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REPLY TO REV. FATHER DIXON'S LETTER

Rev. F. C. Simpson's Sermon on The Ne Temere Decree

[The Union Advocate]

The following sermon in reply to Rev. Father Dixon's recent letter on the United Baptist Convention and the Ne Temere Decree, was preached by Rev. F. C. Simpson in his own church in Douglastown, July 9th, and in Newcastle Methodist church on the 16th.

Rev. Mr. Simpson took as his text--
"If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's," I Cor. 10: 7.

It is to be greatly deplored that the peace and harmony of our young and prosperous Dominion, should have been so unnecessarily disturbed, and the civil rights of the people should have been so seriously interfered with, by the introduction of, and the attempt to enforce, the Ne Temere decree. It ought to be possible in this land, and in this age, for Christians of any church and of every church to live and work together for the glory of God and the good of man. And I am free to say that, so far as the enlightened and intelligent membership of the Catholic Church is concerned, it would be possible, if they were allowed to exercise their own judgment. I am persuaded that they share with Protestants the desire to "live peaceably with all men." I make a distinction as, I am sure we should, between the Catholic people and the Catholic church. The full responsibility for all the bitterness and strife that is being engendered by the obnoxious decree in question must rest upon the LEADERS of that church. It is a pity that the Catholics of this country do not follow the example of their co-religionists in those countries where the church is being so clearly taught that it cannot control, may not interfere with matters civil and political. By its insatiable lust for temporal power, the church of Rome, if allowed its own way, will curse this land, as it has cursed those lands which have for many centuries been dominated by its power.

Behind this Ne Temere decree, is the arrogant assumption that the church of Rome is the only church of Jesus Christ on the earth; and when that assumption is so offensively heralded forth, it is high time to rise in indignant protest and to let it be known beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that the spirit of our Fathers is not dead yet, and that the power of Rome can never be a controlling power in this fair land. The Church and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world, is something far greater than the church of Rome. That spirit of exclusiveness, of sacerdotal pride and priestly assumption which inspires men to cry "the temple of the Lord are we" is the precursor of religious indifference, ignorance, intolerance and infidelity. The true church of Jesus Christ is not a Lo here or a Le there! It is an ideal that has been more or less partially realized in all churches, Roman, Greek and Protestant; an ideal that has never yet been fully realized in any religious organization. The truest church is the church which reflects most fully the religion of Christ, and it is certain that Christ's ideal of religion was non-sacerdotal, non-political, spiritual, personal, democratic; trusting absolutely for its spread and support to the power of truth and the power of love in the souls of its disciples. Jesus Christ had no relation to the priestly order of things save one of antagonism. He made all the great spiritual blessings dependent, not on consecrated rites, but on the possession of certain inward and spiritual qualities. And the society he sought to gather and inspire was a brotherhood of equal souls, in which every believer was a King and Priest unto God; and the only authority and greatness were

those of greater goodness and service. Jesus said: "where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." The presence of Jesus in the midst of a company of believers constitutes a true church, even though there be no priestly presence or priestly authority. The church of Jesus Christ in the world is composed of the aggregate of all true believers in Him, no matter by what name they may be known among men. Therefore we are perfectly justified in appropriating and employing the language of our text: "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." But I promised to deal particularly with the letter which recently appeared in the papers from the pen of Rev. Father Dixon, and I shall now proceed to do so. And I do so for two reasons; first, because in his letter Father Dixon has attempted to give a biased, and unimpartial exposition of the "Ne Temere Decree"; and second, because he himself applies his remarks to all who have dared to take similar action to that taken by the Baptist Convention which recently met in Newcastle. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Canada, which met last month in Ottawa, must therefore be numbered among those characterized by Father Dixon as gentlemen who appear to be as deficient in learning, as they are in good judgment and in the proprieties. Surely it is a piece of gratuitous impertinence on the part of Father Dixon (to say nothing of the "proprieties") to apply such language to those who are at least his equals in learning, intelligence, and courtesy. Father Dixon assumes far too much when he assumes that there is widespread ignorance among Protestants regarding "the contents of the Ne Temere Decree and its bearing on the people in general; such is not the case. Even those who may not have read the decree, are able to form a fairly accurate judgment regarding it. When a man holds an apple in his hand he does not need a technical knowledge of horticulture to know that the fruit came from an apple tree, and not from a pear tree; and a far greater than Father Dixon said "by their fruits ye shall know them" and again he said "a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," and we are being made far more familiar than we could wish, with the evil fruit of this tree of discord.

This decree, which pretends to safeguard the moral and religious life of Catholics, is in reality employed to destroy the sanctity in the home life; it is promulgated in defiance of our civil laws; yes, and in defiance of the plain teaching of the New Testament, for the converts to Christianity were strictly forbidden to put away or forsake their heathen and idolatrous partners. The marriage was to hold good though an unbelieving husband or wife refused to become a Christian.

Whatever the intention may have been in promulgating the Ne Temere Decree in this country at this time, in point of fact, it is an intolerable interference with, and an encroachment upon the civil rights of our people; and by methods that are both question-

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able and unworthy attempts are being made to enforce it. I say that this decree is promulgated in defiance of our civil laws; that is true, for it presumes to declare a marriage invalid which the law has pronounced valid. Father Dixon's letter is certainly elaborate, but yet not as explicit as it might be. The Catholic church does not consider a marriage between a Protestant and Catholic invalid PROVIDED THE OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN IS A CATHOLIC PRIEST; it is only invalid WHEN A PROTESTANT CLERGYMAN OFFICIATES AT THE MARRIAGE. Of course this is implied in the letter, but I think it ought to have been clearly stated in a document that pretends to enlighten the ignorant. Now I want you to see where that places the Protestant clergyman. It puts him in a position of inferiority which is simply intolerable in a Protestant country like this.

Father Dixon says that in the case of a mixed marriage by a Protestant clergyman "the Catholic church will willingly and gladly heal the wound and undo the injury." But how? by requiring the Protestant to repudiate his marriage, to repudiate the right of his own clergyman to marry, by making him a TRAITOR; a traitor to his own religion and church, a traitor to his King and country, for to yield to the decree of Rome is to yield a homage to the Pope which belongs to the King, and the Protestant who weakly submits to the cajoleries and threats of a Catholic priest is the man who would sell his country to the Pope.

I understand that Father Dixon has himself been busy in this way "healing the wound and undoing the injury." With regard to that particular case I wish to say that, notwithstanding the Ne Temere Decree and the claims of the church of Rome regarding the validity or the invalidity of a marriage, that ceremony of Father Dixon's over those two young people was not their marriage. If you want to know where they were legally married, you may find the date duly recorded in the Provincial record of marriages, and you will find the name of the clergyman that married them, and it is not the name of Father Dixon. THAT WAS THE VALID MARRIAGE, and all the power of Father Dixon and his church cannot change it. It is silly and wicked for Father Dixon to tell such people that they are not married. Let Father Dixon employ the authority of his church to separate such a couple, and then let him undertake to marry one of them to a third party and he will soon find out whether the marriage was valid or not. He knows well enough where he would place himself by such folly.

A marriage in this Province is valid when the requirements of the civil law have been complied with, and the ceremony has been performed by a CLERGYMAN OF ANY CHURCH, who has received authority to marry from the Governor in Council and no Catholic priest has the right to question such a marriage. I declare it in-
signed that
(Continued on Page 4.)

