

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON THE THEOLOGY OF
MARRIAGE AND ITS APPLICATION TO MIXED MARRIAGESNotes on Conversation at Lambeth concerning Mixed MarriagesOctober 4th 1972

Present: His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury
His Eminence Jan Cardinal Willebrands
His Excellency Mgr. Ladislao Rubin
The Very Revd. Canon W.A. Purdy
The Revd. Fr. Stjepan Schmidt, S.J.
The Revd. Prebendary H. Cooper
The Revd. M. Moore

The Archbishop began by asking about the status of the Commission and it was established that it was one (there might be others) arising from the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, but distinct from it, responsible directly to the Vatican and Lambeth, but communicating its proceedings to A./R.C.I.C.

The matter of difficulties caused by differences in Ecclesiology was raised and the Cardinal and the Archbishop agreed that these were a proper subject for discussion by the Commission although, of course, only fully possible of solution by the two Churches. The Cardinal stressed that the Commission should not confine itself merely to practical questions without considering theological ones, and the Archbishop observed that the Report in his view did not suggest they had done this - it was a thoroughly theological document. Canon Purdy recalled the point made in the Report, that the ecclesiological question lying at the base of the differences about the promises had seemed to the Commission to be the business of A./R.C.I.C. The Cardinal thought it unrealistic to expect everything from A./R.C.I.C. The Marriage Commission would do better to enlist the services of some experts in the ecclesiological aspects of matrimony.

The Archbishop spoke of the apparent identification of divine law with Ecclesiastical Law and the Cardinal replied that it was divinely ordered that parents should bring up their children in their own faith, but that the promise pro viribus by the Roman Catholic partner was required, otherwise the obligation would be based upon an ambiguity. He admitted, however, that it could sometimes be right for the children to be brought up as Anglicans. There should be openness about this, especially between the two parish priests concerned. The Cardinal said that the general opinion among the Cardinal's Commission for the Motu Proprio had been that an obligation of divine law existed - but the Motu Proprio only asks of the Catholic party an undertaking pro posse - which certainly means there is no obligation to insist on Catholic upbringing to the point of provoking a breakdown of the marriage. No legislation can determine what is to be done in every possible circumstance. This calls for the co-operation of the married partners, helped by the co-operation of their respective pastors.

The publication of the Commission's Report of November 1971 was discussed and the Cardinal could not recollect the grounds on which he had declined to allow its publication. He asked

that a copy embodying the modifications he had suggested be supplied and he would reconsider it in his own study. (This has been sent by Canon Purdy). The publication would of course be in the name of the Commission and on its responsibility.

It was reported that Anglican scholars had prepared working documents on the vinculum as a philosophical concept and on New Testament exegesis of Dominical and Pauline teaching on marriage.

Prebendary Cooper raised the question of the contrast between Anglican pastoral methods of dealing with broken marriages and Roman Catholic use of annulment. It was agreed that this came within the purview of the Commission, but the Cardinal pointed out that re-marriage (in church) was being studied by Roman Catholic theologians with all the cognate problems. He also said that there had been a tightening up of acts of annulment claimed on the Petrine privilege but a loosening on the Pauline privilege. The Archbishop enquired as to the meaning of the Petrine privilege and the Cardinal found some difficulty in explaining, but it seemed that it simply meant the Papal power to bind and loose. The Cardinal insisted strongly on the distinction between the pastoral problem of the spiritual needs of those civilly remarried after divorce (a problem under study in the Roman Catholic Church) and problems of annulment and indissolubility. He disputed the general statement that annulments were on the increase, and insisted that exercise of the papal prerogative in this field had come almost to a standstill.

The Cardinal suggested liaison with Mgr. Moeller.

It was reported that it was hoped that the two secretaries would be present at the triangular meeting of Lutherans, Reformed and Roman Catholics in Madrid in December.

The Commission is to meet in Italy in Passion Week 1973.

H.C.