

PRAYER BOOK
STUDIES

X

THE SOLEMNIZATION OF
MATRIMONY

XI

A THANKSGIVING FOR
THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Prayer Book Studies

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MATRIMONY

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THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

THE STANDING LITURGICAL COMMISSION
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Preface

The last revision of our Prayer Book was brought to a rather abrupt conclusion in 1928. Consideration of it had preoccupied the time of General Convention ever since 1913. Everyone was weary of the long and ponderous legislative process, and desired to make the new Prayer Book available as soon as possible for the use of the Church.

But the work of revision, which sometimes has seemed difficult to start, in this case proved hard to stop. The years of debate had aroused widespread interest in the whole subject: and the mind of the Church was more receptive of suggestions for revision when the work was brought to an end than when it began. Moreover, the revision was actually closed to new action in 1925, in order that it might receive final adoption in 1928: so that it was not possible to give due consideration to a number of very desirable features in the English and Scottish revisions, which appeared simultaneously with our own. It was further realized that there were some rough edges in what had been done, as well as an unsatisfied demand for still further alterations.

The problem of defects in detail was met by continuing the Revisions Commission, and giving it rather large 'editorial' powers (subject only to review by General Convention) to correct obvious errors in the text as adopted, in the publication of the new Prayer Book. Then, to deal with the constructive proposals for other changes which continued to be brought up in every General Convention, the Revision Commission was reconstituted as a Standing Liturgical Commission. To this body all matters concerning the Prayer Book were to be referred, for preservation in permanent files, and for continuing consideration, until such time as the accumulated matter was sufficient in amount and importance to justify proposing another Revision.

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The number of such referrals by General Convention, of Memorials from Dioceses, and of suggestions made directly to the Commission from all regions and schools and parties in the Church, has now reached such a total that it is evident that there is a widespread and insistent demand for a general revision of the Prayer Book.

The Standing Liturgical Commission is not, however, proposing any immediate revision. On the contrary, we believe that there ought to be a period of study and discussion, to acquaint the Church at large with the principles and issues involved, in order that the eventual action may be taken intelligently, and if possible without consuming so much of the time of our supreme legislative synod.

Accordingly, the General Convention of 1949 signalized the Fourth Centennial Year of the First Book of Common Prayer in English by authorizing the Liturgical Commission to publish its findings, in the form of a series of *Prayer Book Studies*.

It must be emphasized that the liturgical forms presented in these *Studies* are not — and under our Constitution, cannot be — sanctioned for public use. They are submitted for free discussion. The Commission will be grateful for copies or articles, resolutions, and direct comment, for its consideration, that the mind of the Church may be fully known to the body charged with reporting it.

In this undertaking, we have endeavored to be objective and impartial. It is not possible to avoid every matter which may be thought by some to be controversial. Ideas which seem to be constructively valuable will be brought to the attention of the Church, without too much regard as to whether they may ultimately be judged to be expedient. We cannot undertake to eliminate every proposal to which anyone might conceivably object: to do so would be to admit that any constructive progress is impossible. What we can do is to be alert not to alter the present *balance* of expressed or implied doctrine of the Church. We can seek to counterbalance every proposal which might seem to favor some one party of opinion by some other

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change in the opposite direction. The goal we have constantly had in mind — however imperfectly we may have succeeded in attaining it — is the shaping of a future Prayer Book which every party might embrace with the well-founded conviction that therein its own position had been strengthened, its witness enhanced, and its devotions enriched.

The objective we have pursued is the same as that expressed by the Commission for the Revision of 1892: ‘*Resolved*, That this Committee, in all its suggestions and acts, be guided by those principles of liturgical construction and ritual use which have guided the compilation and amendments of the Book of Common Prayer, and have made it what it is.’

* * *

THE STANDING LITURGICAL COMMISSION

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The chief preliminary work on the Marriage Service was in charge of two former members of the Commission, the Reverend Dr. Churchill J. Gibson and the Reverend Walter Williams. Preparation of the introduction to the Study was entrusted to the late Dr. Jones, to whom the Commission records its gratitude for the principal substance of the Study herewith

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published. Dr. Jones, however, should not be held accountable for the final draft of this Study in all its particular detail.

The proposals for revision of the Churching Office were first prepared by a sub-committee headed by the Reverend Walter Williams. The final draft of this Study has been in charge of Bishop Lichtenberger and Dr. Shepherd.

MASSEY H. SHEPHERD, JR.
Editor, for the Commission.

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THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY

The Solemnization of Matrimony

I HISTORY

As in several European countries, the Marriage Service of the Church in England before the Reformation consisted of a prescribed tradition in the vernacular, rather than a fixed formula in Latin. This tradition has maintained its place in the use of the Roman Church in England and America to the present day; and this circumstance explains why the marriage ritual officially approved for Roman Catholics in these English-speaking countries is closer to that of the Book of Common Prayer than is the Latin form of the *Rituale Romanum*. For both services are alike descended from the English rite as it was in medieval times.

The form of Marriage Service adopted by the Church of England in the First Prayer Book of 1549 was basically that of the Sarum Manual, with a few features borrowed from the York Manual. The rite has remained thereafter in the English Prayer Book, through successive revisions, without material alteration, as follows:

1) An Introduction, embodying the so-called *Cautelae* or "Cautions," setting forth a eulogy of the holy estate of Matrimony, and emphasizing the necessity of the utmost carefulness and reverence in undertaking that relation.

2) The mutual contracts and avowals which constitute the Marriage. The essential "matter" of this sacrament consists of the reciprocal consents before witnesses — as the final proclamation says, "have consented together . . . and have witnessed the same before God and this company." It should be noted that the illustrative ceremonies — "having declared the same, by giving and receiving of a ring, and by joining Hands" — of whatever dramatic value, are none of them essential.

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The Marriage really consists of two passages, the Betrothal and the Espousal. The Betrothal survives as the residue of the original family ritual of solemn engagement, preparing the way for the (still future) contract. The manifest intention of this form is to establish the free will and accord of the parties making these promises. Immediately thereafter comes the actual Espousal, executing the marriage contract in the present tense. It will be noted that these two passages are said together continuously, without pause or interruption.

3) Then there was a processional Psalm, during which the wedding party proceeded from their original station at the choir gate to the altar rail.

4) The service concluded with summary prayers, and the Church's benediction of the action. A direction that the newly married couple receive the Holy Communion "the same day of their marriage" was slightly modified in the 1661 Book to provide "at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage."

In America, in the early days, members of the Church were few and far between, and church buildings fewer still. Therefore the makers of the Prayer Book of 1789 gave sanction to one feature which has always remained unknown to every other branch of the Anglican Communion: namely, the home wedding held "in some proper house" instead of in the church building. Lacking the scenic setting of the sacred edifice, the processional Psalm was simply dropped from the service. Because of this, unfortunately, certain members of the Church of England in the nineteenth century accused the American Prayer Book of providing "a mere Betrothal Service." This criticism was quite without justification, since the only constituents of the English service which were eliminated by the American rite were the processional Psalm and the final Homily on the Holy Estate — neither one of which is in the slightest degree essential to the Espousals.

The proposed revision of the Marriage Service in the English

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Book of 1928 divided the rite into four parts: The Introduction, The Marriage, The Benediction, and The Communion. We consider that this order should be followed by the American rite; but the slight shortenings of the American order hitherto may properly be retained.

A majority of the Commission believe that it would be valuable to preface the Marriage Service in the Prayer Book with a page on which was printed the Declaration of Intention required of all parties to Holy Matrimony as now set forth in Canon 17, Section 3. This preface would be analogous to the present Prayer Book Preface to the Ordinal. A minority of the Commission consider it unwise to introduce into the Prayer Book matters that are of canonical, rather than of liturgical, regulation; but they readily accede to the majority opinion in proposing this suggestion to the Church for its critical comment and judgment, inasmuch as these Studies are not offered to the Church for legislative action by General Convention but solely for study and reflective consideration by individuals and groups within the Church concerned with the making of our Prayer Book as responsive as possible to the needs of our Church.

II

PROPOSED REVISIONS

The Introduction. The Commission proposes only two slight alterations in the present introduction of the Marriage Service, as contained on page 300 of the Prayer Book. In the opening rubric, it suggests that a qualifying clause be added — “if urgent cause require” — to the permission to hold the service “in some proper house.” The original reason for this exception, allowing a home wedding, is not so urgent today as it was in the time of our Founding Fathers, after the American Revolu-

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tion. We are more plentifully supplied with church buildings, and with easy transportation to them. And there is no good argument for the conduct of a Church rite in any place other than a church edifice when circumstances make it possible, no less than convenient. However, the Commission believes that there may still be causes of a weighty character that may demand some exception to the normative rule. There are still families that live in isolated areas, remote from settled communities where church buildings are available. There are conditions of physical illness or disability that make transportation from the home inadvisable. And there are peculiar circumstances of a pastoral nature where the officiating minister may judge it inexpedient to arrange for weddings in the church edifice.

In the charge to the couple, the word "dreadful" has been changed to "dread," to avoid the misunderstandings possible because of the popular associations with the former term.

The Marriage. The rubric on the top of page 301 has been shortened, in view of the present canonical requirements imposed upon the clergy with respect to pre-marital instructions and inquiries.

The giving away of the Bride has been made optional, rather than mandatory, since in many cases — especially those of older persons — this survival of medieval custom has become meaningless.

A new rubric, allowing the optional insertion of a Psalm, Hymn, or Anthem after the Betrothals, taking the wedding company to the altar for the Espousals and Benediction, is inserted after the giving away of the Bride. It should be emphasized that such a procession in the middle of the service is neither necessary nor, in all cases, convenient. The rubric merely recognizes a custom that has developed in modern times, especially in those churches where the sanctuary is separated from the nave by a chancel choir. There is certainly no ancient tradition for a break in the service at this point, and several members of the Commission have expressed a strong dissent

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from placing such a rubric at this place, rather than before the Lord's Prayer and after the giving of the Ring.¹

A minor deletion from the first rubric at the top of page 302 is suggested: namely, the omission of "after the Minister." In many cases the bridal couple either reads the vows from the Prayer Book or recites them from memory. Hence it is not necessary for the Minister, in every case, to instruct them in the words of the vows phrase by phrase.

The Giving of a Ring by the groom to the bride is one of the ancient survivals of Roman custom in our rite that has largely lost its original meaning of bestowal of a dowry. It is a symbol of something far deeper and more spiritual. And in modern times it has become increasingly customary for both parties to give rings to each other. The Commission believes that the time has come to accede to the widely expressed desire for some recognition in the service of the "double ring" ceremony. (There is precedent for this in the marriage rituals of a number of European countries.) Hence the formularies associated with the Giving of the Ring have been revamped to allow a blessing and giving of rings by both the man and the woman, when it may be so desired.

The Sarum Manual provided a form for the Blessing of the Ring. The American revision of 1928 was the only Anglican text providing for a prayer of this nature. But this Blessing was, not very happily, inserted after the bestowal of the Ring, which it was designed to precede. The present proposals are designed

¹ It is only fair to the late Dr. Jones of our Commission, to record his characteristically vigorous comment on this matter, especially in view of his being unable to present in person his dissent from the Commission's final vote on this rubric. In his draft introduction, he wrote: "It is hard to account for the custom which has grown up in the nineteenth century, of splitting asunder the Betrothals from the Espousals, and inserting the latter after the Giving of the Ring, and going up to the altar rail for that purpose: though the English order has no such shift of place here; and the American rite has no provision whatever by rubric or otherwise for such a shift. Although this ritual has made its way into 'Emily Post,' it is in fact completely unjustified; and it remains a mystery why our Anglophiles ever thought they were replacing the Espousals which the British critics had claimed to be missing."

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to correct this dislocation. And the form of Blessing has been worded in the hope that it will preserve the graceful, if fragile, rhetoric of the formulary, by avoiding either a banal pluralizing of the words or a tiresome repetition of them by shifting the pronouns "he" and "she" in a separate Blessing for each Ring.

The Benediction. No changes are proposed in the formularies that now complete the Marriage Service, beginning with the Lord's Prayer, except for a rewording of the rubric before the final Blessing. Instead of "the Minister," the words "a Priest" are substituted, to clarify a problem that often arises and make certain the unaltering tradition of the Church that only a Minister in priest's (or, of course, episcopal) Orders is qualified to pronounce such a Benediction.

It has also been proposed — and the Commission offers this suggestion for comment and criticism — that in many cases some form of dismissal of the congregation is desirable, after the wedding party have retired from the church. A permissive form is presented: the Salutation, the prayer "For a Blessing on the Families of the Land" (Prayer Book, page 598), and the Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26. This dismissal would in any case be omitted whenever a Nuptial Eucharist follows immediately upon the Marriage Rite.

It is also proposed to introduce the proper Collect, Epistle and Gospel for a Nuptial celebration of Holy Communion as a conclusion — making it clear, however, that such a celebration, though highly desirable in proper circumstances, is nonetheless optional. But the Commission believes that in so placing these propers here, we shall not only be returning to the traditional teaching of the Prayer Book that such a celebration is a fitting climax of the nuptial rites, but we may thereby encourage a wider acceptance of the Nuptial Eucharist among our membership as a constituent part of a Church wedding in its fullness and perfection.

III

HOLY MATRIMONY

¶ *Before the Solemnization of any Marriage, the Minister shall have required that the parties sign the following Declaration:*

We, A.B. and C.D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Form of Solemnization of Holy Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, for the safeguarding and benefit of society. And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

¶ *And when the Banns are published, it shall be in the following form:*

I publish the Banns of Marriage between N. of _____, and N. of _____. If any of you know cause, or just impediment, why these two persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is the first [second or third] time of asking.

The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

¶ *At the day and time appointed for Solemnization of Matrimony, the Persons to be married shall come into the body of the Church, or shall be ready in some proper house, with their friends and neighbours; and there standing together, the Man on the right hand, and the Woman on the left, the Minister shall say,*

DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.

¶ *And also speaking unto the Persons who are to be married, he shall say,*

I REQUIRE and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's Word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful.

(Proposed)

The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

THE INTRODUCTION

¶ *At the day and time appointed for Solemnization of Matrimony, the Persons to be married shall come into the body of the Church, or if urgent cause require, shall be ready in some proper house, with their friends and neighbours; and there standing together, the Man on the right hand, and the Woman on the left, the Minister shall say,*

DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.

¶ *And also speaking unto the Persons who are to be married, he shall say,*

I REQUIRE and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dread day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's Word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful.

Matrimony

¶ *The Minister, if he shall have reason to doubt of the lawfulness of the proposed Marriage, may demand sufficient surety for his indemnification: but if no impediment shall be alleged, or suspected, the Minister shall say to the Man,*

N. WILT thou have this Woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ *The Man shall answer,*

I will.

¶ *Then shall the Minister say unto the Woman,*

N. WILT thou have this Man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ *The Woman shall answer,*

I will.

¶ *Then shall the Minister say,*

Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man?

¶ *Then shall they give their troth to each other in this manner. The Minister, receiving the Woman at her father's or friend's hands, shall cause the Man with his right hand to take the Woman by her right hand, and to say after him as followeth.*

I N. take thee **N.** to my wedded Wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

THE MARRIAGE

¶ *If no impediment be alleged or suspected, the Minister shall say to the Man,*

N. WILT thou have this Woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ *The Man shall answer,*

I will.

¶ *Then shall the minister say unto the Woman,*

N. WILT thou have this Man to thy wedded Husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ *The Woman shall answer,*

I will.

¶ *Then may the Minister say,*

Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man?

¶ *Then the Minister, followed by the Man and the Woman, may go to the Lord's Table; while there may be sung a Psalm, Hymn, or Anthem.*

¶ *Then shall they give their troth to each other in this manner. The Minister, receiving the Woman at her father's or friend's hands, shall cause the Man with his right hand to take the Woman by her right hand, and to say as followeth,*

I N. take thee **N.** to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

Matrimony

¶ *Then shall they loose their hands; and the Woman with her right hand taking the Man by his right hand, shall likewise say after the Minister,*

I N. take thee N. to my wedded Husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

¶ *Then shall they again loose their hands; and the Man shall give unto the Woman a Ring on this wise: the Minister taking the Ring shall deliver it unto the Man, to put it upon the fourth finger of the Woman's left hand. And the Man holding the Ring there, and taught by the Minister, shall say,*

WITH this Ring I thee wed: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

¶ *And, before delivering the Ring to the Man, the Minister may say as followeth.*

BLESS, O Lord, this Ring, that he who gives it and she who wears it may abide in thy peace, and continue in thy favour, unto their life's end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ *Then, the Man leaving the Ring upon the fourth finger of the Woman's left hand, the Minister shall say,*

Let us pray.

¶ *Then shall the Minister and the People, still standing, say the Lord's Prayer.*

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

¶ *Then shall they loose their hands; and the Woman with her right hand taking the Man by his right hand, shall likewise say,*

I N. take thee N. to my wedded Husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

¶ *Then shall they again loose their hands; and the Man shall give unto the Woman a Ring; and the Woman may likewise give a Ring unto the Man. And the Minister, receiving the Ring or Rings, may say,*

BLESS, O Lord, this Ring (*these Rings*), that both giver and-wearer may abide in thy peace and continue in thy favour, unto their life's end; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

¶ *Then, the giver of the Ring shall take the same, and put it upon the fourth finger of the left hand of the other party; and holding it there, and taugt by the Minister, shall say,*

WITH this Ring I thee wed: In the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

THE BENEDICTION

Minister. Let us pray.

¶ *Then shall the Minister and the People, still standing, say the Lord's Prayer.*

OUR Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Matrimony

¶ *Then shall the Minister add,*

O ETERNAL God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life; Send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy Name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, (whereof this Ring given and received is a token and pledge,) and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ *The Minister may add one or both of the following prayers.*

O ALMIGHTY God, Creator of mankind, who only art the well-spring of life; Bestow upon these thy servants, if it be thy will, the gift and heritage of children; and grant that they may see their children brought up in thy faith and fear, to the honour and glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O GOD, who hast so consecrated the state of Matrimony that in it is represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church; Look mercifully upon these thy servants, that they may love, honour, and cherish each other, and so live together in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and of peace; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister join their right hands together, and say,*

Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

¶ *Then shall the Minister say,*

O ETERNAL God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life; Send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy Name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, (whereof *this Ring* given and received is a token and pledge,) and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ *The Minister may add one or both of the following prayers.*

O ALMIGHTY God, Creator of mankind, who only art the well-spring of life: Bestow upon these thy servants, if it be thy will, the gift and heritage of children; and grant that they may see their children brought up in thy faith and fear, to the honour and glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O GOD, who hast so consecrated the state of Matrimony that in it is represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church; Look mercifully upon these thy servants, that they may love, honour, and cherish each other, and so live together in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and of peace; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister join their right hands together, and say,*

Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Matrimony

¶ *Then shall the Minister speak unto the company.*

FORASMUCH as *N.* and *N.* have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a Ring, and by joining hands; I pronounce that they are Man and Wife, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

¶ *The Man and Wife kneeling, the Minister shall add this Blessing.*

GOD the Father, God the-Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting. *Amen.*

¶ *The laws respecting Matrimony, whether by publishing the Banns in Churches, or by Licence, being different in the several States, every Minister is left to the direction of those laws, in every thing that regards the civil contract between the parties.*

¶ *And when the Banns are published, it shall be in the following form:* I publish the Banns of Marriage between *N.* of —, and *N.* of —. If any of you know cause, or just impediment, why these two persons should not be joined together in holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is the first [second or third] time of asking.

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

¶ *Then shall the Minister speak unto the company.*

FORASMUCH as N. and N. have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a *Ring*, and by joining hands; I pronounce that they are Man and Wife, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

¶ *The Husband and Wife kneeling, a Priest shall add this Blessing.*

GOD the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting. *Amen.*

¶ *Here, except when there is a Communion, the Minister may dismiss the Congregation as follows, saying,*

The Lord be with you.

Answer. And with thy spirit.

Minister. Let us pray.

ALMMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; We commend to thy continual care the homes in which thy people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh; turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE LORD bless you, and keep you. The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and evermore. *Amen.*

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

THE COMMUNION

The Collect

O ETERNAL God, we humbly beseech thee, favourably to behold these thy servants now (*or* about to be) joined in wedlock according to thy holy ordinance; and grant that they, seeking first thy kingdom and thy righteousness, may obtain the manifold blessings of thy grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Epistle. Ephesians v. 20.

GIVE thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The Solemnization of Marriage (*Proposed*)

The Gospel. St. Matthew xix. 4.

JESUS answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.



A THANKSGIVING FOR
THE BIRTH OF A CHILD



A Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

I

THE NEED OF REVISION

The infrequent use of the Churching of Women Office in the Prayer Book has been the occasion of considerable comment and suggestion in the correspondence filed with the Liturgical Commission. Reactions to the service have been either negative — that the Office ought to be eliminated altogether from the Prayer Book — or positive in their proposals for a radical reconstruction of its materials.

On the negative side, it has been pointed out that despite the careful revisions that the Office has undergone in successive editions of the Prayer Book, the ancient taboo of uncleanness associated with childbirth, with the concomitant notion that the rite is some kind of purification, has lingered about the service. Though it cannot be fairly stated that the present Prayer Book Office either suggests or encourages such an outworn, not to say un-Christian, viewpoint with respect to childbirth, it cannot be denied that such prejudice still exists with respect to the service. It may be that this association of ideas is kept alive — unconsciously perhaps — by suggestions from the Prayer Book feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, with its popular title, still preserved in the heading of the Prayer Book (pages 231-32), of "The Purification."

More reasonable is the insistence that the Office "suffers today from an exaggerated emphasis upon the dangers of childbirth, since modern medicine has so greatly reduced, at least in America, as also in many other "Western" countries, the mortality-rate of both mothers and newborn infants. It would be foolish, of course, to deny the seriousness of "great pain and peril of childbirth" as mentioned in the Office, or to overlook the plain

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facts of tragic loss of life and health that do occur. A Prayer Book service that avoided all reference to these hard realities would lack relevance to basic human situations and experience. What the objectors to the Office maintain, however, is the unreality of building an entire service about this theme, in the light of present-day conditions where the normative expectancy of the family is hopeful of a happy and successful birth of a new life. All that is needed in the Prayer Book, from this point of view, are one or two prayers in the section "Thankgivings" that may be used when desired, either privately with the family or publicly in the course of the regular offices of corporate worship of the Church.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the birth of a child in a Christian family is of such high significance that the Church's liturgy should give it due and proper recognition by a suitable service of thanksgiving. They would revamp the present Churching Office to make it a corporate act of the entire family concerned, or at least of both parents, rather than of the mother alone, and set it normally within the context of the public worship of the whole "household of faith." Such a service would include not only a thanksgiving for the safe deliverance of the mother, but also — and more importantly — for the birth of a child, with additional prayers, when the occasion seems appropriate, for the home and for the Christian nurture of the newborn member of the family.

The Liturgical Commission shares this latter point of view, which it believes to be in line with trends in other Anglican Prayer Books. By altering the title of the service, it has attempted to place a right emphasis upon the primary nature and purpose of the Office. But the Commission has felt that the contents of the service have not needed so radical a reconstruction as many have supposed. The changes herewith proposed have not materially altered the simple structure of the present Prayer Book service; and though there has been a slight lengthening of the Office, if it is said in its entirety, an attempt has been made to make its contents more flexible so that it might

A Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

be adapted to varying family situations. The rubrics have been carefully revised, to eliminate archaic survivals and references, and to adapt them to modern conditions.

The Commission also believes that this Office should be maintained in its present location in the sequence of Prayer Book services, following as it does logically the marriage service. We would also wish to call attention to the need of including within the Prayer Book itself, at the next revision of our liturgy, the form of service for the Adoption of a Child that now appears in the *Book of Offices for Special Occasions* authorized by General Convention. This latter service was prepared by the Commission several years ago at the specific request of the General Convention, and has found a most cordial reception in the Church. We believe that it should not be left ultimately in a separate, although official, book of special Offices, but should find a place in the Prayer Book directly following the present service of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child.

II

PROPOSED CHANGES

The Title. The new title, as stated above, gives the primary emphasis that the Office should have. It should also have a greater psychological appeal to our Church people than does the title of the present Office, and thus encourage and develop a more widespread use.

Opening Rubrics. The four rubrics contain the principal substance of what is directed in the present Office both by its opening rubrics and by the rubric at the end of the service. They give the Minister clear indications of the varied ways and places where the Office can be appropriately used. And they make specific the intention that wherever feasible the entire family, and not just the mother alone, have a part in the service.

Exhortation. The present Exhortation of the Office is re-

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tained, but with the significant addition of the phrase: "and to bless thy home with the gift and heritage of this child." (Obviously, if twins are born, the Minister will say "these children.") The pronouns have been changed from the plural "you" to the singular "thee" since the Office will normally be used for a single family. But there is no inherent reason why several families might not participate together in a service, in which case the plurals "you" and "your" may be employed. The Exhortation has also been revamped so that the entire family is bidden to join in the psalm with the Minister. This avoids the awkwardness of the present service, where the mother alone is bidden to say the psalm, but the directive is corrected by a rubric. No reference is made to the posture of those reciting the psalm, as this may be left to the choice of the persons concerned; but the rubric before the Exhortation suggests in any case that standing would be the normative posture, for the psalm is said as an act of thanksgiving.

Psalms. A choice of Psalms is offered. The Commission recommends the restoration of Psalm 121, the one traditionally associated with the Office both in the Sarum Use and in the First and Second Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. Psalm 116 was introduced into the Office in the revision of 1661, and is particularly appropriate when the Office is followed immediately by the Holy Communion. It will be noted that the Commission recommends the entire psalm, not the shortened version that has characterized the American Prayer Book since 1789. The verses omitted hitherto in the American Book are all fitting to the occasion.

Lesson. The principal new feature of the proposed Office is the addition of a lesson from Deuteronomy 6:4-9; but the rubric makes the lesson optional, not mandatory. When the Office is used separately, the lesson services in filling it out with helpful instruction in God's Word to the families of His people. It gives the Office a general similarity of structure with that of the Daily Offices. If used before the Holy Communion, the lesson of this Office adds to the total rite salient Old Testament

A Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

material, and in particular gives a specific application to the Summary of the Law contained in the Eucharist.

The Prayers. The pattern of the prayers follows that of the present service. The Lord's Prayer has the doxology, since in this service it is not preceded by the *Kyrie* and it has no penitential context. The versicles remain the same, but the wording is restored to a general application rather than to "this woman." The first Collect has been considerably revised to include not merely thanksgiving for deliverance in childbirth, but also for the child; and the petition is directed to the thought of the Christian nurture of the child rather than to the continuing Christian life of the mother alone. The phrase "with her husband" is placed in parentheses to provide for those occasions when the father has either died before the birth of the child, or for some tragic circumstance has no direct responsibility for the upbringing of the child.

In place of the present concluding Collect (which is only permissive), the Commission recommends the addition at this place of two prayers now appearing in the Family Prayer section of the Prayer Book: "For the Children," and "For a Blessing on the Families of the Land." The appropriateness of these prayers in this context does not need to be argued. But the Commission believes that there is value in placing together in the Prayer Book related prayers, in contexts where they fit. Their inclusion here would be convenient to the Minister, and provide him with all that is needful to a proper ending of the service. But the printing of these prayers in this place would in no way necessitate their exclusion from other parts of the Prayer Book, whether in the occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings, or in Family Prayer. What these latter sections of the Prayer Book should contain will be the subject of other Studies by the Commission.

The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth

Commonly called the Churching of Women.

¶ *This Service, or the concluding prayer alone, as it stands among the Occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings, may be used at the discretion of the Minister.*

¶ *The Woman, at the usual time after her delivery, shall come into the Church decently apparelled, and there shall kneel down in some convenient place, as hath been accustomed, or as the Ordinary shall direct.*

¶ *The Minister shall then say unto her,*

FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his goodness, to give you safe deliverance, and to preserve you in the great danger of Child-birth; you shall therefore give hearty thanks unto God, and say,

¶ *Then shall be said by both of them the following Hymn, the Woman still kneeling.*

Dilexi, quoniam. Psalm cxvi.

MY delight is in the LORD; because he hath heard the voice of my prayer;

Because he hath inclined his ear unto me; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

I found trouble and heaviness; then called I upon the Name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

What reward shall I give unto the LORD for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?

I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people,

(Proposed)

III

A Thanksgiving for the
Birth of a Child

¶ *This Service, or the Collect named The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, as it stands among the Occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings, may be used before the Holy Communion or separately.*

¶ *The Woman, as soon as may be after her delivery, shall come into the Church, with such other members of her family as may be convenient.*

¶ *This Service may be used in the hospital or in the home.*

¶ *The Minister shall say unto the Family, all standing,*

FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his goodness, to give *thee* safe deliverance, to preserve *thee* in the great danger of Child-birth, and to bless *thy* home with the gift and heritage of *this child*; let us therefore give hearty thanks unto God, and say,

Psalm cxxi. *Levavi oculos.*

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help?

My help cometh even from the LORD, who hath made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD himself is thy keeper; the LORD is thy defence upon thy right hand;

So that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night.

The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil; yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.

The LORD shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.

Churching of Women

in the courts of the LORD's house; even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

¶ *Then shall the Minister say the Lord's Prayer, with what followeth: but the Lord's Prayer may be omitted, if this be used with the Morning or Evening Prayer.*

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Minister. O Lord, save this woman thy servant;

Answer. Who putteth her trust in thee.

Minister. Be thou to her a strong tower;

Answer. From the face of her enemy.

Minister. Lord, hear our prayer.

Answer. And let our cry come unto thee.

Minister. Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY God, we give thee humble thanks for that thou hast been graciously pleased to preserve, through the great pain and peril of child-birth, this woman, thy servant, who desireth now to offer her praises and thanksgivings unto thee. Grant, we beseech thee, most merciful Father, that she, through thy help, may faithfully live according to thy will in this life, and also may be partaker of everlasting glory in the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving for Birth of a Child (*Proposed*)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

¶ *Or this,*

MY delight is in the LORD; because he hath heard the voice of my prayer;

Because he hath inclined his ear unto me; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

The snares of death compassed me round about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.

I found trouble and heaviness; then called I upon the Name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

The LORD preserveth the simple: I was in misery, and he helped me.

Turn again then unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath rewarded thee.

And why? thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

I believed, and therefore will I speak; but I was sore troubled: I said in my haste, All men are liars.

What reward shall I give unto the LORD for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?

I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people: right dear in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Behold, O LORD, how that I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast broken my bonds in sunder.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the LORD.

Churching of Women

¶ *Then may be said,*

GRANT, we beseech thee, O heavenly Father, that the child of this thy servant may daily increase in wisdom and stature, and grow in thy love and service, until *he* come to thy eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ *The Woman, that cometh to give her Thanks, must offer accustomed offerings, which shall be applied by the Minister and the Church-wardens to the relief of distressed women in child-bed; and if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion.*

Thanksgiving for Birth of a Child (*Proposed*)

I will pay my vows unto the LORD, in the sight of all his people, in the courts of the LORD's house; even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

¶ *Then the Minister may read as a Lesson, Deuteronomy vi. 4-9.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister say,*

Let us pray.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Minister. O Lord, save thy servants;

Answer. Who put their trust in thee.

Minister. Be thou to them a strong tower;

Answer. From the face of our enemy.

Minister. Lord, hear our prayer.

Answer. And let our cry come unto thee.

Minister. Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we give thee humble and hearty thanks that thou hast brought this thy servant through her travail to rejoice in the birth of a child. Continue, we beseech thee, thy goodness to her, that she, restored to health and strength, may (with her husband) lead this child in the way of truth and righteousness, to the glory of thy Name, and the blessing of their home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving for Birth of a Child (*Proposed*)

ALMIGHTY God, heavenly Father, who hast blessed us with the joy and care of children; Give us light and strength so to train them, that they may love whatsoever things are true and pure and lovely, and of good report, following the example of their Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; We commend to thy continual care the homes in which thy people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh; turn the heart of the parents to the children, and the heart of the children to the parents; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

