

But it would be accounted an injury by these good clergymen to have the truth brought home to them, for this would deprive them of the luxury of protesting. Let us therefore leave them and proceed to consider a case that will show what is exactly the effect on mixed marriages of the *Ne Temere* Decree.

A Catholic man proposes marriage to a Methodist woman. If this man does not wish to marry in the Catholic Church no one can force him to marry there. A Methodist minister writes that 'desperate, bitter, and unscrupulous attempts are made to coerce Catholics to be married only by a priest.' This, of course, is simply untrue. No such attempts are made, and all such attempts were worse than vain. Catholics know the catechism, they enjoy free-will (notwithstanding the doctrine of the Calvinistic Methodists), for the use of this free-will they will have to answer to Almighty God, and it is for them to decide whether they will obey or disobey the law of the Church.

If alive to his responsibility and making a good use of his free-will, this Catholic decides to marry in the Church and prevails upon the Methodist to marry him there, I submit that if the Methodist clergyman has a grievance, it is with the member of his own flock and not with the Pope. It is adding insult to injury to rail against the Pope. He does not want Methodist wives for Catholic men. He has done all that is possible, without infringing upon human liberty, to stop such marriages; it is only under protest he tolerates them, and it oversteps the bounds of decency to call him bad names because, in his well-matured legislation for his own subjects, he does not make provision for the marriage of these by non-Catholic clergymen or mere State officials when they choose to take alien partners. This would be to put a premium upon mixed marriages, not to discourage them.

But should each prefer to break off the match rather than go to the Church of the other, every sensible person will conclude that even from a worldly point of view they have done the very best thing. All this hysterical talk we hear about the sundering of loving hearts is so much mawkish nonsense. But why in the event the sundering of the loving hearts should be attributed to the Pope and not to the Methodist minister the protesters do not depose.

Suppose finally the Catholic consents to marry in the Methodist church and presents himself in due form to the Methodist clergyman, how will the case stand? Its solution will now depend largely, if not entirely, upon the education, judgment, and refinement of the Methodist clergyman. But here is how a venerable and learned Anglican Archdeacon in New Zealand has acted more than once in such an unhappy case: 'My friend,' he would say, addressing the Catholic, 'if you marry before me you will be validly married according to the law of the land, and in the opinion, too, of the great multitude of Protestants, but not in the eyes of the Catholic Church, which after all is the oldest and still by far the largest of all the Christian Churches; whereas if you marry before a priest, your marriage will be recognised by all—by the State, by Protestantism, and by the Catholic Church—my advice to you is obvious.'

The Methodist minister, however, does not give this advice, and the marriage is attempted in the Methodist church. After a few weeks, or months, or years, but generally weeks, the Catholic begins to suffer remorse of conscience; he comes to the priest, who tells him very kindly but very firmly that he is not married at all, that the Church of Christ has reserved to herself the right of celebrating the marriages of her children. He does not, however, as Protestant clergymen so magisterially declare, advise him to leave the woman. There is hardly a case in ten thousand, as we shall see, where he would give such advice. He says to the repentant Catholic: 'You have done this poor woman the gravest wrong that was in your power to do her, and you are bound by the claims of natural justice to make restitution by marrying her at once.' The Catholic goes home and reasons with his partner. 'You know,' he says, 'that we Catholics believe that marriage is a Sacrament and that it must be entered into by a Cath-

olic in the face of the Church; I know that you think a legal marriage quite sufficient, but to ease my conscience you will not refuse to renew your consent to be my wife in the presence of a priest. This renewal will take nothing away from the consent you have already expressed, but it will add greatly to my happiness here and to my hope of heaven hereafter.' She is a reasonable woman, she consents, the marriage is regularised, the children, if any, are legitimated, and all ends happily and well.

But suppose she is not reasonable and that she will not accede to this simple and easily satisfied request? Even here, where there seems to be a deadlock, the Church, a wise and provident mother, supplies a remedy. She applies to her repentant son what is technically called a *Sanatio in Radice*, that is, the supreme authority in the Church grants to this repentant sinner who begs for it a dispensation by means of which the general legislation regarding valid marriages is waived in his particular case, and the marriage is regarded for all practical purposes as if it had been validly contracted from the outset. This, of course, supposes that the consent of both parties to the marriage still holds good. For marriage is a bi-lateral contract, and the consent of one party will not be sufficient to make it valid. Nor, it must be remembered, will two distinct consents to two distinct things make a bilateral contract valid. The consent of A to buy a sack in which he thinks is corn added to the consent of B to sell it knowing that it holds chaff, will not make a valid contract. Nor will the consent of a Catholic to a Catholic marriage, added to the consent of a Methodist to a civil marriage which the Catholic believes to be no marriage at all, be a valid contract of marriage.

Now suppose, and this is the very extreme case to which I referred a while ago, and which should not occur in more than one case out of ten thousand. Suppose, I say, that this poor woman has been feeding herself for years on Hocking and Horton, and that she has been recently listening to sermons from Orange chaplains, ridiculing and blaspheming the Sacraments, that she is not merely indifferent to Christian marriage, but formally excludes the very notion of it as a Sacrament, and while she curses, and blasphemes, and hurls at her partner the words of Calvin and Luther, that marriage is no more sacred than shoe-making or hair-cutting, declares that she would not consent to share with him anything else than a civil marriage which was quite good enough for her illustrious apostles—what just grievance can she have if, when she and God are thus put into competition, the repentant soul of the Catholic turns to Him Who said: 'Whosoever loves father or mother or wife or husband more than Me is not worthy of Me'?

Here, though a very extreme case and one most unlikely to occur, is a breaking up of home, if you like, dear reader, at the bidding of the *Ne Temere* decree, but the responsibility for which must be laid not at the door of the Church, but at the door of the Methodist, or perhaps, at the door of her clergyman who neglected to warn the poor member of his flock of the risk she was running in tempting a Catholic to violate the law of the Church in so grave a matter.

No honest, straight-forward Protestant has cause to fear the *Ne Temere* decree. A Protestant can contract a valid marriage and a valid Sacrament with a co-religionist; or he can marry a Catholic before a Catholic priest, or, better still, can study the claims of the Church, when, if won over by the beauty of her teaching, all obstacles will disappear.

But if Protestants tempt Catholics to play false to their religious principles, they are laying up trouble for that day when the still, small voice of conscience speaks.

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