

OXFORD MORALS DRAFT

A.

1. The hymn to Christ which is in the first Chapter of the Letter to the Colossians speaks of the Risen Lord in these terms:
"All things were created
through him and for him.
He is before all things
and in him all things hold together." (Colo. 1, 16-17).
2. It is the faith of the Church that all was created in Christ and that through the resurrection of Christ the whole of creation was renewed. Christians participate in this new creation in the common life they share by baptism. Through baptism, we become members of the Body of Christ and, therefore, "we are all parts of one another" (Eph. 4, 25). Our life is shared in common. The common life Christians share is consequently something much deeper than any specific resemblances. It is not just that each of us lives a life that is in various respects like the lives of others. Rather, our life is to be understood in the first instance as the life of the community, of the whole Body, and then as the life enjoyed by each individual who is a member of it.
3. This common life is specifically referred to in the New Testament in Acts 2, 44, and 4, 32. The most striking practical feature of it is the sharing of goods. This is referred to specifically in Acts; it takes on its full meaning when set in the context of what the New Testament as a whole teaches about Christians putting their gifts and resources at the service of the community. But a deeper dimension of the common life is revealed in what Acts 4, 32 says about Christians being of one heart and one mind. This is the root of the common life and is to be understood in terms of the central New Testament themes of grace and reconciliation. Christians have a common mind

since, through the cleansing waters of baptism, their minds have been made new. St Paul says to the Romans:

"Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind" (Rom. 12,2).

and to the Ephesians:

"Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4,23-24).

4. The common mind is a reality in the life of the Church. It is the fruit of God's saving activity in Christ, and is a vital aspect of our common life in the Body of Christ. Explaining the nature of life in the Church, St Paul says: "But we are those who have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2, 16).
5. The common mind includes in the first place fundamental common judgments which are implied by belief in the Gospel, judgments which constantly characterise the practical reasoning of believers, whatever their generation or circumstances. There is a finality in the values recognised by Christian moral conviction, and in the norms both positive and negative that are associated with them, that reflects the finality of Jesus Christ himself, "the same yesterday, today and forever". There are certain truths about the proper form of human life and decision which will always be affirmed by those who have reflected upon their belief that it is in Christ that human life is restored and disclosed. These truths are human from one point of view, divine from another: human in that they concern the shape of created order and our part in it, divine in that they depend upon God's word of affirmation in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
6. But the common mind also includes a consistent way of approaching new challenges and discriminating changing circumstances. It is constantly

renewed through the work of the Holy Spirit and its historical development is part of the development of the koinonia as whole. Questions are constantly being posed in new contexts, in relation to changing circumstances. The unchanging moral judgments of Christian faith yield further decisions which express our creative freedom in relation to the evolving realities we have to face. In this ongoing process of discernment, too, we expect to see a consistency which reflects the finality of the truths on which it is based, as well as a flexibility and diversity which reflects the changing context of decision.

7. Saying that Christians have a common mind is something more complex than affirming a shared understanding about certain moral values. It implies existing common moral judgments which enable us to face each new deliberative challenge, presuming on the agreement we have in Christian truth, ^{and} making it possible for there to be common decisions by which we act consistently with one another.
8. We believe Anglicans and Catholics can agree on these general observations even though they are not stated in the terms in which either Catholics or Anglicans would normally articulate them. But the points thus stated are at least sufficient to pose the question that must be addressed by Anglicans and Catholics as they seek to heal their historic divisions: Are we, despite four hundred years of separate development, sufficiently at one in our understanding and exercise of Christian practical reasoning to enable us to see it as a project we may undertake in the future together?
9. Since the time when the Malta Report first charted a course for Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue, there appears to have been a developing anxiety abroad that gains in common understanding of

doctrinal issues might be offset by deep underlying divisions about Christian morality. The CDF, in its Observations on the Final Report of ARCIC-I, asked that "moral teaching" be given an "important place" among the remaining "points which constitute an obstacle to unity". An Anglican commentator on Anglican-Roman Catholic relations has articulated a view common among both Anglicans and Catholics that our methods of reaching moral judgments are quite distinct and that, especially in sexual ethics and medical ethics, there are "very considerable differences" between the two Communion.

10. These perceptions need careful attention, but they must also be examined critically. Perceived differences of approach can give rise to a caricature of Roman Catholic ethics, on the one hand, as oppressively authoritarian, and of Anglican ethics, on the other, as irresolutely relativist. To be sure, for the indissolubility of marriage and the question of contraception clear evidence of disagreement is available, in the one case a longstanding disagreement and in the other a more recent one. In the areas of medical ethics and other issues in sexual ethics, on the other hand, it would be difficult to establish formal disagreement of any great import. Fortunately, there seems to be little current concern that the Churches disagree on matters which in past centuries were thought to divide them: for example; once prevalent Anglican anxieties about Roman Catholic attitudes to truth-telling, or about the use of the seal of the confessional to subvert political authority, have vanished in the daylight of experience.

Distinctive Roman Catholic contributions to socio-economic and political theory in the last century have actually received some sympathetic enthusiasm among Anglican respondents. In what follows, we

shall propose that there do not exist fundamental differences in the biblical and theological perspectives from which we view the exercise of Christian moral judgment (Section B); nor differences in the way that moral judgments are made that are of such weight as to preclude our being united in the exercise of practical reasoning for the continuing formation of a common mind (Section C). And in conclusion (Section D) we shall make some observations about the two subjects on which there has been definite disagreement.

B.

1. Our aim in this section is to outline biblical and theological perspectives on Christian morality. Christian morality is based on the Christian gospel. At the heart of the gospel is the revelation that God confers freedom on fallen humanity, a freedom brought to us by Christ (Rom. 6 18-23; Gal. 5 1). It is a freedom from sin; for the grace of God enables the redeemed, to overcome their tendency to perform acts which are displeasing to God, which enmesh them in habits of sin leading to eternal death, and, healed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, it enables them to obey God and perform acts which are motivated by faith and love, which accord with the divine will and lead to eternal life. It is a freedom from death (the wages of sin) and the fear of death which holds them in lifelong bondage (Heb. 2 13, 14). It is a freedom from the obligation to observe the Mosaic law, God's gracious provision leading humankind to Christ, and from all merely human precepts (Gal. 3 23-4; Col. 2 20-23). It is a freedom from domination by 'principalities and powers', forces hostile to God, and from the devil (Eph. 6 10-12). It is a freedom from guilt and the fear of punishment (1 Jn. 4 18). It is a freedom from darkness, for the redeemed see God, now with the eyes of faith, but one day will see Him face to face (1 Cor. 3 12; 1 Jn. 3 2, Mt. 5 8). Set free, the redeemed are empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead holy, blameless and irreproachable lives (1 Col. 1 22), lives renewed after the image of God (Col. 3 10) bearing fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5 22) becoming what God meant them to be from the first.

2. As we have seen, the new life of Christian freedom is not an individualistic affair, between the individual alone and God, it is inescapably communal. Christ calls together a new community, a body, a family; we are members one of another, equally children of the one God and having obligations of love towards each other (Eph. 2,11-22; 4 25; Col. 3 12-15). Through his new community, Christ lays the foundations of a renewed social order in which, although it is not identical with the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom is present in anticipation, and which prepares the way for the Kingdom in its fullness. In the midst of the old social order, the Christian community should be a sign of the new order which God is building in Christ, pointing towards a new way of relating, and witnessing to the power of God at work through the Risen Lord. Small communities within the larger Christian community can have a special witnessing function, the characteristic features of this new way of life include mutual forgiveness, mutual service and community of goods. So the Christian way of life makes political, social, cultural and economic demands.
3. Because we worship and follow Christ and seek the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, studying the same scriptures and trying to remain faithful to the same apostolic tradition, Christians are in agreement about characteristic features of the Christian way of life, about its ideals and values. In one way or another we seek to practice mutual forgiveness, mutual service and community of goods, patience, forbearance, humility, kindness, justice, chastity, and all the virtues taught and exemplified by Christ.

4. Christian freedom is not lawless. Christians are under obedience to Christ whose servants they are. They are led by the Spirit of Christ to do good works 'which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them' (Eph.2 10). The Holy Spirit purifies the redeemed conscience, permitting the children of God to understand the design of God which is written in their being and to obey its exigencies. They are summed up in the law of love (Rom. 3 10) which includes, but goes beyond, the Decalogue (Mt 19 6-22). So Christians are under authority. And authority in morals is the claim made on us by the will of God, revealed in Christ.

5. Whoever willingly and knowingly violates the law of Christ to which an informed and redeemed conscience bears witness, sins. To turn away from the law of Christ and embrace sin is to separate oneself from Christ and from the life and freedom which are his gift. Habits of sin dull the conscience, imprisoning the sinner in darkness. Individuals and communities can drift into sin without a clear perception of what they are doing, so we are warned to watch and pray. Sin breaks down the koinonia, setting up counter-communities; for there is a sort of solidarity in sin, a collusion of fallen mankind against God, which manifests itself in sinful structures and corrupt and oppressive institutions, and one task of the Church is to unmask these. Sin need not have the last word for, by the grace of God, while in this life, repentance is always possible.
6. Christ is the 'prototype and source of our new humanity' (Salvation and the Church, 19). This is not discontinuous with the old humanity, which it restores and elevates. Neither are the ethical requirements of Christian living entirely new. Whatever in human wisdom is genuinely good, and whatever in the Old Law was of permanent validity, are taken up in Christ who is himself the full revelation of God, 'whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Moral knowledge is only perfect in Christ. All else must be evaluated and interpreted under the authority of the gospel.
7. The Christian Church has received from Christ the mission to proclaim to the sinful world which he wills to save the law of love as taught and lived by Christ himself. She must not remain at the level of generalities but must show how the Lord's commandment is to be applied concretely. The passage of time brings new discoveries and changed

circumstances, so the teaching of Scripture is interpreted and appropriated in the tradition and thus applied anew in each generation. All who live faithfully in the koinonia share in this task of creative application of the moral truths of the gospel, and the ordained teaching ministry, in unity with the bishops of the Church, has the task of testing their work and safeguarding fundamental truth (cf Final Report, Authority 1,18; Elucidations 5).

8. The teaching authority of the ordained ministry is a service to the faithful, and is carried out under the authority of the Word of God and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit; otherwise it would have no claim to be heard. Nor can the ordained ministry be expected to have an answer to every question which faces the faithful (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 43). It is for the faithful, in whose hearts the Spirit dwells to form their consciences, paying careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church (*Dignitates humanae*, 14) and responding creatively to the challenges facing them, seeking to discern God's will in the concrete circumstances of their lives (Rom. 12:1-2). In this task they should be able to count on the support of their pastors. Thus authority and conscience are not opposed to each other. Authority serves conscience, not constraining it, but giving it direction in its exercise of mature freedom. On these general perspectives our two communions are agreed.

C1 There have, however, been differences, and still are; and it is our task to assess them. Not every kind of difference is a major obstacle to the fellowship between our churches, and some may be a positive enrichment of it. A common mind does not mean rigid uniformity, for within the Christian community there is room for diversity at many levels, which is part of the gift of God; but there is always need to safeguard the fundamental moral unity of our witness to the Gospel.

C2 By way of introduction it is important to note how many differences of emphasis between us have arisen because our moral traditions have developed in different cultural settings, different geographical locations and different social, political and economic circumstances. The settings in which Christians live vary considerably, both geographically and in time, and it can easily happen that legitimate developments within one setting contrast sharply with practice in another, simply because circumstances differ so widely, something that can occur even within one communion and not only between two. Since each local church has the responsibility of enunciating the demands of the Gospel in its own context, it must, for example, engage in a serious search for social justice and endeavour to support marriage and family life within the context of problems

and developments in its own situation. As it does so, its thinking will constantly be challenged and stimulated by its direct practical experience, which will suggest new approaches and furnish new insights. The upshot may be that differences emerge in the way that some issues are perceived from one local church to another, and in the priority of urgencyⁱⁿ which issues are ranked. Quite often this may yield a difference in disciplinary practice - a fact that must be borne in mind when we come to assess differences in discipline between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in such areas as marriage.

C3 Although they have not developed in complete isolation from each other, Anglican and Roman Catholic moral teachings each bear the stamp of their own cultural and philosophical context. It is true that both communions exist in more than one cultural situation; nevertheless most of the formative Anglican development took place within the English-speaking world and much of the Roman Catholic development was shaped by the cultural traditions of Southern Europe, and there are, as a result, some generalisations that can be made about their respective characteristics. A sense of the autonomy of the secular sphere developed, for various reasons, more strongly in Anglicanism, with a corresponding predisposition to look favourably on democratising and secularising social changes. Roman Catholicism felt a stronger need to subject these developments to critical scrutiny. This has resulted in differently nuanced attitudes towards political structures, technological innovations and secular professions. This has

affected the ways in which each has approached questions of bioethics raised from within the medical profession. Differences of discipline in regard to marriage are also in some degree attributable to different perceptions of the autonomy of the secular sphere. In many aspects of its thinking on such matters the Anglican tradition has been quite representative of the wider Protestant tradition, and in the remarks that follow we shall sometimes use the word "Protestant" where what is to be said about Anglicanism would apply equally to other Protestant churches.

Six points on which difference of approach has been observed invite special mention: -

- C4 1. There is a difference in the process by which our two communions provide moral teaching. This difference is often referred to as a disagreement on "moral authority", but that description is misleading. Moral authority, as we have said, is the claim made upon us by the will of God, by what is "good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom.12:2). We disagree neither on this principle nor upon its implications. Where different assumptions do emerge, however, is on how we mediate the claim of God's will to one another in our teaching ministry, that is to say, on ecclesial authority; and in the realm of moral teaching they are no greater and no less than they are in the realm of dogma. The teaching magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church is exercised by the bishops collectively and includes a central teaching office exercised by the Bishop of Rome. Anglican churches have assumed that it is usually sufficient for authority to teach morals to reside with individual presbyters or bishops in the exercise of their pastoral and

preaching ministry; and only when particular controversies have needed wider consideration have they felt the need of a more broadly-based process, a need which in recent times has been met sometimes by national synods and sometimes by the Lambeth Conference.

C5 To this we may add a further difference, more a matter of temperament than of structure. Anglicans are less inclined to attribute authority to recent exercises of teaching, and they appeal more readily to formulations which have, over a period of time, proved their worth. Roman Catholics expect to be able to repose confidence in any ordinary exercise of the teaching magisterium from the moment at which it is propounded, although they recognise that situations change and with the passage of time some teachings can become dated. To these differences in structure and style of moral teaching the Final Report of ARCIC-1, which claimed convergence on our understandings of authority, is relevant.

C6 2. There has, in the second place, been a preference among Anglicans for leaving the church's moral teaching without official definition wherever it has seemed safe to do so, and this invites a contrast with the Roman Catholic concern to put the church's view on record. There is a great deal more Anglican moral instruction going on in practice than could ever be proved from formal episcopal and synodical pronouncements. Historically, sermons rather than pronouncements have been the place where such teaching has been found. This caution about definition affects also

the form in which Anglican statements are made, especially on matters where, despite a high degree of moral certainty, there are ongoing scientific or philosophical questions which may need to be kept open.

C7 Contrast, for example, the wording of the resolution of the General Synod of the Church of England on abortion (1983) with the way in which the same subject is spoken of in the Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1987). The Anglican statement reads: "This Synod believes that all human life including life developing in the womb is created by God in his own image and is, therefore, to be nurtured, supported and protected". The Roman Catholic document is very much more extended; but the following sentences may reasonably be extracted from it for the purposes of comparison: "From the moment of conception, the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way... The human being must be respected - as a person - from the very first instant of his existence". The Anglican statement notably avoids any philosophical terminology which might commit it to a particular theoretical anthropology ("person") or metaethics ("absolute"), and relies solely on the biblical category derived from Genesis 1:27. It avoids surrounding the moral demand with precise delimitation ("the moment of conception") and employs not a hint of rhetorical forcefulness in its expression. By contrast the Roman Catholic statement is both forceful and precise; and the same document is prepared to elaborate a theoretical presentation of the human status of the fertilized ovum,

though this is accompanied by the reminder that "the Magisterium has not expressly committed itself to an affirmation of a philosophical nature". These differences in approach are considerable; yet when every allowance has been made for them, the distance between the substantive moral positions of the two churches in their declarations may be measured in centimetres. Precisely, the difference is this: that the Anglican synod explicitly acknowledges that an abortion may sometimes be justified by a threat to the life of the mother. The Roman Catholic document, like its predecessor, the Declaration on Procured Abortion of 1974, will not open the question beyond making a categorical prohibition of "direct killing", a prohibition which, of course, requires the corollary category of a permissible "indirect" abortion.

C8 3. There has been a historical difference in the two communions' attitudes to casuistry - that is to say, the discipline in moral thought whereby a general rule is applied to specific situations, especially those which present unusual difficulties. Until about 1700 the tradition of casuistic thought was common to Catholics and Protestants, but from that time it fell out of favour in the Protestant world, which came to distrust the complexity of such moral analysis and to suspect it of latent dishonesty. For a period, at least, the complexities of context which could make moral decisions agonising fell out of sight of Protestant moral theorists and became the province of writers of fiction. In their desire for greater theoretical simplicity Protestants often favoured a radical appeal to a single all-encompassing moral principle, sometimes Scrip-

tural and sometimes philosophical in provenance, which tended to be subjective in content, identifying in one or another way the motive that was held to characterise all good deeds. The most famous and influential example was Kant's "categorical imperative". This had the effect that specific moral norms addressed to different spheres of practical decision were given a secondary, and so a relative position in the context of Protestant ethics. In a more recent period Protestants have occasionally gone so far as to doubt whether there are any exceptionless moral norms other than all-encompassing subjective norms of motive.

C9

The lasting effect of this historical divergence upon contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic thinking should not, however, be exaggerated. It is not the case that Catholics think morality to be objective and susceptible of detailed prescription while Protestants think it subjective and unpredictable. Each recognises both objective and subjective aspects. In the Catholic tradition it is held that it is through the practical reasoning of the knowing subject that objective goods and the norms which secure them are identified. Anglicans, too, hold convictions about objective forms of behaviour, sometimes acknowledging norms to which they allow no exceptions (current attitudes to racial justice are a case in point) and sometimes appropriating a common tradition of making careful distinctions (as in their treatment of war). The opposition of subjectivism and objectivism is an unhelpful caricature, which fails to identify the twin evils of atomistic individualism and arbitrary authoritarianism which too often beset modern

ethics. These evils tend to flourish together, and in different ways both subjectivism and an over-developed objective casuistry can foster them. In their place what is needed is an understanding of the Christian ethos as a community possession, an emphasis which has been importantly rediscovered both by Catholic and Protestant moralists in recent times.

C10 4. The Catholic tradition of moral concepts has made more use than the Protestant tradition of an analogy between morality and the positive legal order. The "moral law" is conceived to resemble positive law in certain respects, with God in the place of legislator and the church in the place of the court that interprets and applies it. This analogy has given rise to assertions that sound harsh in Anglican ears, for example the claim of Paul VI in Humanae Vitae that Jesus Christ "constituted (the apostles) as the authentic guardians and interpreters... not only of the law of the gospel but also of natural law". The import of this kind of statement is that Christ equipped his apostles not only to explain his own teaching but to engage in moral reasoning that would explore its implications, and provide authoritative guidance. The legal analogy is an important one for illuminating certain features of Christian moral reason, and, moreover, one with which the Anglican tradition is not unfamiliar, as can be seen especially from 17th-century writers and in the moral writers of the evangelical and Anglo-Catholic revivals. But Natural Law is not a kind of positive legislation, and Catholic moralists who employ legal concepts seek thereby to establish the binding force of the judgements of true practical reasoning.

C11

5. An important factor in the independent development of Catholic and Anglican moral theology has been the sacrament of penance. The Council of Trent standardised the practice of penance in a way that made it a vital feature of the Catholic ministry and profoundly affected the development of Catholic moral theology. In the Anglican context the use of the confessional, though of importance within parts of the communion, has not shaped the moral thinking of the church in the same way. This appears from the different approaches traditionally adopted by standard books on moral theology in the two traditions. Anglican writers aimed to stimulate a capacity for moral self-interrogation in the believer who responds to the general preaching and teaching of the church; while Roman Catholic books were written more for the confessor, to give him help in directing certain penitents. To Anglican eyes this has sometimes seemed as though the sacrament were being used to impose a purely heteronomous moral discipline, while Roman Catholics have valued it as a vital focus for the ongoing rejection of sin. Despite these differences, each side can acknowledge the other's concern as its own: Anglicans, too, insist on the importance of repeated self-examination and repentance while in the Roman Catholic church one of the aims of the renewal of the sacrament of penance has been to enable Christians to understand fully what it means to take personal responsibility for their own actions.

C12

6. Not much weight need be placed on an alleged difference of theological sources in moral reasoning, namely that Anglicans appeal primarily to the authority of Scrip-

ture while Roman Catholics make extensive use of the principles of Natural Law. For Roman Catholic moral theology, too, treats the norms of Scripture as its final authority. This was given a new emphasis in the Second Vatican Council (*Optatam Totius*, n.16), but even in the seventeenth century it was sufficiently apparent to Protestant moralists who felt free to make extensive borrowings from Catholic material. Correspondingly, Anglicans, as we observed above, have a place for Natural Law within their own tradition; and, if anything, they are more eclectic in their use of rational principles and less committed to traditional concepts for defining the Christian ethos.

C13 The question of the relationship between Natural Law and Scripture only became a vexed one when the two were misunderstood as alternative "sources" of moral knowledge. But Natural Law does not consist of another collection of moral teachings, like the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount but of a different provenance. It is the presupposition of our faculty of practical reasoning as it seeks to discern God's purposes in the created order. The moral teachings of Scripture are authoritative precisely by providing the basis and the text for our rational reflection and deliberation in harmony with the tradition of reflection in the church, and not by foreclosing on moral reason before it has done its work. Both communions have ways of saying that Christian ethics must receive its sense of direction from the Scriptural text and must be elaborated by the work of moral reasoning.

C14 None of these six differences of approach that we have reviewed amounts to a substantive disagreement on the nature of the ethics of the Gospel. Taken together, however, they do go some way to explain how the suspicion of substantive disagreements may sometimes have arisen. This suspicion, once conceived, may be fanned by the kind of half-overhearing that inevitably takes place wherever our two communions live in close proximity. Some particular view on a contentious issue - say, of medical or sexual ethics - is expressed in a pulpit or a synod and taken up by the press; it is all too easy to suppose that what one is hearing is the authentic view of the communion. Yet in both our communions there may be heard a variety of opinions on difficult subjects, some of which the church may yet have to disown, or may have disowned already. A study of the pronouncements of the Lambeth Conference and some national Anglican synods on the one hand, and of the Roman magisterium on the other, does not support the conclusion that, apart from the well-known disagreements on contraception and the indissolubility of marriage, there are other significant disagreements of substance between our communions.

* * *

D1 Finally we address the two points on which there is definite disagreement, and ask how serious these are.

D2 On the indissolubility of marriage there has been a divergence between Catholic and Protestant opinions since the Reformation. The Council of Trent in 1563 reaffirmed a traditional Augustinian interpretation of Christ's

teaching, namely the two associated views that (i) the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of either partner; and (ii) that neither, not even the innocent partner, is able to contract a second marriage in the lifetime of the other. Continental Protestant Reformers, on the other hand, argued that divorce was possible on the grounds of adultery or desertion. The Church of England remained for a long time irresolute on this matter. Cranmer's projected revision of Canon Law would have brought the church into line with a conservative Protestantism, but the actual revision of 1604 left the matter untouched. By the nineteenth century, however, the general availability of secular divorce had been accepted de facto by the church, and in 1888 the Lambeth Conference hesitantly recognised divorce for adultery, while leaving the question of the innocent party's eligibility for remarriage open.

D3 Like other Christians, Anglicans have always believed that lifelong permanence was an essential determinant of the marriage covenant, and that divorce could not properly be an option on the horizon of any married couple. The judgment of 1988 did not imply that the Anglican churches would ever acquiesce in, or encourage divorce, let alone accept any pastoral role in granting it; but only went so far as to acknowledge that some marriages dissolved by the State had actually ceased to exist. In 1975 the A.R.C. International Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Application to Mixed Marriages was able to declare that it could find "no fundamental difference of doctrine between the two churches as regards what marriage of its nature is or the ends which it is ordained to serve". Disagreement touches only the way in which we understand and respond

pastorally to the phenomenon of marital failure. Anglicans have felt free to say that in some cases what was a marriage has ceased to be one; while Roman Catholic pastoral practice has been concerned only with judging when what appeared to be a valid marriage was not so in fact. Pastoral discipline has developed on different lines in our two communities corresponding to these differences in conception; yet the pastoral goal is clearly the same: to strengthen marriages that exist, to heighten the responsibility with which marriages are undertaken, and to minister discerningly and sensitively to those whose marriages have actually failed - whether or not they have remarried, and whether or not the church has given its blessing. In this context the Commission on Marriage believed it possible for each church to recognise the Christian authenticity of the pastoral approach adopted by the other, even while it thought it had good reason to think its own approach better. Such a difference can, at any rate, pose no greater obstacle to Anglican-Roman Catholic relations than it does to Orthodox-Roman Catholic relations, and may very possibly pose less, in that the Anglican church has been unwilling to admit the concept of ecclesiastical divorce.

D4 We may add a note of regret that the agreement reached by the A.R.C. Commission on the Theology of Marriage (which was welcomed by the Lambeth Conference in 1978 and...) has not yet yielded a general improvement in pastoral cooperation in the marriages of practising Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It seems clear, however, that the roots of this pastoral difficulty do not lie in disagreement on doctrine or morals.

In this situation there is still an opportunity for useful dialogue on Christian responsibility in procreation which could proceed with the hope of yielding strong common affirmations that would put the disagreement in a new light. Meanwhile the pastoral application of the positions of the encyclical in such a way as will come sensitively to grips with the dilemmas of responsible parents is a matter of continuing study within the Roman Catholic Church.

D7 . To this we think it appropriate to add two recommendations, aware that perceived difference, even where the perceptions are exaggerated, can all too easily lead to real differences. The first is that wherever it is practicable national hierarchies and national churches should seek to build an element of ecumenical cooperation into their routine studies and pronouncements on moral and social issues. This step, anticipated in a recommendation of the Malta Report (§ 14), has been taken only occasionally and sporadically to the best of our knowledge. Isolated examples have come to our attention in which a participant from one of our two communions has been invited to engage in the studies of the other, and we think that this practice at least should become a matter of course and that, where appropriate, studies should be conducted entirely on a common basis.

D8 A second recommendation concerns the internal discussion of moral and social issues within each communion, bearing in mind the anxieties that can arise from inter-continental differences. We hope that our two churches will

each re-examine the processes of consultation that link the national church or hierarchy with the worldwide communion, and ask whether they are equipped to give the necessary assistance to the formation of moral guidance, so that the two ends of worldwide unity in Christian moral understanding and of local responsibility for discernment and decision are equally well served.

%%%%%%%%%