this altar around you to found a family that will be as heroically devoted to God as the heroes of old were devoted to their king. And the outstretched hands of the priest as he calls down Heaven's blessing upon you will be a pledge of the hand of God that will never cease to caress you throughout what I trust and pray will be a long and happy life.'

This is what the *Ne Temere* Decree secures in the second place to all faithful Catholics. Let the chaplains of the Orange Lodges in New Zealand meditate quietly