

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

The Commission met for the fifth time at the Divinity Hostel, Rathgar, Dublin, Eire, from 1st to 5th April 1974.

There were present:

Bishop E.L. Unterkoefer (Co-Chairman), Bishop F.J. Spence, Professor P.F. Cremin (members), Canon W.A. Purdy (Secretary), Dr. Brian O'Higgins (Consultant).

Archbishop G.O. Simms (Co-Chairman), Professor G.R. Dunstan, Professor L.M. Knox, Dr. B. Lindars, SSF (members) Prebendary H. Cooper (Secretary), Chancellor G. Moore (Consultant).

Bishop Langton Fox of Menevia was unable to be present because of a recent severe illness. A message of sympathy was sent to him by the Chairmen. Bishop Donald Hallock and Archbishop Ralph Dean had resigned from the Commission since the last meeting having resigned from their sees, and their places were taken by Professor Lincoln Mason Knox and Brother Barnabas Lindars.

It was again decided not to publish an interim report but to prepare for the final report next year and the following summary is for the information of members and their authorities only. No press release was issued.

Position papers had previously been circulated by Dr. L.M. Knox, Dr. Brian O'Higgins, Chancellor Garth Moore and Professor Dunstan.

The answers to the Questionnaire sent to all the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences and all the Anglican Provinces were received from about half of each, but answers revealed a considerable variety of views and relationships, and on the Anglican side some diversity in canon law. It did not seem to be practicable to produce a summary of the replies which would be clear and useful.

Discussions revealed again that the chief differences between the two Communions were in the realm of Ecclesiology and that the only considerable divergence in the theological view of marriage was concerned with the relationship of 'natural' and 'sacramental' marriage.

There was a useful discussion on Inter-church Marriages based on the work of Fr. John Coventry, S.J. of Heythrop College, London.

Discussions on the way in which each Communion dealt with those whose marriages had broken down and had re-married was not strictly within the terms of reference of the Commission but served to reveal attitudes towards indissolubility. Both sides clearly held that marriage was a permanent relationship and the different ways of dealing with pastoral problems in no way detracted from this. Anglicans were concerned about types of annulment and the Pauline and Petrine Privilege as used by Roman Catholics whilst Roman Catholics were concerned about some Anglican provinces allowing re-marriage in church of the divorced.

Mgr. W.A. Purdy and Professor G.R. Dunstan were asked to prepare an outline for the final report. This would include conclusions culled from previous reports as well as final objectives and a draft would be circulated to all members during the autumn of the current year and in the light of further criticism and suggestion would be considered at the meeting, it was hoped the final one, of the Commission in Italy in June 1975.

There was gratitude expressed for the help of the two consultants, Chancellor Garth Moore and Fr. Brian O'Higgins and regret that more time could not be given to the latter's full and accurate paper, which it was hoped would be published elsewhere.

The Archbishop of Dublin (Anglican) visited the Commission for lunch and a number of the members paid a visit to the School of Ecumenics (Fr. Michael Hurley, S.J.).

Material needs were amply provided for by Canon J.S. Brown, the Warden of the Divinity Hostel, and his staff who treated the Commission with great kindness.

Secretarial services were very competently given by Miss Anne Tyler of C.F.R.

H.C.