

Mixed Marriages: Ecumenical Boom?

They, too—Protestant-Catholic marriages, which until now have been a religious battleground for the churches, just may hold the blueprint for interfaith peace and eventual church unity, according to a Protestant-Catholic couple.

The couple—Paul Simon, a Lutheran, and the former Jeanne Hurley, a Catholic—set out to write a book of do's and don'ts for mixed-marriage couples because everything else they had read was "negative, carping, and unduly partisan."

The result, "Protestant-Catholic Marriages Can Succeed," not only offers suggestions ranging from religious instruction in the home, but spotlights the potential ecumenical value of mixed marriages.

Although families and the individual churches have discouraged mixed marriages, they do exist and are likely to increase, say the authors. But rather than looking upon Protestant-Catholic marriages as "a monster to be feared," such marriages should be regarded by the churches as "an opportunity to heal the wounds of Christendom," the Simons contend.

For in a Protestant-Catholic marriage, "their common commitment to Jesus Christ, sealed by Christian baptism, unites them—more effectively than any doctrinal difference may divide them."

Seeing Bright Side

On the family level, this can promote ecumenical understanding, starting with a thankfulness "for the heritage of faith that could produce such a lovable person as your partner." On the church level, mixed marriages should provide opportunity to heal the wounds of Christendom by providing counsel for the partners of the mixed marriage.

Admitting that their suggestions for religious harmony in the family were not offered "to please either Protestant or Roman Catholic theologians," the Simons insist that "by accommodating your church practices to each other a little without sacrificing a worshipful experience, you immeasurably speed reconciliation on issues more basic to theologians."

But rather than opting for religious "indifference," as the above seems to imply, the Simons stress that the worst thing that can happen to an interfaith marriage is for one of the partners to become indifferent about his own religion.

In fact, the Simons advise, a couple should never choose a civil ceremony as a compromise between their two churches. "A marriage ordinarily should be begun under religious auspices if there is to be a sense of Christian direction in the home," they wrote.

Books, newspapers and periodicals of both faiths should be read regularly by both partners, the authors note. "The Protestant-Catholic home has added reasons for learning as much about church history, tradition and thinking. This will come largely from the printed word."

Attending services at the partners' church at least twice a year is recommended, but above all, the partners should become deeply involved in the activities of their respective churches, whether it be serving on school or hospital committees, working with the poor, or helping to organize interracial councils. Often, both partners can work on the same church committee, since no "doctrine" is involved.

"If Christianity is viewed



ECUMENICAL AUTHORS Paul and Jeanne Simon with their two children. The couple met while both were members of the Illinois House of Representatives. Mr. Simon is now a State Senator. Both parents are active in their respective churches.

only as a matter of going to church on Sunday morning, then a Protestant-Catholic marriage might well be divisive," the Simons wrote. "But if Christianity is much more than that—as it must be—then we can celebrate our faith together in a hundred different ways each day, enriched by the added dimensions of our differing backgrounds bring to our situation."

About The Children

Undoubtedly the most controversial suggestion the Simons have to offer concerns the religious education of the children. Both firmly insist that the children should be brought up in the faith of the partner who is more active and more serious about his or her religion.

Where there is little difference as to activity and interest, the mother should raise the children in her faith, since it is usually the mother who plays the dominant role in rearing

children and determining their religious attitudes. Under these circumstances it takes an exceedingly able and understanding mother to bring up her children in a church affiliation other than her own.

As for allowing the partner with the strongest religious conviction to have charge of the religious instruction of the children, the Simons argue that if, for instance, an active Methodist mother or father must (as current Catholic Church law insists) rear a child as a Catholic—if the partner is a "weak" Catholic, that child will probably grow up to become a weak Catholic. "Attitudes are caught, not taught," the Simons contend, suggesting that it is better to rear a strong Methodist than a weak Catholic.

Staying almost clear of the birth control issue, because it is "less of a problem now" and because they expect some change in Church law soon, the

Former Doctor, Lawyer Becomes Priest at 73

New York—William J. Fordring felt that everything he had learned in his long life—as a doctor, as a lawyer, as a college professor, as a husband, as a father—could be put to use in the service of the Church. So at 73 he became a priest.

"I'm bringing a layman's experience of a lifetime to the priesthood, and by the grace of God I've been given the vigor of a renewed youth," said Father Fordring, a man who looks and talks like he's been a minor-league ball player and who celebrated his first public High Mass Jan. 21 at Fordham University, where he was a member of the Class of 1911.

Father Fordring believes he is probably the oldest person to be ordained, but he is more interested in telling you how his whole life led him to the priesthood and how, after a prominent career as a doctor he wishes to devote the rest of his life to "the diseases of the soul" as well as to diseases of the body.

His wife, Charlotte, died in 1954 and not long afterward Dr. Fordring—then professor of physiology and health at New York's Hunter College—began considering Pope Pius XII's plea to widowers to consider the religious life. But there was something else, he said.

"I've seen a lot of suffering and the priesthood seemed to offer the best all-around possibilities to help stricken people," Father Fordring commented.

In fact, what directly drew him into the priesthood was a long conversation in 1960 with a medical-mission priest who had returned from the Orient. The priest introduced Dr. Fordring, who had just retired from Hunter, to Cardinal Tien of Taipei, Formosa. The cardinal encouraged Dr. Fordring's thoughts about the priesthood and last September—after completing his studies at a seminary in Morristown, N.J.—Dr. Fordring was ordained in Taipei.

Father Fordring is now serving as the U.S. representative of the Cardinal Tien Medical Center, for which he will raise funds, give lectures and encourage doctors and nurses to give some of their time and skills to the people of Formosa.

He speaks of the tuberculosis, worm infection, exposure and crippling accidents he has witnessed in Formosa and thinks back to his youth in New York's impoverished "Hell's Kitchen," where he remembers deaths from both heat and cold, trains killing kids he played with because the tracks were our playground. "Families losing lives in (elementary) fires and 'two boys I grew up with who went to the electric chair.'"

"A sense of compassion was being developed in me then and I think that is what eventually led me to the priesthood," Father Fordring said.

The eldest of 10 children of a German-Lutheran butcher and an Irish-Catholic mother who had come to America as a 12-

Simons give more space to such matters as relatives, religious art and family prayers.

In-Laws, Art and Prayer

As for opposition from relatives, the Simons ask couples in mixed marriages to understand that "centuries of lovelessness between Protestants and Catholics" have left emotional scars on their families. Neither should they forget "the myth" that people who married outside their faith came from homes where there was divorce, unhappiness, family fights and lack of affection. The parents undoubtedly are more concerned about their own "reputation" than about a child marrying an "unbeliever."

Concerning religious art, the Simons see no reason why a Catholic wife should not hang a picture of Mary in the kitchen and the Methodist husband a picture of John Wesley in his study. But in a Protestant-Catholic home, the husband and wife "should agree on any picture before it goes up," and "both partners should attempt to understand what is great about the persons the partner worships in pictures. The Protestant hopefully may come to want a Madonna around—Luther did."

The Simons offer an appendix of "prayers acceptable to Protestants and Catholics" for use at the dinner table, at bedtime for the children and for other times of the day, among the latter the prayer of St. Francis ("Where there is hatred, let me sow love...") and "The Morning Prayer of Martin Luther."

One chapter includes a series of suggestions to both Protestant and Catholic churches, with the observation that the churches have done a little about mixed marriages except warn about them, and then fight about them.

There is little excuse anywhere for the old-fashioned religious wars which have been waged in communities the world over between Protestants and Catholics—and there is even less excuse for people to divide families in such a way, ironically, and tragically doing it in the name of Christianity," the Simons wrote.

"The churches should look to the Protestant-Catholic marriage as a symbol of the church itself. In the process of strengthening such an intra-faith strength, the church approaches a little more closely the type of unity for which too many religious leaders seem willing to pray, but for which they too often are unwilling to take practical steps." (Catholic Press Features)

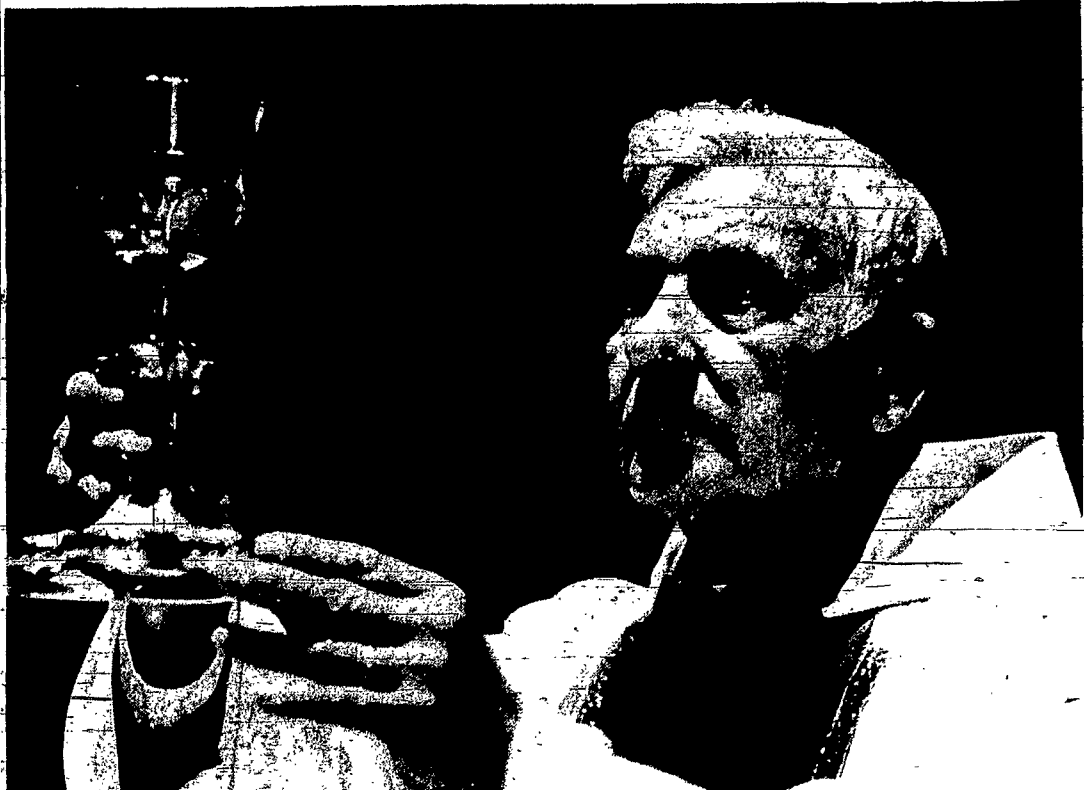
year-old domestic, young Fordring studied at Purdue, Columbia University and Georgetown, and was director of laboratory at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York.

Later, in addition to his position at Hunter-College, he was to develop a private practice. Since many of his patients were poor and uneducated and were often injured because of employer negligence, Dr. Fordring took up the study of law to assist them in lawsuits, being admitted to practice before the New York bar and the U.S. Supreme Court.

As a priest, Father Fordring believes his legal experience may be helpful to him in fighting legalized abortion, artificial insemination and in speaking out on other moral-legal matters. "I can take a stand on law and medicine and they can't argue that I don't know what I'm talking about," he said.

Having been married for 33 years and having raised four adopted children, Father Fordring thinks he has something to say to priests who want to be married.

"I feel I had as happy a marriage as any right-minded man could expect to be granted by Heaven," he said, "but I am saddened that anyone in the priesthood should think he has a greater freedom for fulfillment of life in marriage. Each vocation carries with it counterbalancing responsibilities, frustrations and 'disappointments'." (Catholic Press Features)



NEW CAREER AT 73 awaits Father William Fordring, recently ordained to the priesthood.

Letters to the Editor

Editor: I was very much interested in the appearance in your paper, issue of Jan. 19, page 13 of an account of our Round Table in Philadelphia, under the heading "Dialog Group Dates from 1928."

The article was in an abridged form received by you from the NC News Service and, in abridging it, some remarks of mine which I consider very important were omitted.

I quote from the original article one of these omitted portions: In answer to the question whether the Round Table's members think that similar groups should be established, I replied:

"Possibly so, but there should be certain conditions, especially now that some 'emerging laymen' are assuming the position of spokesmen for the church and entering fields of theology and morals beyond their competence. They give the impression of confusion in the Church. A discussion group should be in close touch with diocesan authorities. Interested in ecumenical movements, and if the group discusses doctrine, there should be a priest present at all times."

John B. Gest, Philadelphia, Pa.

Mixed Marriages A Thorny Problem

Courier News Summary

Mixed marriages are increasingly common and carry a high risk of divorce, according to a new report from a psychologist at New York's Yeshiva University.

Dr. Victor Sanua interpreted his findings as a challenge to parents and churches to keep the young within their own religious groups. Interfaith marriages of Protestants are more stable, he found, than those involving Catholic or Jewish partners.

The report surveys 41 studies made over the past 35 years. It was released against a background of continuing high-level discussion within the Catholic Church and in inter-denominational committees.

In some sections of the country, Dr. Sanua found, half the Christians marry outside their own churches. His figure for Jews is 17 per cent, nationally.

The Catholic and Jewish mixed marriages that fail founder less often on a direct clash of convictions than on the religious indifference of one partner, Dr. Sanua reported. Church and family pressures create extra problems.

But he also noted that strong religious ties on the part of either or both parties are a source of conflict in the raising of children in general, as well as in their religious training.

His investigation found that the pre-marital promises on religious training of children, asked by the Catholic Church of non-Catholic partners, are often broken. One report, said Sanua, disclosed that in half the cases involving Catholic-Protestant marriages the children were raised as Protestants.

Topic Under Discussion

Two recent dialogues affected Catholic dialogue with other Churches on mixed marriages. During the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy, it was reported that the two religious leaders discussed the establishment of a Catholic-Orthodox committee of theologians to work out a common approach to the issue.

A committee of this sort lately was established by the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission. Similar groups have been in existence for Vatican discussions with the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, for more than a year.

In the U.S., during the past year, Catholic theologians have held national-level talks with Orthodox and Presbyterian-Reformed experts.

The topic was one of the most lively on the agenda of the recent Synod of Bishops in Rome. The Synod confrontation gave an interesting index of how opinions on the subject have been developing.

The working paper on mixed marriages presented at the Synod was itself the product of interaction between divergent points of view. Originally, paper was prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Holy Office), without consulting the Secretariat for Christian Unity, an agency deeply involved in discussions on mixed marriages.

Objecting to the document prepared by the Doctrinal Congregation, the Unity Secretariat said that it would prepare a

separate paper on the subject, more ecumenical in its orientation, for presentation to the Synod.

The result, reportedly after intervention by the Pope, was the preparation of a compromise document by the two agencies, a document which one observer called the most impartial position paper presented at the Synod.

The actual presentation of the paper, however, was described as far from impartial. Paolo Cardinal Marrella's introductory discussion of the paper was seen in some quarters as virtually an attack on it and his own views on mixed marriages were considered decidedly negative.

He described mixed marriage as "a danger to the Faith" and urged strong regulations against such marriages.

This point of view, prevalent among Catholics as recently as a generation ago, has apparently lost much of its influence in most areas with a large non-Catholic population. Statements by Catholic spokesmen, at the Synod and since, have differed sharply from the attitudes expressed by Cardinal Marrella.

The points of opposition reduce themselves basically to two: 1. That mixed marriages are already so prevalent that stringent measures against them have proved ineffective, and a reduction of restrictions will not lead to any significant increase.

A corollary is the view that the ecumenical advances to be gained from easing mixing marriage requirements outbalance negative effects.

2. That mixed marriages in themselves, if they are otherwise good marriages, can have wide effects, both on the individuals and on ecumenical relations.

CLIP and SAVE

Current Film Ratings National Catholic Office For Motion Pictures

CLASS A, Section 1 - Unobjectionable for General Patronage

Africa Addio	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	General's Perfect
American Dream, An	Alice	Alice	Four Guys To	Palaces of a Queen
Beautiful Swindler, The	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Reluctant Autobiography
Biggest Bundle of	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Return of the Gladiator
Blues, The	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Russian Adventure, The
Bon Losers	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Seven Gypsies for the
Chump	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Sound of Music
Conquered Ones, The	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Sullivan's Empire
Convent with Death,	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Death for the Male	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Devil's Angels	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Don't Mole Waves	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Emily	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
First of Dollars	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Inspector, You've Got to	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Be Kidding	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Madame	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Man, The Married	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the
Man, The Married	Alice	Alice	Follow Me Boys	Tarzan and the

CLASS A, Section 2 - Unobjectionable for Adults and Adolescents

CLASS A, Section 3 - Unobjectionable for Adults

CLASS A, Section 4 - Unobjectionable for Adults, with Reservations. These films require caution and some analysis and explanation as a protection to the uninformed against wrong interpretation and false conclusion.

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