Healing Touch to Marital Breakdown: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Approach

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Introduction

When a man and a woman get married, they commit themselves to spending their lives in a new relationship. It is a partnership of love, made richer and deeper through the union of persons (soul and body). Like many people, Christians regard it as the best context for nurturing children. In any Christian marriage ceremony the bride and groom must confirm that they want to marry each other and express their willingness with the exchange of consent. They exchange rings, tie *tali* (marriage pendant) and apply vermilion on the forehead of the woman depending on cultural practices. They are worn as a reminder of these promises for the duration of their married life.

Generally Christians believe that marriage vows are unbreakable, so that even in the distressing circumstances in which couples separate, they are still married from God's point of view. This is so in the Roman Catholic Church, although occasionally a marriage is declared to be null (in other words, it never really was a marriage). Other

Christians have accepted divorce and remarriage in some circumstances, for example, to relieve one partner of intolerable hardship, unfaithfulness or desertion. There is rarely marriage breakdown without pain. Even when divorce comes as a relief, it follows the pain of broken relationships and dreams, and great anxiety about the impact on children. Christians seek to uphold the seriousness of wedding vows while responding with compassion to deep hurts by recognizing that divorce.

In this article I shall try to attempt 'Healing Touch to Marital Breakdown' on the basis of biblical, theological and pastoral approaches giving due respect to the latest teaching of Pope Francis.

1. The Biblical Foundation: Marriage as God's Plan

1.1. The Old Testament

The scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of the wedding feast of the lamb (Gen 1:26-27 & Rev 19:7,9). Marriage was God's plan from the beginning and was not human's idea. It is God's plan that marriage should be the way in which children are born and raised in the security and love created by one man and one woman committed to each other all through their life (Ps 127:3 & Mt 19:6).

The church's understanding of the sacredness of marriage is rooted in the narrative of creation in Genesis. "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and

they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The Lord blessed their union and orders them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). The sexual difference between man and woman and their sexual encounter with each other are belonging to the order of creation and as part of God's plan.[1] According to the OT tradition, marriage is primarily an Institution for the preservation of husband's clan. That is why, children especially sons are regarded as a blessing and a gift from God (Gen 24:60). Childlessness was considered a disgrace (Gen 30:1-6; 1 Sam 1:6-11). Marriage is a symbol of covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Hos 2; Is 54:4-5; Jer 2:2).

1.2. The New Testament

The covenant between God and humanity is realized in the person of Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom of God's covenant with human beings. He is the bridegroom of God's people of the new covenant (Mk 2:9). Jesus deepens the Hebrew concept of marriage, insisting on the oneness that exists between man and woman.[2] He speaks against divorce so strongly and according to him the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-12). In Mk 10, Jesus apparently repudiates the prevailing Jewish views on divorce and makes marriage an indissoluble institution of divine origin. The exception recorded in Mt 19:9 where unchastity (*porneia*) may be grounds for divorce, is an evidence that the early church found Jesus' literal ideal hard to uphold.[3]

According to Paul, marriage is a symbol of Christ's union with his church (Eph 5:21-33). When the husbands love their wives as their own flesh, they are only doing what Christ does with the church. On the other hand, Paul wishes that the faithful would renounce marriage in favour

of virginity because he thinks that the Lord will soon return. He seems to reduce marriage something of secondary importance in view of the second coming of Christ.[4]

Marriage was the first institution founded by God in human society. The fact that marriage was established before man's fall into sin implies that marriage is holy. The miracle where Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-11) shows that God wants people to celebrate the event of marriage as he was pleased to grant this gift to man.

1.3. An Appraisal of the O.T. and the N.T.

In God's plan marriage is the basis for a morally and socially stable society. That is why God hates adultery (Ex 20:14), fornication (1 Thes 4:3-6), incest (Lev 18:6ff) and homosexuality (Rom 1:24-28). These things disrupt and twist God's plan for a stable human society. Bible tells us that God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Heb 13:4). With regard to marriage, family, sex etc., there are numerous traditions in the N.T.

Marriage is God's plan for all people and all cultures in the world. The family cannot be replaced by any other institution in God's plan for humankind. It was God who performed the first marriage in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:21-25). It is human who spoiled marriage through immorality and unfaithfulness. God's design for marriage is between one woman and one man. Firstly, it guarantees care, provision and protection for the wife throughout her life (Col 3:12-13; 1 Pet 3:7). Secondly, there is a need for emotional security and development of children. When parents separate or get divorced, children feel great emotional pain and insecurity. Thirdly, every spouse needs

to know that he or she alone has the exclusive love and care of his or her spouse and there is no other person who shares it with him or her.[5] Since God created one man for one woman at the creation, polyandry and polygamy are not the will of God. The first polygamist mentioned in the bible, i.e., Lamech was a murderer (Gen 4:23). Bible shows polygamy and polyandry produce lifelong conflicts and problems. Abraham never had happiness in his home life from the time he took Hagar as a second wife: the jealousy between Hagar and Sarah (Cf. Gen 16:4-5; 21:10).

2. Divorce as Human Plan: The Biblical Foundation

Scripture is the primary source of any Christian teaching, and therefore, the essential test for the validity of any dogmatic teaching or ecclesiastical practice. By looking at the scriptural evidence, we may not be able to solve debates and differences concerning marriage and divorce, but at least we may be in a better position to see what scripture allows and so to decide whether a future relaxation of Catholic position is possible or not.

2.1. The Old Testament

Marriage in Israel was a private affair rather than religious or public concern. Two texts in Genesis (1:27ff and 2:18-25) indicate the ends of marriage and seem to imply that the ideal union is a monogamous one. Elsewhere, the O.T. makes an explicit connection between God's covenant and the married state. The marriage and covenant bonds are both enriched by mutual exchange and are portrayed as exclusive and indissoluble unions of love. This is true especially in the prophets (Hos 2:5, 13, 19-20).

The Jewish legal code contains no explicit regulation of divorce, in contrast to what is being sometime thought. The passage in Deuteronomy (24:1-4) does not command divorce though it tolerates the existing custom. The aim of the legislation is to make divorce irrevocable once it has taken place, and so to discourage marriage union lightly. The legal causes for divorce are nowhere mentioned in the O.T. The only hint of them is in Deut 24:1, wherein the expression *erwat* which indicates something indecent or unseemly.[6] This was interpreted with varying degrees of strictness by the different rabbinical schools and was an issue of contention in the N.T.

2.2. The New Testament

The teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce is found in Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18; Mt 19:3-12 and Mt 5:31-32. In Mark's account a hostile audience questions Jesus on the lawfulness of divorce. Jesus claims that Moses dispensed the law due to hard-heartedness but the original intention of God was marriage be indissoluble i.e., "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mk 10:9). Mk 10:11 is a revolutionary statement running counter to any known Jewish interpretations. In the Jewish law a woman could commit adultery against her husband, but a husband could not do so against his wife. Mk 10:12 is generally understood as a Roman corollary to v. 11, for Roman law allowed the woman to divorce her husband. Luke, however, does not relate the conflict setting. He merely states "everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Lk 16:18). Luke does not make any exception.

In Mathew (19:3-9) the issue is whether divorce can be allowed *for any cause* and so centres on the grounds of divorce other than the lawfulness of divorce itself. The Pharisees were trying to get Jesus to take sides on the controversy between the rabbinical schools of Hillel and Shammai over the interpretation of *erwat dabar* in Deut 24:1. Jesus refers them to Genesis twice and insists that man cannot put asunder what God has joined together. Thus Jesus refuses to take sides in the debate over the grounds men could take to sunder a marriage. But then evangelist adds a phrase which seems to contradict the preceding argumentation for the absolute indissolubility of marriage: "But I say to you, that everyone who divorces his wife, except for unchastity and marries another, commits adultery" (Mt 5:32).[7]

2.3. An Appraisal by Scholars

A vast majority of Protestant scholars maintain that the term indicates adultery as grounds for divorce and say that it was introduced into the text by a later generation of Christians among whom the practice of divorce on these grounds was accepted. They insist that it does not represent the teaching of Jesus. However, it seems unlikely that even a later scribe would have made an addition which clashed so obviously with the context, which emphasizes the absolute indissolubility of marriage and shows Jesus refusing to take sides in the rabbinical dispute. Otherwise it would appear that Jesus would align himself with the rabbinical school of Shammai which allowed divorce only in the case of adultery.[8]

Most scholars today believe that Jesus himself never admitted no exception to the indissolubility of marriage

and the exceptive clauses could have arisen in the early Church. Our task is to seek an explanation which does not amount to a contradiction of Jesus' teaching as expressed in Mark, Luke and 1 Cor 7:10. We shall look into a few more respected interpretations of these clauses. According to classical interpretation, *porneia* indicates marital infidelity and *apoluein* refers to separation without the right to remarry. However, this opinion is waning in popularity, for it seems unlikely that *apoluein* should mean separation in Mt 19:9 and full divorce including the possibility of remarriage in Mt 19:3.[9]

The position of the Catholic Church is that Christ's absolute condemnation of divorce and remarriage as reported by Mark and Luke represent the law of God revealed through him. There is some scriptural evidence that this is true of his teaching on divorce. Mt 5:31-32 falls within the Sermon on the Mount, which is itself a statement of Christian ideals and attitudes. Therefore one can also make a case for understanding Christ's insistence on the indissolubility of marriage as an ideal to be seriously pursued rather than as a law to be literally enforced.

3. The Church's Healing Touch

Divorce and Remarriage are the twin issues that disturb the Church today. The pastor of a parish confronts them at close quarters when parishioners come for counsel. Even the Christian parents to whom divorce has always been unthinkable are stunned to find that it has penetrated into their own families. If the biblical understanding of divorce is correctly understood, then one thing is clear:

that there is no rule of thumb to be applied mechanically in all cases, no readymade list of grounds on which divorce is to be permitted or denied. The constraints of the Church's situation arise directly from the teachings of Christ. On the one hand, it is God's design and intention that marriage is for life and is not to be ended for any reason other than death. On the other hand, the Bible affirms that God's grace extends to every sinful breach of God's will, including his will regarding marriage.

This is the Church's dilemma, a dilemma that it has not always successfully been resolved, as is admitted by many Christian communities. For, example, the Church, attempting to be faithful to the biblical teaching of the permanence of marriage, has frequently closed its doors to the divorced, in practice if not in theory. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the divorce rate rose dramatically and involved between 40 to 50 percent of all marriages.[10] The net effect of this state of affairs was that Churches that maintained a high view of marriage were automatically distanced from a growing percentage of the population, a distancing increased by the fact that five out of six men and three out of four women married shortly after divorce.[11] What is amounted to was that a large and growing segment of population was placed beyond the Church's ministry.[12]

Hence, given the sociological phenomena, the Church is confronted with two main issues such as fidelity to the values of the Gospel and also to the cultural existential realities which go in opposite directions. Under this changing scenario, we shall look into the healing touch of the Church in two ways.

3.1. Theological Approach

The *Magisterium* of the Church, especially since Vatican II, has referred repeatedly to the importance and the necessity of marriage preparation in ordinary pastoral care. This preparation cannot be reduced to simple information about what marriage is for the Church, and it has to be a real path of personal formation based on education. I shall, in this sub-section, deal with various theological writings that have taken up the gauntlet in countering the rising trends of post-modernism.

3.1.1. Marital Breakdown and Remarriage in the Churches Today

It is not the responsibility of the Church to re-shape the Gospel to suit the taste of the market place, but it is the responsibility of the Church to ask itself if the Gospel is being emptied of its meaning by the implicit claim that there are situations in which it has no word of grace to utter. The Church affirms both the permanence of marriage and the message of grace possibly forgiveness, yet in many concrete situations it is impossible to obtain both.

Denominations have reacted differently. For instance, the Anglican Church has made provision for a service of blessing of such marriages following a civil ceremony, even though it has been sternly criticised by many Anglican theologians. Of late the Church of England has allowed remarriages of divorcees in the Church.[13] The Roman Catholic Church, which in an earlier stage pronounced the penalty of excommunication on all who remarried following divorce, has also sensed that such a position did scant justice to the note of grace in the Gospel. Contemporary Catholic theologians, therefore, lay greater stress on the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* which made the

following points clear: (i) Catholics who are divorced and who have not remarried enjoy full and complete union with the Church. They are not excommunicated and may receive the holy Eucharist. (ii) Catholics who are divorced and remarried should not consider themselves as separated from the Church, for as baptised persons they can and, indeed, must share in its life. These persons, in other words, are not excommunicated from the Church and they should consider themselves members of the whole community of the faithful. (iii) Catholics who are divorced and remarried may not participate in the Eucharist because their new relationship, the new marital bond, objectively contradicts the first marital union, which the Church always desires to protect.[14] As we analyse the three formulas, we come to understand that the Church remains faithful to the permanence of marriage as well as the good news of grace and forgiveness. Hence, the position of *Familiaris consortio* shows the difficulty of holding together God's design for marriage as life-long and the word of pardon and grace to those who have failed in this design. It is good that we turn to some of the specific issues that give rise to leading problems in the current situation.

3.1.2. Theological Approach on Marriage in Post-Modern Times

Post-modern philosophy was born out of the fear of too much normative reality. It defends the individual ways of seeing the world and designing one's life in it. In contrast to the unity of fidelity and friendship that Augustine envisioned in marital *fides*, the modern assumption has grown to assume that marriage is an inherent self-contradiction: how can an intimate loving relationship provide a life-long commitment when we all know too well

how fragile those emotional bonds are? The more the relationship factor is brought to full pitch the less it can be meant to last. If the emphasis is on personal relationship, it is per definition a temporary thing. Fidelity should rather define the capacity to be faithful to oneself. Such faithfulness to oneself requires radical honesty towards the partner. True love can never stand still. Therefore, if a relationship has come to a standstill, love must flee from it in order to survive.

The fact that remarriage rates keep up with the increasing divorce rates certainly does not foster the assumption that marriage is becoming outdated. By and large, the logic of modern relationships amounts to this sobering pattern: on its contractual side, the relationship can be sustained as long as the terms and conditions are valid. Yet, on its romantic side the definition of validity is totally subjective.[15]

Marriage has become much more demanding in post-modern times. In former times we used to declare that to celebrate the marriage the couple must at least show the will to do what married people do within the Church.[16] The charm as well as the challenge of post-modern times concerns the individual's licence and desire to give his own structure to his life and his own marriage. It is understandable that in this institution the eagerness of people to get married decreases.[17] In a situation of irrevocable pluralism real ecclesial unity can only be achieved through the spiritual and practical orientation of one's life with regard to Christ. But this means individuals must possess real spiritual and theological competence. Therefore focus must be on teaching how to reflect on their

own lives in all its forms before God. All marriages have their problems, and it is fatally easy to seize upon a given problem and use it an excuse for seeking divorce when it is simply an idle and sinful evasion of the responsibility of paying the price of keeping one's covenant.[18]

The Christian's moral responsibility in marital crisis is always to seek reconciliation and to continue seeking it until all reasonable expectation of it has disappeared. It is true that we can never argue that a marriage is *broken beyond possibility of repair* and, therefore, there can never be a time when a Christian may justifiably sue for divorce. Indeed this argument against divorce was used by some fathers.[19] Yet it is hard not to conclude that in some cases, when actions that are very destructive, through distorted personalities and outlooks, reconciliation is very unlikely. This conclusion may be reached by Christians in those situations in good conscience with the recognition of failure other than with the desire to get their freedom.

3.1.3. Theological Healing Touch

In such a situation where divorce is the only response for a peaceful life, what could be the possible theological consideration?

Firstly, the act of divorce must function as a vehicle of penitence. It is not necessarily true that blame rests equally upon both partners in a failed marriage. No doubt things may have been said and done on both sides that did nothing to contribute to the survival of the marriage, but these can be scarcely be equated with the material causes that led to break-down. It is worth noting that in Mt 5:32, the husband who divorces his wife is held to be guilty along with his divorced wife.... In short, divorce by itself stands

as a condemnation because it is a departure from God's will that a husband will remain united to his wife (Gen 2:24). It is stated that divorce can be a sign of repentance by which two people face up to their failure. It can be a confession that they have not succeeded in living according to God's will. Divorce can, therefore, set one free to experience anew the mercy of God.[20]

Secondly, by formalising the end of the covenant, divorce also formalises the end of marriage. Human marriages are made between two sinful human beings, not between the infinite, holy and loving God. In the O.T., God's covenant with Israel is spoken of in terms of marital faithfulness and is never broken despite's Judah's infidelity. Therefore, the marriage covenant is also unbreakable. While the divine purpose inherent in the very meaning of marriage is that it be life-long, yet the effects of sin upon the relationship can be so grievous that the covenant loses all meaning and therefore is ended.

Thirdly, should marriage be envisaged, it must be in the light of the recognition of the previous failure, as well as in a solemn and human commitment to the Christian view of marriage as life-long. It is stated that the failure of love can destroy oneness, and civil divorce can annul the marriage, but only repentance can sever the bond of guilt for their failure which still unites husband and wife to one another. It is for each individual to sever the connection with the dead but persistent marriage, the sinful tragic past. For the impenitent, there ought to be no permission to remarry but the case of the repentant is different.[21]

This leads to the second prerequisite: honest acceptance of, and commitment to, Christian marriage as

permanent. The responsibility rests heavily on pastors to urge the probing conscience that reveals the real depth of such declarations as far as may be, so that the moral issues do not become lost in the emotion and glitter of a wedding ceremony.

3.2. Pastoral Approach

3.2.1. Pastoral Considerations

Firstly, the Church's attitude toward the divorced must be inclusive and welcoming and not exclusive and discriminatory. In one of the books it is quoted that the divorced people are like the lost sheep of the house of Israel as long as their relationship to the Church is concerned. The majority of the divorced people find new meaning in remarriage. This has become the prevailing pattern in our society. But it puts them in opposition to the Church, whose teachings hitherto allowed these people no room. It is in this connection that one frequently encounters the bitter comment that 'the Church is the only army that shoots its own wounded'.

The Church's actions will not change unless the attitude changes. A duty, therefore, rests upon the pastors to lead their congregations to the biblical understanding of divorce that, while frankly admitting that it is falling short of God's design, nonetheless does not constitute an automatic visa to outer darkness. In the words of a theologian, "Let the Church be bold in grace. Let the divorced and remarried feel fully accepted in the community of sinners saved by grace, for we are sinners all.... Set the remarried free to find their place in the Church, alongside those who experience the forgiving grace of God which may have been in less conspicuous areas of life's struggle."[22]

Secondly, the Church's ministry to the divorced and the remarried must be to seek to bring restoration and healing. This is possible meaningfully only on the understanding of marriage as a moral reality rather than a physical (as implied by the blood relationship view) or metaphysical (as implied by the view that marriage is absolutely indissoluble by nature). Neither of these views does justice to the biblical view of marriage as covenant because each assumes that when the assent is truly given to the marriage covenant, it can never be undone.[23] The effect of this can be to remove marriage from the moral sphere. *But where marriage can be the subject of the moral breakdown, it can also be the subject of moral restoration*, and only within such a context can there take place both the healing of the wounds that result from divorce and the restoration of broken relationships.

3.2.2. Pastoral Healing Touch

Within such a frame work, the pastoral care of the divorced will be directed to at least three distinguishable ends according to individual circumstances:

(i) The Objective of Mending Broken Marriages: this goes beyond the divorced to those separated but not yet divorced to those contemplating separation. The Church is the community of its reconciled, and her mission is to bring reconciliation wherever it is lacking. Beyond that, marriage is a covenant relationship to which the two parties have freely committed themselves before God and society. The centre of the meaning of marriage is the expression of the moral troth (covenantal faithfulness) in which two people marry each other before God and pledge to each other loyalty, trust, devotion and reliability.[24] The first pastoral

duty in marital breakdown is to seek to avert or reverse it on the basis of the original moral commitment.

(ii) The Recognition of Failure: Sometimes it has already been rendered impossible by the remarriage of one of the parties or one of the parties' refusal for reconciliation. The pastoral task then becomes that of seeking to bring healing where mending is fore-closed. The only secure base upon which healing can take place is the moral base. This is not to underestimate the emotional trauma sustained by the divorced. The primary moral reality where marriage is ended by divorce is a broken covenant. The first step toward healing is not the apportioning of blame but the recognition of failure. It is stated that all divorce is failure which represents the breach of God's intent. This does not mean that divorce is always a direct result of sin on the part of one or both partners. Yet of every divorce, it can be said that it is a consequence of the disorder brought into our world by sin.[25]

(iii) Understanding of the Remarried: A third setting in which pastoral care of the divorced finds expression is where divorce is followed by remarriage. Within a Christian frame work anyone who remarries following divorce or enters into marriage with an intended spouse who has been divorced should be brought to a clear recognition of several spiritual truths. The spiritual reality to be faced is that there can be no remarriage within a Christian frame work without meaningful commitment to Christian marriage as permanent and lifelong. The problem posed by such a requirement is very obvious: How can one be sure that such a commitment is no more than empty words, particularly since it comes from one who has made that

commitment before and broken it? There is no definite answer to this question. For one thing, the pastor who is to perform the ceremony is the custodian and trustee of the Christian view of marriage each time he or she conducts a marriage service. Through pastoral acquaintance with the couple, pastors are best placed to assess the depth of their responses and will be acutely aware of that, in addition to their responsibility to God, Church and society.[26]

3.2.3. Recent Approach of the Holy See

In a flight to Rome from Rio de Janeiro in 2013, Pope Francis spoke to reporters about the need for a stronger pastoral approach to marriage and divorced people and made a parenthetical reference to how Orthodox churches handle the breakup of marriages. "The Orthodox have a different practice," he said. They "follow the theology of *oikonomia* (economy or stewardship), as they call it, and give a second possibility; they permit" a second marriage, the pope had said. But he stressed that the Orthodox Church and Catholic Church have failed in two areas: teaching the faithful about the holiness and permanence of marriage; and providing an effective pastoral, healing response to those whose marriages have failed.

"The Catholic church and the Orthodox church both have the responsibility to teach the sanctity and unity of marriage – which is ultimately designed to help couples get to heaven – and to be cognizant and merciful when faced with human frailty," he said. He said a solution could be found through *penance* and *dispensation.*

Penance can be "a pastoral response to the problem of a marital breakdown and a successive marital union," he said, adding that penance, including acts of piety and

charity, has a long-standing tradition in the Eastern Church. While penance doesn't return a situation to the *status quo,* it does serve a purpose in healing the offender and repairing damage to the ecclesial community, he said.

"Perhaps both the Orthodox and the Catholic churches could accept the challenge to formulate a pastoral approach that does not abdicate responsibility to consider the facts of the former marriage, the spiritual state of the faithful who are seeking to remarry and the possibility that persons who remarry are not automatically excluded from full communion with the church".

A concern among canonists is that adopting *oikonomia* elicits a reaction that the "law has been abandoned and a 'feel-good' approach has been adopted," he said. But the Catholic Church does have a developed, codified understanding of economy: the dispensation.[27]

Conclusion:

Everyone enters into this world through the physical union of man and woman. Every culture in this world has its own set of customs and rules regarding marriage, sex and family. The best way to understand church's position on marriage is to study and reflect on the liturgical celebration of the matrimony. The liturgical text books reveal the doctrinal and dogmatic teachings on marriage as well as the place of marriage in the life of the church. The sacramental aspect of marriage is emphasized throughout the liturgical service. It is his grace that unites two persons into one unit. However, with changes in the society, certain values inherent in matrimonial relations

are put into jeopardy. But the Church never abandons her lost sheep. Through pastoral care, the Church inculcates her values to those divorced and remarried, and Catholics living in other forms of unions to remain obedient to the *Magisterium* of the Church and return to the flock.

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Endnotes

[1] Joseph Kallarangatt, "Marriage and Family in the Christian Tradition", in

Indian Journal of Family Studies, 1/2 (2003) p.8.

[2] Walter Kaspar, *Theology of Christian Marriage,* New York, 1977, p. 77.

[3] Dr. Joseph Kallarangatt, "Marriage and Family in the Christian Tradition", p. 9.

[4] Mc Brien, *Catholicism,* London, 1984, p. 789.

[5] Joseph Kallarangatt, "Marriage and Family in the Christian Tradition", p. 10.

[6] Willian J O'shea, "Marriage and Divorce: the Biblical Evidence", in

Theology Digest, XIX (1971) p. 4

[7] Joseph Kallarangatt, "Marriage and Family in the Christian Tradition", p. 10.

[8] J O'shea, "Marriage and Divorce: the Biblical Evidence", p. 8.

[9] Joseph Kallarangatt, "Marriage and Family in the Christian Tradition", p.8.

[10] Dominian, J., "The Consequences of Marital Breakdown", in Roberts, W., (ed.), *Divorce and Remarriage, Religious and Psychological Perspectives,* Kansas City, Sheed and Ward, 1990, p. 128.

[11] Dominian, J., "The Consequences of Marital Breakdown", p. 131.

[12] The point is illustrated vividly by the statistics for divorce and remarriage among Roman Catholics. Divorce rates among Roman

Catholics are approximately the same as those among the population at large. Coleman writes that at least 6 million U.S. Catholics have been divorced; and since 1978 U.S. diocesan marriage tribunals have processed approximately forty thousand annulment petitions each year. It is further estimated that seventy five percent of those divorced Catholics in the United States have remarried or will eventually do so, most without benefit of annulment and without a catholic celebration of these new marriages. Cf., Coleman, P., *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church,* pp. 5-6.

[13] Stott, J., *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today,* N.J., Old Tappan, 1990, pp. 304-304.

[14] As summarised by Coleman, P., *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church,*

pp. 10-11.

[15] Wannenwetsch, B., "Whose Marriage, which Decline", in *Journal for the Study of Marriage and Spirituality,* 14 (2008), pp. 31-32.

[16] This is an application of principle taught by the Council of Trent: Every minister administering a sacrament must at least have a virtual will to do what the Church does. Cf., Diekamp, F., *Katholische Dogmatik nach den Grundsätzen des heiligen Thomas,* Münster, Aschendorff, 1954, p. 390. He extends this principle to the man and woman conferring to each other the sacrament of marriage.

[17] Miggelbrink, R., "Theological Perspectives on Marriage in Post-modern Marriage", in *Journal for the Study of Marriage and Spirituality,* 14 (2008), pp. 44-45.

[18] Such an attitude has been fostered by the legal doctrine of many countries that the sole ground on which marriages can be dissolved is that of irretrievable marriage breakdown. Some recent catholic theology appears to be moving in the same direction. Michael Lawler writes, "a sacramental marriage becomes indissoluble only when the marital love on which it is founded attains its practical fullness as communion that is mutually faithful and loyal.... Even the sacramental marriage acquires indissolubility only when and because, the marital love that grounds it has become faithful and indissoluble." cf., Lawler, M., *Marriage and Sacrament,* p. 105.

[19] Quoted from: *The Shepherd of Hermas,* cf., Deasley, A., *Marriage Divorce in the Bible and the Church,* Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 2000, p. 177.

[20] Schweizer, E., *The Good News According to Mark,* Atlanda, John Knox Press, 1976, p. 206.

[21] Deasley, A., *Marriage Divorce in the Bible and the Church,* p. 179.

[22] Small, H.D., *Remarriage and God's Renewing Grace: A Positive Biblical Ethic for Divorced Christians,* Grand Rapids, Baker, 1986, pp. 74-75.

[23] Thomas P Doyle, "Title VII: Marriage (cc.1055-1165)" in James A Cordien et.al. (eds), *The code of canon law: A text and commentary,* Bangalore: Theological publications in India, 1991, p.738.

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 85.

[25] Small, H.D., *Remarriage and God's Renewing Grace: A Positive Biblical Ethic for Divorced Christians,* Grand Rapids, p. 72

[26] Deasley, A., *Marriage Divorce in the Bible and the Church,* pp. 186-187.

[27] "... Churches urged to develop better pastoral approach to divorce, marriage", in *National Catholic Reporter,* October 28, 2014, p. 4.