

Part I

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

I. *The Divine Institution*

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them.

GENESIS 1²⁷⁻⁸

It is fit, therefore, that we bear in mind that marriage is ordained of God as the sacrament of human society. It was hallowed by our Lord, both by His presence and by His solemn words. It is commended in the Christian Scriptures as honourable in all who engage in it not inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently and discreetly, and in the fear of God. And it has been consecrated by the faithful keeping of good men and good women in every generation.

Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined together.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE—CONGREGATIONAL VERSION

Your letter arrived this afternoon: I got it at five o'clock, and put it unopened in my pocket, got on my bicycle and rode out into the country. I felt I must read it alone and with God. I will show you the place one day. Then I raised my heart in prayer to God, as I have been doing many times each day since the day at Brindisi. I had utterly committed the whole matter to Him. . . . In the quiet light of the setting sun, I broke the seal and saw the Yes. I bowed my head and took you from the hands of God: then gave yourself and myself back to Him to fulfil His utter will. . . . Please God these things will make something heavenly, something spiritual and ethereal in our relations one to another. Something that God may have pleasure in and use to His own glory.

TEMPLE GAIRDNER OF CAIRO, in a letter to his future wife

WHEN two people start their married life they are naturally not thinking of much except the joy and delight which they have in one another. The long time of waiting (and for all

lovers it seems long, whether it is days or years) is over at last. They now belong completely to one another, in the sight of God and with the full blessing of all their friends. The happiness and fulfilment they experience at this time will never be quite equalled again. Edward Wilson of the Antarctic wrote to his friend Fraser at the time of his marriage and said, 'I am as happy as it is given to mortals ever to be on this earth'.

Yet sooner or later all husbands and wives must consider marriage not just as a personal experience, but as a social institution. We have to decide what we believe about marriage in general, as well as what we feel about our own marriage in particular.

When you try to do this you will find that there are two ways of looking at marriage. First, it is a human institution, found in one form or another all over the world. Edward Westermarck, the great anthropologist, came to the conclusion that marriage is an essential part of the life of all settled communities, ancient or modern. Even in the animal world, lasting partnerships are formed between male and female which sometimes continue for life.

So the very private and personal bliss you share as husband and wife links you with a vast company, stretching back to remote ages and out to the ends of the earth. Countless millions of married couples have held each other's hands and looked into each other's eyes, have breathed mutual assurances of love into each other's ears in languages old and new. With the tireless march of the passing years, each new generation enters into this great heritage.

There is another way of looking at marriage—as a divine institution. The Bible begins by telling us that God chose to make the human race in the form of individuals of two different kinds, so that they might meet and love and marry and complete each other. And on all this God looked with satisfaction and blessed it. Generations of Christian men and

women have interpreted their love for one another as a gift from the God of love; and this has made it seem even more wonderful and sacred than it could otherwise have been.

Those of us who choose to be married according to the Christian faith and by a Christian minister join ourselves to this happy company of 'good men and good women in every generation'. Those faithful couples who stretch back in an unbroken line for nearly two thousand years have now committed the honour of Christian marriage into our keeping. When we think of this, we will want to pray, as Temple Gairdner did, that we may be worthy of so great a trust.

PRAYER

O Thou who in Thy great wisdom hast chosen to make us incomplete without each other, and hast given us to each other to love and to cherish; enable us to make of our marriage a thing of such beauty and joy that it may fulfil all our hopes and dreams. And may our fellowship together be worthy of the great heritage into which we are now privileged to enter. Amen.

2. The First Object of Marriage—Procreation

Male and female created he them. And God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

GENESIS 1:27-8

Duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained. . . . First, it was ordained for the increase of mankind according to the will of God, and that children might be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of His Holy Name.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

Lovers radiate well-being. They seem to take a practical and tingling pleasure in increasing each other's joy. Nature is always on the side of

lovers. But she makes no bones about her purpose. Nature gives men and women this overwhelming desire, dowered with beauty and delight, in order to produce children.

PHYLLIS BOTTOME—*And So We Got Married*

The achievement of a deep and abiding love between a husband and wife normally results in the growing desire to share, as well as to perpetuate, their happiness. The natural way to do this is by raising a family of happy, intelligent, healthy, emotionally mature children. The result is probably life's superlative satisfaction.

F. ALEXANDER MAGOUN—*Love and Marriage*

Most forms of the Marriage Service begin with a statement, read by the minister to the couple and congregation, of the three great causes for which matrimony was ordained. In this and the next two sections we shall think of these objects of marriage.

The first end of marriage is to enable children to be born under the best possible conditions, so that they have the loving care of a father and a mother who will work together, and if necessary sacrifice, for their highest good.

Nowadays we have achieved so much control over nature that we tend to think of parenthood as almost a by-product of marriage, something which grows out of the relationship of husband and wife. Yet if we take the long view, it is rather marriage which is a by-product of parenthood. Marriage became necessary, at some far-away point in our misty past, because the human child could not reach his full development without the co-operation and care of two parents. This is as true today as it ever was. One of Edward Westermarck's most profound sayings was: 'Marriage is rooted in the family, and not the family in marriage'.

This might be put a little differently by saying that parents exist to serve their children, not children to serve their parents. It is a fundamental law of life that the older generation must be

willing to sacrifice its interests to those of the younger generation. That law is defied by some people; but only at the risk of unsettling the foundations of human society.

So the love which draws a man and a woman into marriage has in it a creative quality and also a sacrificial quality. The power of fruitfulness which God gave to man is sometimes called 'procreation'. That word means 'creation for and on behalf of' another—and the other is God Himself. The Christian way of thinking about parenthood is that it is a sharing by men and women of the work of the Creator. Just as God in the beginning made the world of living things, so man and woman—not separately, but together—have been appointed God's agents to continue His creative work.

It is right and natural, therefore, that the love of husband and wife for each other should overflow into a shared love for a child of their own flesh and blood. This experience brings new responsibilities and duties—the married pair will have to unclasp one hand each to bring another into the circle. But it also brings out new qualities in them both—a depth and intensity of devotion which makes them ready and willing to sacrifice and suffer and even die for the sake of their little ones.

Marriage, therefore, is not an end in itself. It is a united ministry to others. For most couples the first of those others are their own children. No service which Christian men and women undertake is more important than this great ministry of parenthood.

PRAYER

When we consider the confidence which Thou hast placed in us, O God, by making us partners of Thy great work of creation, we are humbled at the thought of our unworthiness. If the blessing of children should be ours, may it be for us an experience of deep and lasting joy; and help us to be ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may require of us. Amen.

3. *The Second Object of Marriage—Sexual Fulfilment*

And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. Therefore shall a man cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

GENESIS 2²³⁻⁵

Duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained. . . . Second, it was ordained in order that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright; that those who are called of God to this holy estate should continue therein in pureness of living.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE—REVISED PRAYER BOOK VERSION

The highest and most intimate of spiritual friendships can never be marriage without the union of the flesh: but where the man and woman are one flesh, their indefinite yearnings are replaced by the peacefulness of a pervading possession, the inward energy corresponding to the outward union. Marriage is thus an ordinance peculiarly human. It is adapted to man's composite nature, which is at once fleshly and spiritual.

OSCAR D. WATKINS—*Holy Matrimony*

Intercourse between two people who love one another should produce not merely pleasure and satisfaction, but confidence, harmony, and self-respect. It should relieve anxiety, lessen guilt, and prevent the formation of hostility. And all these consequences, being felt as a gift from the other partner, should fortify affection. To be indifferent to the physical expression of love, still more to dislike it, or to feel that it is in some way shameful, is neither superior nor virtuous nor refined; it is a symptom of mental illness or maladjustment.

AMBER BLANCO WHITE—*Worry in Women*

ONE of the powerful forces which draws men and women together in marriage is the drive of sexual desire. This is a normal, healthy, God-given impulse. It is also a strong and

insistent urge. It has to be so; otherwise the vitally important function of reproduction might be neglected, and the continuing purpose of creation would be defeated.

So we are endowed with an intensity of sexual desire far greater than is strictly necessary to carry on the race. Because of this, sex is an emotional high explosive which can do terrible damage when it gets out of hand. All human communities have found that sexual urges have to be controlled. The best way which has been found is for a man and a woman, in marriage, to form a continuous association in which each seeks to meet the other's sexual needs. Thus the drive of this mighty impulse is channelled in a way which does no harm to other people.

That is a somewhat negative way of putting it. Unfortunately the Church has sometimes been sadly negative about sex. The old version of the Prayer Book even spoke of the second purpose of marriage as 'a remedy against sin'! This is true enough. The sin of misusing sex is one into which it is all too easy to fall—and marriage certainly provides an outlet which lessens the temptation to do so. But this seems a very inadequate way of putting the case for marriage.

So it is. Even the Church has to make progress and find better ways of proclaiming its message. And one of the great advances of Christian thinking in our time is the more positive and wholesome way in which we can now look at sex. We can be thankful that we live in an enlightened age in this respect. In the past, men and women were often made to feel that their sexual nature was something of which they ought to be ashamed.

Sex, as we see it today, is not a regrettable overplus of guilty desire which marriage helps us to dispose of secretly. It is a part of our nature which can be a source of deep fulfilment and rich fruitfulness. Quite apart from the wonderful power which it gives us to create new life, it can be used as the

instrument of the most tender spiritual love between husband and wife, to refresh and renew and enrich their whole relationship. In fact, it *must* be used in this way, or it will endanger the security of married life.

In the early days of marriage, husband and wife must learn the great art of expressing their love for each other in this mysterious union of their bodies which can be such a deeply spiritual experience. If they can rejoice in it as a great gift from God, then they have achieved a true Christian attitude to sex.

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God our Creator, that Thou hast made us as we are. Help us as man and wife that through the mutual fulfilment of our bodies we may achieve true unity of spirit. Amen.

4. The Third Object of Marriage—Comradeship

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God made a woman, and brought her unto the man.

GENESIS 2^{18, 22}

Duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained. . . . Third, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

A wise man soon grows weary of acting the lover, and treating his wife like a mistress, but wants a reasonable companion and a true friend through every stage of his life. It must therefore be your business to qualify yourself for those offices. . . . The grand affair of your life will be to gain and preserve the friendship and esteem of your husband.

DEAN SWIFT, writing to a bride

I value being alone with my husband; it is a quiet I have not lately enjoyed, and it does seem to me one of the great blessings of life. I have much valued my dear husband's company, and feel it sweet that we can so thoroughly enjoy being together, and that we unite so much in our principles and tasks.

ELIZABETH FRY, in a letter

APART from the sexual attraction which they feel for one another, two people marry because a deep friendship has grown up between them which they find very satisfying. The element of comradeship is a most important one in the marriage relationship. All marriages are not blessed with children. Even if they were, children come and go, leaving the couple alone together again. Parenthood, therefore, may enrich marriage; but it will not sustain marriage. Neither will sex. There is much more in marriage than physical love-making. In the daily living together of husband and wife, amid all the changes and accidents of human life, what will matter most of all is that they are true and trusty friends.

We all need friends. Of all the experiences which men and women can encounter, loneliness is one of the most dreaded. As the Bible says, it is not good that a man, or a woman, should be alone. One of our deepest human needs is the need to love and to be loved.

Of course that need can be satisfied apart from marriage. But the close and intimate life together of husband and wife has always provided the ideal solution for most people. Sharing their resources, their plans, their hopes, the married couple grow into a fellowship of warm affection and mutual trust which becomes more and more precious to them as the years go by. At least, that is what marriage ought to be.

The friendship of husband and wife is particularly rich because they are not fully alike. In the Bible story it was not just that the man needed a companion. In that case another man might have met his need. It was that the man's nature was

incomplete in itself until the gift of the woman completed it. Nowadays we can smile at the story of how the woman was made out of the man's rib. Yet this is a symbol of the way in which men and women in love regard each other. When they come together in love they do not feel that they are meeting as strangers. They feel that they have always been part of each other from the beginning and that in coming together they are making each other complete.

So it is only half the truth to say that men and women have been made different. The very nature of their differences is that they require each other in order to be truly happy. Love for each other is kindled in their hearts just as desire for each other is kindled in their bodies.

Sometimes this love blazes for a time with great intensity and then dies out. But at its best it glows like a steady fire through long years and becomes a rich and enduring comradeship. Marriage, by bringing man and woman into a secure and exclusive association, provides the conditions in which this comradeship can come naturally to its full maturity.

We have been thinking of the great ends which marriage serves. As you consider them, you will realize that they are deep and fundamental. They do not vary with the passing of the centuries, with the rise and fall of empires, or with climatic variations or social changes. And they are all bound up in one another. Parenthood normally deepens the married couple's affection and enriches their comradeship. Sex makes possible the coming of children on the one hand and the ecstatic rapture of the love relationship on the other. Good fellowship between husband and wife establishes a stable, happy home for their children, while it makes their sexual union something far more significant than the mere gratification of a recurring physical appetite. The three ends of marriage present a trinity in unity.

PRAYER

We rejoice in the happy fellowship which has been ours since love touched our hearts and awakened us to our kinship with each other. As we travel together the unknown road which lies before us, O God, be Thou our Guide. Enable us, in sharing the joys and sorrows which come to us, to grow daily in mutual love, confidence, and trust. Amen.

5. The First Standard—Monogamy

Let every man of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife reverence her husband.

EPHESIANS 5³³

And the man shall say, I N take thee N to my wedded wife . . . to love and to cherish. And the woman shall likewise say, I N take thee N to my wedded husband . . . to love and to cherish.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

Between husband and wife there should be no question as to meum and tuum. All things should be in common between them, without any distinction or means of distinguishing.

MARTIN LUTHER—*Table Talk*

That there should exist one other person in the world towards whom all openness of exchange should establish itself, from whom there should be no concealment; whose body should be as dear to one, in every part, as one's own; with whom there should be no sense of Mine or Thine, in property or possession; into whose mind one's thoughts should naturally flow, as it were to know themselves and receive a new illumination; and between whom and oneself there should be a spontaneous rebound of sympathy in all the joys and sorrows and experiences of life; such is perhaps one of the dearest wishes of the soul.

EDWARD CARPENTER

WE have been thinking about the great purposes which marriage has served in human life. Whether we think of it as a human or as a divine institution, these purposes are the same. All people everywhere would be in general agreement about them.

But marriage has not always followed the same pattern. Indeed, when you study its history you discover that there have been many patterns, bewildering in their variety. Needless to say, they have not all served equally well the purposes for which marriage exists.

So it is not enough for us to say: 'This is what marriage was meant to be. These are the ends which it achieves.' If all marriages worked out that way, without effort on the part of the men and women concerned, we should be spared a great deal of trouble. The sad truth, however, is that in practice many people fail to achieve the clear and simple ideals which we have been considering. They mismanage their relationships; they sink to sub-human levels of behaviour; they make themselves and each other miserable and unhappy.

So we have to go further, and say that there are laws which must be honoured if marriage is to fulfil the purposes it was intended to fulfil. Christian people believe that there is a particular pattern of marriage which is God's intention, and that this means accepting standards which many human communities have not been ready to accept. There are three standards specially, which have always been the foundation of the Christian teaching about marriage.

The first foundation is monogamy. Of course we take it for granted that marriage at its best means the union of one man with one woman. At least, we do so in Christian countries. In some communities, however, even in the modern world, it is possible for a man to take several wives; and the fate of those wives can often be very hard.

The Church has sometimes had to fight a long battle for the

acceptance of the Christian standard of monogamy. In the Old Testament there are plenty of stories about men who married more than one wife. It has not always been easy to insist on monogamous marriage when your opponent could quote you cases of polygamy out of the pages of the Bible itself!

Yet the case for the marriage of one man and one woman is overwhelming. How can married people who really study each other's well-being bring a rival into the intimacy of a relationship so close and personal? When you read the fine account which Edward Carpenter gives of the aspirations of the lover, you realize that a fellowship of that kind must necessarily exclude all but the man and woman concerned.

But monogamy, in the Christian sense, means also that husband and wife must treat each other with due respect, as equals. That is a truth which the Church has not always fully accepted. St. Paul, for example, has been criticized a good deal for appearing to suggest that the wife is inferior to the husband and must be meek and submissive to his imperious will. We must remember that Christianity was a very new religion in St. Paul's time, and that all its practical implications had not yet been worked out. We can excuse Paul more readily than we can some of those who came after him, when there had been time to consider the matter. Yet the idea of the inferiority of the wife has continued even in the Marriage Service, where in the old Prayer Book form the wife promises to 'obey' her husband, while he makes no corresponding promise to her.

That is not a Christian concept. In God's eyes the man and the woman are equally loved and equally honoured. Their functions are different; but as co-operating partners in the marriage relationship they are in every sense equals. It has taken us a long time to grow into the fulness of Christian truth in this matter; but we have arrived at last. It is the privilege

and the duty of Christian married couples today to exemplify that truth.

PRAYER

O God our Father, we thank Thee that in our marriage Thou hast called us into a partnership where we both count alike in Thy sight. Help us, in mutual consideration and mutual respect, ever to honour each other as we honour thee. Amen.

6. The Second Standard—Fidelity

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

MATTHEW 5:27-28

Then shall the minister say unto the man, Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife . . . and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live? . . . And unto the woman, Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband. . . . and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

It is a formidable decision to make when one says: 'I bind myself for life: I have chosen: from now on my aim will be, not to search for someone who may please me, but to please the one I have chosen.' Yet this decision can alone produce a successful marriage, and if the vow is not sincere the couple's chances for marriage are very slim, for it will run the risk of disruption, when the first obstacles and the inevitable difficulties of life in common are encountered.

ANDRÉ MAUROIS—*The Art of Living*

It has always been the Christian teaching that sexual union is a sacramental experience, to be shared only with the beloved

mate. This arises naturally out of the standard of monogamy which we have already considered. If the intimate and deeply personal nature of the fellowship between husband and wife excludes the idea of a third partner to the marriage, it also excludes the idea of sharing that intimacy with another person outside the marriage partnership.

The very idea of such a thing is remote from the minds of true lovers. The thought of an act of infidelity fills them with horror. It would violate completely the warm and tender trust which they feel towards each other.

Yet here also the Christian Church has had to fight for its standard. In Old Testament times adultery meant something different from what it means to us today. It meant only a relationship outside marriage in which a married *woman* was involved. A relationship between a married *man* and a woman who was not married was not an offence against the man's wife. So there was a 'double standard' which discriminated between the man and the woman.

Christian teaching has always been clear on this point. Faithfulness is expected equally of the husband and of the wife. The best, the most stable, the most satisfying kind of marriage is that in which the couple think of their intimate life together as a secluded walled garden where no one else ever comes—a little private kingdom apart from the rush and roar of the world's life in which they can enjoy the full and free expression of their mutual love and be refreshed and renewed. To allow an interloper to break into that garden, or a usurper to invade that kingdom, would be to threaten the very heart of the marriage with grave danger, and even with destruction.

The standard of fidelity which Christ set, however, begins not in the realm of action, but in the realm of thought. He understood men and women; and he knew well enough that before there is open unfaithfulness between husband and wife

there is nearly always a long period of secret disloyalty which prepares the way for the act of adultery. So he declared that it is here, in the mind, that the Christian must set a continual watch upon himself.

There have been people of fanatical zeal who have distorted this saying of Jesus. He obviously did not mean that a young man seeking a wife should experience no feelings of sexual desire as he contemplated an eligible young woman. Nor did He mean that the wholesome pleasure a man might feel in admiring a beautiful woman, or the delight with which a woman might look upon a fine specimen of manhood, was evil in itself. What He meant, surely, was that the best way in which we can all safeguard ourselves from unfaithfulness is to refuse to let the imagination dwell upon the thought of a sexual relationship which if it actually took place would violate a marriage, our own or another's. There is no doubt that the world would be a much happier place if that standard were more widely accepted. It is certainly our duty as Christian husbands and wives to strive to live up to it. As Thomas Ken put it, we must 'guard the first springs of thought and will'.

Christian husbands and wives make solemn vows of loyalty to each other. The best way to keep those vows is to strive to be completely loyal in *every* area of your relationship. Those who live to please one another, and to trust one another, in the little things, generally find that the big issues take care of themselves.

PRAYER

Keep us faithful all our days, O God, to the vows we made to each other, and to Thee, when we stood together at the altar. Day by day, keep us ever true, in word, thought, and deed. Amen.

7. The Third Standard—Indissolubility

And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them. . . . Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

MARK 10^{2, 9}

Then shall they give their troth to each other in this manner. The man, I N take thee N to my wedded wife, to have and to hold . . . till death us do part, according to God's holy law. And the woman likewise, I N take thee N to my wedded husband, to have and to hold . . . till death us do part, according to God's holy law.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

When spirit irresistible
Grasps and holds within itself
The elements,
No angel severeth
The twin natures thus joined
In their inmost being.

GOETHE

I don't think Christ ever allowed divorce. The ideal that He set before people was to marry and accept what came; but I agree with you that He made no law on the subject. It is only in later Christian history that we get the idea of absolute law. Christ always taught that the administration of any law was to be tempered with the idea of God as being merciful and loving.

EDWARD F. GRIFFITH—*Morals in the Melting-Pot*

To anyone who approaches the New Testament with an open mind, there can be no doubt that marriage is regarded as a binding life-long commitment on the part of the Christian husband and wife. The vows taken at the wedding service are also clear and plain. They can mean only one thing—that death alone terminates the bond into which the couple have entered.

The principle of marriage as a binding life-long union is no longer accepted by many people today. Young people will say, quite seriously: 'Let's get married and see how it works. If we don't like it we can always get a divorce.'

No sincere Christian would enter marriage in that spirit. The failure of a marriage between Christian people must always be a particularly sad event, for themselves and for their friends. To avoid this possibility, Christians have a special obligation to choose their partners wisely and to go into marriage only after careful preparation, and in a spirit of solemn dedication.

Whatever may be true in theory, however, we have to face the fact that marriages between Christian people do sometimes break down. What are we to say when this happens?

On this point Christian people are not of one mind. The Catholic tradition takes the view that the letter of the law must be strictly observed in this matter. When two Christian people find that their marriage relationship means little or nothing to them, they must bear their hardship with fortitude, as a soldier endures hardship in the service of his country. If they feel they cannot go on living together, they must nevertheless accept the fact that, though separated, they are still man and wife. Divorce and re-marriage are out of the question. In this way, it is believed, the sanctity and honour of the institution of Christian marriage are preserved.

Not all Christians, however, share this view. In many of the Protestant groups divorce is accepted, though only with deep regret and as a last resort when all else has failed. It is felt that, because human beings are weak and capable of making many mistakes, they may thoughtlessly, in spite of every safeguard, enter into unions which cannot fulfil the divine purpose for marriage. In such a situation, compassion can be exercised, and divorce and re-marriage permitted.

There is little hope that these opposing views will be soon or

easily reconciled. But what all Christians can do is to recognize that it is their duty and their privilege to set an example of constancy and devotion. It is very easy, when others around us are lax and careless, to neglect our ideals and lower our standards. In such times as these, the witness of good Christian marriage is needed not less, but much more, than it has ever been before. The Christian's standards are high; he accepts them gladly and willingly as part of the way of life which he has voluntarily chosen.

The great error of the past has been that Christian people were not content with binding this high ideal upon themselves, and seeking by the quality of their married life to show forth the Christian way: they have tried to impose these standards upon others against their will. The rebellion against Christian standards which we are witnessing today is, partly at least, an understandable resentment against attempts in the past to make anyone and everyone toe the line, often by coercion which has been a violation of personal freedom. The day in which it was possible to do that kind of thing is all but over for the Christian Church; and some of us at least are not at all sorry.

We can sum it all up like this. If what we Christians believe about marriage is true, just saying so is not going to persuade people of it. To be convincing, the Christian marriage standard must be demonstrated to the world by deeds, not words. It must be *lived*.

PRAYER

We thank Thee, O God, for all the joy and gladness which our married life has brought to us. We do not expect that the way will always be easy. If days of hardship should come, help us to meet them in a spirit which may set a good example to others. So may our life together, in sunshine and in shadow alike, bear witness to what a Christian marriage can be. Amen.