

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON THE THEOLOGY OF
MARRIAGE AND ITS APPLICATION TO MIXED MARRIAGES

The Commission met in London 22nd - 25th November 1971 and a copy of its Report with the covering letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Willebrands has been circulated to members of A./R.C.I.C.

The Archbishop of Canterbury expressed his willingness for the Report to be published in a similar manner and in the same journals as the Report on the Eucharist of A./R.C.I.C., but Cardinal Willebrands had several criticisms which he asked the Commission to consider, and meanwhile withheld permission to publish the Report.

In March this year the Cardinal wrote to Bishop Unterkoefer, the Roman Catholic Chairman of the Commission, detailing his criticisms and a copy of his letter was sent to the Anglican Chairman, the Archbishop of Armagh (and to the Secretaries). Suggested alterations agreed on the Anglican side were then sent to Bishop Unterkoefer but it is not yet known if the Roman Catholic members have all agreed to them.

In summary the alterations were as attached.

The Commission had agreed to meet again in Italy in November 1972 and supporting papers by distinguished theologians were to be prepared for this meeting. Professor Dunstan has obtained papers from Anglican theologians and philosophers (Professor John MacQuarrie, Lady Helen Oppenheimer, John Lucas and Professor Christopher Evans) on New Testament evidences, the nature of the Vinculum, etc.

But in July Canon Purdy wrote to say that work was not so far forward on the Roman Catholic side and that the date in November clashed with an ecumenical officers conference in Rome and that it would have to be postponed. He suggested January but this was inconvenient and it was agreed to try for either Passion Week or Easter Week. From replies so far received it appears that the former week but not the latter would be possible.

Canon Purdy also suggested that it would be helpful if an Anglican from the Commission could attend a tri-partite meeting in Madrid in December 1972 between Roman Catholics-Lutherans-Reformed.

There are two matters which seem to require urgent investigation by the Commission in addition to those already in hand. Namely, the possibility of dispensation from the promise about Catholic upbringing and its apparent equation with 'divine law', and the grounds for nullity at present being accepted by Roman Catholic authorities.

The Commission would also like to have confirmation of its status. It began as a sub-commission of the Preparatory Commission. Now that the Preparatory Commission has become a permanent commission (although changing its name) the sub-

commission has been left parentless. It seems best to the sub-commission itself that it should continue as an independent commission responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Secretariat for Unity, but reporting to A./R.C.I.C. for information. Perhaps A./R.C.I.C. could confirm that this position is satisfactory, or otherwise give advice. It is certainly the view of the members that the Commission on Marriage is urgently needed and that the subjects it discusses are vital to ecumenical harmony.

HENRY COOPER

Anglican Secretary.

24th August 1972

Summary of agreed alterations to the Report of November 1971
in response to Cardinal Willebrands criticisms.

1. Paras. 4 ~~line~~ 4 to read 'A pastoral purpose may require expression in juridical language and process: to legislators and administrators of the law this pastoral end should always seem to be primary.'

2. Para. 2, line 3 to read 'the required promise on Catholic upbringing.'

line 4 to read 'the promise'.

Para. 12, line 3 to read

'the promise concerning Catholic upbringing.'

3. We feel that the "fairly liberal agreed limited circulation" mentioned by the Cardinal in his letter to the Roman Catholic Chairman, "to promote calm and qualified reflection among theologians and others" could best be achieved by the Commission's Report being published in theological journals such as Theology, the Clergy Review, and One in Christ in England, and in the Jurist or the Journal of the Canon Law Society of America. Such publication could take place discreetly, as happened with the Venice papers in February 1971, and would be the best way for the Report to reach those theologians and priests whose professional and pastoral concern for mixed marriages make them those best qualified to reflect on the issues raised in it..

4. Cardinal Willebrands wonders whether "we are taking enough account of other discussions. The possibility of an Anglican attending the Madrid meeting in December this year is an attempt to meet this criticism, but also we would reply, first that the "strain on all our resources" was our reason for referring major theological questions to A./R.C.I.C. (para. 3 of Report). Second, that we would gladly take account of other discussions and be happy for others to take account of our work. We should, therefore, be grateful if the Cardinal could make arrangements for documents from similar Commissions to be made available to us. We also add that his wish that such sharing of the fruits of our various discussions should take place is another argument in favour of the publication of our own and similar Reports. Third, in view of all that His Holiness Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council have said about a special relationship between our Anglican and Roman Catholic "sister-churches" we feel that it is right and proper that our Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages should pursue its task vigorously and with even greater urgency in order to deal with problems that still remain and which are among those which hinder even closer relations between us.