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A King, But Not a Gentleman.

"King Boris is acting as a sovereign, but not as a gentleman." This statement, attributed to Msgr. Roncalli, Papal Delegate at Sofia, doesn't sound authentic, but it is good. The Vatican diplomats are proverbially firm but courteous: this statement is curt. The occasion which called for comment, however, was enough to provoke a curt statement.

King Boris broke a solemn promise. Gentlemen don't do that. Kings, they tell us, sometimes do.

It concerns us because it is one more case of an unfortunate mixed marriage. Royalty must marry royalty, it seems, and when a king goes shopping for a bride his field of choice is strictly limited. Boris found an Italian princess to his liking, but since Boris is head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Giovanna is a Catholic, the marriage was forbidden unless the parties to it would promise in writing that the Catholic party would be allowed free exercise of the Catholic religion and that all children born to the union would be baptized and reared in the Catholic faith.

There was nothing new about the promise. It is the same contract that is exacted of peasants. And there is nothing new about the breach of contract. It is because that promise is so often broken that statisticians tell us that 65% of the mixed marriages in this country are failures. It was because such a promise was broken that one alumnus wrote in after reading the Religious Survey of the Alumni: "I have spent seven years in hell." If the statistics are correct, it would seem that the contract is "more honored in the breach than in the observance."

Boris broke his solemn promise by having the infant daughter, Marie Louise, baptized in the Orthodox Church. (He had already broken another promise not to be married in the Orthodox Church; after his Catholic marriage at Assisi he had forced his wife to renew her promises before the Orthodox Bishop at Sofia.) And we may presume from his actions that he has no intention to carry out any of the promises by which he obtained the Pope's consent to marry a Catholic.

There is nothing new in this general attitude. The non-Catholic who breaks one point in his pre-nuptial agreement may just as easily break other points. It is well for the Catholic who contemplates marriage with a non-Catholic to know this. And we feel it a duty to point out to such Catholics the crucial points on which they may expect to encounter future difficulties. They are matters on which the Church dictates to the conscience of the Catholics, but on which the non-Catholic may feel free to follow the dictates of an unenlightened or warped conscience. They are these:

1. Baptism. This has already been discussed. Suffice it to say that a non-Catholic who promises Catholic Baptism to the children may later change his mind if prejudices against the Catholic Church assert themselves.
2. Catholic education. The feeling that the social position of Catholics is inferior has caused many a non-Catholic parent to insist on public schooling for the children who were baptized Catholics. Similar foolish reasons have effected the same damage. The spiritual function of education is ignored by many Catholics and by probably the majority of non-Catholics.
3. Birth control. When that becomes an issue and the conscience of the non-Catholic is formed by the stand of the Federal Council of Churches the Catholic party has a tough time of it.
4. Divorce. If a non-Catholic partner feels that the marriage bond is not "unto death" the Catholic party may be left on the shelf - or may shelve religion.