

THE
THRESHOLD OF
MARRIAGE

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Addressed to
those about to be
Married

FOURPENCE.

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CHURCH OF ENGLAND MORAL WELFARE COUNCIL
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FOREWORD TO THE REVISED EDITION

By the BISHOP OF KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

As Chairman of the Committee responsible for this little book, I have been asked to write a few lines of explanation.

Many clergy have been feeling the need of a book written on frankly Christian lines to give to those who were intending to get married. Many persons about to be married have also felt and expressed the need of such help. Resolution No. 12 of the Lambeth Conference, which is a conference of all the Anglican Bishops, meeting every ten years, said at their last meeting in 1930: "The Conference urges the need of some further preparation for those members of the Church about to marry."

This little book is an endeavour partially to meet the need.

It is the result of much corporate thinking and discussion on the part of many people. Clergy, medical men and women, schoolmasters and mistresses, married and unmarried men and women, have all made their contribution, and the Committee desires to express its gratitude for their help. For the actual form of the book the Committee is mainly indebted to the former Secretary of the White Cross League, the Rev. C. E. Seccombe, now Vicar of Escot, South Devon.

Two points need emphasising.

First, the booklet is intended for young people about to be married. Its aim is to put simply for such people the Christian view of marriage in all its aspects, spiritual, social, and physical. As in all these God's working is to be seen, all are equally good and beautiful and not to be shunned.

Secondly, the book is not intended to deal with all the problems connected with marriage. Some of these arise out of circumstances which are abnormal; some from the failure of marriage. Because our Committee desired to give a simple, positive and constructive view, those problems have been deliberately excluded.

Our hope and prayer is that this little book may clear away uncertainties from the minds of many about to be married, and enable them more joyously to enter into that estate of life which for most men and women is the normal and should be the most deeply blessed.

F. O. T. KINGSTON.

Advent, 1938.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

Now that your marriage is drawing near, it is only natural that your thoughts should be mainly occupied with one another and with the tremendous happiness which marriage will bring you. However, it is worth while to remember that your marriage is of great moment to a much wider circle than your two selves.

For instance, the State has made certain laws about marriage, bearing on such subjects as the wife's claim on the husband for maintenance and the duty of both towards their children.

The reason why such laws have been made is that the State is deeply interested in the well-being of the family. The State wants children to be born and cared for because they will be the next generation of its citizens, and nowhere are children so well cared for as in the family.

Indeed without the family there could be no civilisation. Civilisation is built not on laws but on character, and family life is the greatest influence in forming the character of children. They learn the great lesson of life from parents who love and care for them, and who love one another; the love of father and mother for one another has a wonderful effect on their children. Love is the great lesson of life; and love is the spirit of the family.

Jesus Christ taught that love is the link between us and God, because God is love. Thus the family is part of God's plan for human life, because it is not only the means which God has ordained for perpetuating the human race, but also the school prepared by Him in which we may learn what love is and what He Himself is like.

Husband and wife must also be companions to one another. One element in their love is the passionate feeling which comes from sex attraction; another is the liking or affection which makes them delight in each other's

companionship; but that which gives it depth and security is the unselfish devotion, the generous desire to bestow happiness and fulness of life on the loved person. Love like that is a gift of the Spirit of God, and if your love for one another is of that quality, you may be confident that God has brought you together and wants you to marry. That is why Christ spoke of marriage as "What God hath joined together." (St. Mark x. 9.).

You have heard it said that marriage is a sacrament. A Sacrament is an outward act with an inward meaning. So marriage is a Sacrament in two senses.

(1) The Church Service, called in the Prayer Book the Solemnization of Matrimony, is a sacramental Service because the man and woman, who are the ministers of the sacrament, take one another for husband and wife before God Who blesses their union through His Church. The Service is explained in the last Chapter of this book.

(2) The whole of married life is sacramental, because everything that you do with one another and for one another is an outward sign of the love which unites you. By showing your love for one another in outward ways you increase it. This is true of all acts of unselfish kindness and helpfulness. It is also and more especially true of bodily intercourse, which is the great sacrament of married love. This subject is considered more fully in Chapter III. All that need be said about it at the moment is this:—

Bodily union is not just the fulfilment of bodily desire; it is the pledge of true love. Husband and wife share in this because they want to share their whole lives, all they have and all they are, all their joys and hopes, especially the hope of children. In the same spirit they mean to stand by one another in all difficulties and troubles, and to trust one another perfectly to be true and loyal. So married intercourse is not just a bodily act; behind it lies that love and loyalty and trust which consecrate it and make it a true sacrament of love; the bodily union is the outward sign of the union of heart and mind and

soul. When married union has become so close and complete, you will realise that nothing but death can break it.

The Church blesses your marriage in God's Name on the understanding that you are going to be true to one another for life, and a marriage begun on that understanding is sure to be the happiest.

You may have heard people talk about marriage in such a way as to suggest that it looks very wonderful and exciting at the outset, but that very soon the romance will fade, and then you will have to settle down to marriage as it is, that is to say, rather a dull and commonplace affair. Nothing could be more misleading. The exact opposite is nearer to the truth. Marriage should grow more interesting and delightful year by year, as husband and wife come to understand one another better, and learn how to make their companionship more and more complete and satisfying. At the beginning of marriage, when they are thrown together for the first time in close and constant intimacy, it is hardly likely that they will attain to the full happiness of marriage all at once. To some extent they are still unknown quantities to one another. They are two human beings with different minds and characters; there are almost sure to be differences of opinion, and even mistakes on both sides. But if they are true to their love, they will grow through differences and mistakes to fuller sympathy and co-operation. They will work together towards a unity and richness of life which will fulfil the hopes with which they set out on the great adventure, and justify their belief in God's calling.

Companionship and co-operation in marriage are the subject of Chapter II.

Married life is a real test of character. To make the best of the opportunities of marriage will call upon all the elements of character. Next to plain good sense and good will, the most valuable is humour, which is one of God's best gifts to man. The sense of humour is the power of

seeing all things, including oneself, in right proportion. It is invaluable to married people, because it prevents them from magnifying offences or imagining them when they do not exist. On the other hand, if they do exist, the only sane thing to do, on the one side and on the other, is to own up and to forgive. That is one of the distinguishing marks of Christian marriage.

You are both looking forward to the future, and the past does not interest you. However, it is well to be sure that the past has left no trace which might disturb the happiness of married life. If it has left some such trace, be sure that you make it right with God. If it is anything that your partner ought to know, do not hesitate to make a clean breast of it. It would be better to break off your engagement than to begin marriage with a secret on your mind which would be almost certain to spoil your married life. A partner who truly loves you will surely understand and forgive.

From these rather grave thoughts we return to the hopes which you both have for a long and happy married life.

CHAPTER II.

THE ART OF MARRIAGE.

Marriage is a fine art, because it creates beauty out of the blending of two lives. The beauty of married life is not a happy accident; it has to be made by constant thought and effort. Like all artists and craftsmen, husband and wife have to study their materials, which are the natures and personalities of both.

It is well known that a man's nature and a woman's nature tend to be different in some respects. That is one reason why married life is so interesting. Each supplies what is lacking in the other, and as they enter more and more into each other's mind, new aspects of life open up. The differences between men and women are not inscrutable mysteries, and there is no reason why they should be allowed to set husband and wife at cross purposes. Such slogans as "These women again!" or "Just like a man!" only show that those who use them are selfish or lazy-minded.

With regard to temperament, a woman's emotions are generally more delicately organised than a man's. Her feelings react more promptly to her immediate surroundings, and she is more quickly moved to laughter and to tears. A man tends to be absorbed in a few dominant interests, and when those interests are not concerned he is liable to boredom. A woman lives more in the present, and finds in its details sources of entertainment and enjoyment, as well as causes for apparently unnecessary depression. The difference between a man and a woman makes their companionship stimulating to both. It is possible, however, that because of her keener sensitiveness the process of settling down to novel conditions in the first months of marriage may be more trying to the wife than to the husband.

Again, it is to be noted that a man has less reserve of

energy than a woman. A woman can go without food, or miss a meal, with much less discomfort than a man. Therefore if a wife finds that when her husband comes home from work he cannot take a keen interest in home affairs until he has had a square meal, it is not to be put down to greed or pig-headedness.

A more serious point is this:—speaking generally, a woman's affections are more stable than a man's. Therefore when a man has married a wife and settled her in a home, he may feel that she is in his power, and that just because he is sure of her loyalty to him, he need take no pains to deserve and retain it. But a right-thinking husband will realise that just because he has his wife's happiness in his hands, he is in honour bound to show by all possible tenderness and considerateness that he loves and values her above all women, and that she is to him what no other woman is or could be. On the other hand, she will show that she appreciates his loyalty and prove herself worthy of it by making herself as attractive as possible and in every way fit to be his companion and to hold his love.

The fact is that neither of you can take it for granted that love will last without any effort on your part to keep it. Your wedding day should not be the end of your courtship. Courtship must go on all through married life; you must be lovers all the time. There must be the same respect for one another, the same desire to please, the same thoughtfulness and delicate attentions, and the same eagerness to share all the pleasant things in your lives as well as the hard and difficult things. By that sharing you will halve each other's sorrows, and double each other's joys.

In spite of the real differences between men and women, at the same time they have a great deal in common. Both are human beings with personalities of their own which are to be respected. Marriage means that two distinct personalities are blended, not that either or both are swamped or stunted. The wife is not to be expected to

conform in all things to the husband, nor the husband to the wife; there must be give and take on both sides.

Each of you may have detected certain faults in the other, and made a mental note that such faults are not important now, but that after marriage you will be able to deal with them, and to alter your partner to your own pattern. Such an idea is sound when you are buying a costume or a piece of furniture, but not when you are taking a husband or a wife. Human beings do not respond to such treatment. You take one another for what you are, not for what each expects to make the other. Adaptation there must be, but it must come about through the willingness of both to allow each other's personality to grow and to fulfil itself through love.

The time before the wedding will be well spent in looking ahead and considering certain matters in which agreement and co-operation will be essential.

Religion. Religious feelings and convictions, if shared by husband and wife, make marriage happier, not only by providing one more interest in common, but by making the whole relationship richer and deeper. If, on the other hand, religion meant a great deal to one and very little to the other, the sincerely religious one might find the other outside the deepest part of his or her life, and might feel lonely and unhappy about it. Even if both were keen on religion but belonged to different Churches, difficulties might arise, especially as to the bringing up of the children. It does not follow necessarily that in that case you ought not to marry, but you certainly ought to discuss the matter and come to an understanding about it, even if you have to agree to differ.

Health. For your children's sake, as well as for each other's sake, you should be quite certain that each of you enters marriage with a clean bill of health. If you have not been to a doctor for a thorough examination, be sure to do so. You will never regret it, even if, as a result, you have to postpone the marriage or even give up all thoughts of it. It is important for you both that the doctor should ascertain whether there is anything which

would prevent your having children, and whether you are both free from any disease which might be passed on to them. If, as is most likely, he finds that you are both quite healthy, you will marry with added confidence, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have played fair by each other, by your children and by the community.

The family income. Riches are by no means essential for the happiness of marriage, but there should be enough money in hand to provide a home, if only in a small way, and a reasonable certainty of being able to meet the expenses of the new household.

In the ordinary way the family income is earned by the husband, but it should be considered as belonging to husband and wife jointly, and both should decide together how it is to be portioned out—how much for housekeeping and clothes, how much for luxuries, entertainments and holidays, and how much for the work of God's Church and the needs of others.

It is only just that the wife should have an equal say in this matter, not only because if she were not married she would be able to earn an income of her own, but also because all that she does to make the home comfortable and attractive is a real contribution to their joint wealth.

Home companionship. As a general rule the husband is away from home for most of the day, and he and his wife are together only in the early mornings and the evenings. Constant effort to make the most of these opportunities of companionship will be richly rewarded. The day's work that lies ahead should not be allowed to cast its shadow over the breakfast table, and if the newspaper must be read at that meal, the interest in its contents should be shared by both. When the husband comes home, both will find their chief refreshment in each other's society, and not become separately and selfishly engrossed in their favourite pastimes. In most families as no domestic help can be afforded, the husband should remember that his wife's work in the home is just as tiring as his own, and if he helps her in the household tasks, especially if there is

any heavy lifting to be done, it will encourage and cheer her out of all proportion to the amount of work he actually does. On the other hand, she will remember that while she can do her work at her own time, he has to keep someone else's time, and it is to her interest as well as his to enable him to start off to his work comfortably and punctually.

Leisure. The use of leisure is a matter for careful consideration. The choice of occupations will depend on individual taste and opportunity. A much more serious question is whether you will pursue your chosen occupations together or apart. From the point of view of companionship, husband and wife will probably wish to be together as much as possible. On the other hand, it is important that both should keep themselves physically fit and mentally fresh and alert. They may find it possible and even easy to do this without parting company; but if it proves impossible and they have to go their separate ways for a short period each week, that decision should be made for no selfish reason on either side, but with a view to their common good, and because they believe that by so doing they will not only be fitter for the tasks of life but also better companions for each other. Therefore neither of you will assume that after marriage the games or hobbies to which you have been accustomed will be continued as a matter of course; but you will discuss the matter and agree on the policy which makes for the greatest good of each and of both. It may be that you will feel that for the sake of the happiness of both you will have to give up some cherished recreation, and you will do so gladly. But the last things to be given up are intellectual interests; for these greatly enrich personality, and therefore add to the charm and value of companionship. Husband and wife should do all that lies in their power to encourage each other to develop their interest in science, literature, art, politics, gardening or any other recreation.

The joint life of husband and wife should not be a selfish life. Part of their leisure time should be given to some form of work for others. This will not only benefit

their fellow men, but will make their love for one another stronger and truer.

Friendships. Marriage should enhance the value of the friendships of husband and wife with other men and women, because it gives them a new sense of security and a new understanding of life. There is therefore no reason why you should not each keep a place in your heart and your home for old friends and also make new ones. But the great principle is that wife or husband must come first before any other friend, male or female.

This applies specially to your relations. Your love for your parents has been changing in character throughout your life so far. It began in complete dependence when they were "all the world" to you. It should have become, by the time you are ready to marry, more of a friendly partnership of equals. Now your husband or wife comes first in a special kind of way, so that your parents tend to become part of your general circle of friends. They are now much less in the "foreground of the picture." You will probably find that their attitude to you will change gradually; encourage it to do so. Many marriages are wrecked because when any misunderstandings arise, husband or wife or both rush off to father or mother for sympathy. Such people are not really grown up; they cannot stand on their own feet; they still want to be pitied and protected like children.

You are both of you grown people; you have chosen your mate for life; you are founding a home of your own; and you must work out your difficulties together. Take other people's advice, if you like, but use your own judgment; do not expect them to shoulder your responsibilities. You and you alone are responsible for making a success of your marriage.

Do not claim to know all one another's secrets or to read all one another's letters. Each of you may receive letters which cannot be shown to the other without being unfair to the writers. Married life cannot be happy unless husband and wife are prepared to trust each other.

Children. In the natural course of events your first

child will be born about a year after your marriage. The advantage of this is that you will begin your united life by entering into the meaning of marriage at its richest and fullest, in which married love and parenthood are bound up together, and complete each other.

If the interval after the birth of each child before the next arrives is not less than two years, the mother will have had time to recover thoroughly from the last confinement, and she will not have two children in arms at the same time; the older one will be a toddler before the next one arrives. If the interval is longer than that, especially if it extends to four or five years, it may be bad for the older child, because it has got used to being the baby, and therefore a privileged person, and is not at all pleased at being put in the second place; indeed it may be left with a sense of injustice which may be a source of serious trouble in later life.

When children come, the wife will be tempted to neglect her husband because she is so taken up with them. She must resist this temptation; she must be wife as well as mother. On the other hand the husband must not be exacting; he must recognise that children have a rightful claim to a mother's love and care. If he leaves the children entirely to her, the position will be difficult. It will be much easier if he takes a real interest in them and is ready to help her to look after them.

With the birth of children, husband and wife experience still further joy from their love for each other. However devoted they have been to one another hitherto, they find that there is a place in their nature which only children can fill, and that the coming of children can draw them closer together. The unspoiled freshness of children is one of the most beautiful things on earth. It is given to parents to have this revelation of beauty constantly before their eyes, to watch the growth of body and mind, and by their love and careful wisdom to foster that growth and direct it towards the full development of Christian character, since in them their children are to see their first picture of God.

CHAPTER III.

MARRIED INTERCOURSE.

Marriage is the partnership of two whole lives, not of parts of two lives; and therefore married life employs the whole of human nature, not a part of it. There are as many sides to marriage as there are to human nature. Marriage has a spiritual side, because true love is spiritual and comes from God; it has a social side, because husbands and wives and children have to live in a world of human beings like themselves; it has a practical or common sense side, because hard facts like work and money have to be faced in order to keep the home together. It also has a bodily side. In this world soul and body are united, and the soul cannot do without the body, any more than the body without the soul.

This brings us to the subject of married intercourse, which is important just because it is not simply a bodily act, but one in which body and soul both take part.

It would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of bodily intercourse. It is by no means the be-all and end-all of marriage. Also married couples differ very much as to the value which they set upon it. Some come to value it more and more as they grow through bodily union to oneness of mind and heart. Others find that their companionship in the interests and pursuits which they have in common is so satisfying that bodily union becomes less important. Still, for most people who are on the point of marriage, intercourse is part of their expectation, and it is well that this should be clearly understood between them, however few words they exchange on the subject. It has been known to happen that a man and a woman are very fond of one another as friends, and get married on the strength of that friendship, only to find that the very idea of intercourse is simply unbearable to one or the other of them, and the result is misery. If they had only found

out in time how things were, they would either have broken off the engagement, or would have married with their eyes open to the sacrifice which each would have to make.

This side of married life is as truly part of God's purpose as any other, and therefore you should have sufficient knowledge about it to enable you to help one another to enter into it without anxiety or perplexity.

Married intercourse is the appointed means of bringing children into the world. At the same time it is the special way in which the love of husband and wife shows itself and grows in depth and tenderness. The rest of this Chapter gives, first, a short explanation of parentage, and, secondly, some simple practical suggestions on the more personal side.

The life-story of every child begins with conception, which takes place in its mother's womb. Conception is the meeting of an egg-cell of the mother with one of the fertilising cells of the male substance or semen which comes from the body of the father.

The egg-cells come from the ovaries, paired organs which lie within the pelvis, one on each side of the womb. Once a month in connection with the menstrual flow, or "monthly period," an egg-cell is released from one of the ovaries, and is drawn towards the womb. The womb is connected with the outside of the body by a passage called the vagina.

Corresponding to the female ovaries are the male testes, which lie outside the body in the purse or scrotum. In these the male cells are formed and in the act of intercourse pass through the penis, which has been introduced into the vagina, and so reach the womb. If a male cell then meets an egg-cell, the two cells combine to form a fertilised ovum, and thus conception takes place. A new life has begun, and after nine months of pregnancy a child will be born.

It should be realised that the monthly period is part of nature's preparation for conception. It is a process which involves the successful interaction of various organs of

the body, and by means of it the surface of the uterus is maintained in a condition which enables it to receive the ovum should it be fertilised, and to allow of its fixation and growth in the early stages of development. Menstruation is not an illness but a natural function, and if the ordinary rules of health are observed there should be freedom from pain or unpleasant sensation during the period. Pain, depression and irritability are not normal at this period, but appear occasionally even in the most healthy, and when they do, they call for special consideration on the part of the husband. If there is persistent trouble at this time medical advice should be taken.

From evidence which is gradually being collected it appears that the most usual time for the release of the ovum is round about the fourteenth day after menstruation, though there may be variations from this in individual cases. Conception depends upon the length of time the ovum remains in the female passages after being discharged from the ovary, and on the length of time of survival within these passages of the male fertilising cells.

After conception menstruation normally ceases, and no egg-cells are released from the ovaries until the mother has recovered from childbirth.

This short account is sufficient to explain the purpose of intercourse from the point of view of parentage. It is mainly concerned with bodily processes. But when it comes to the personal side if intercourse the attitude of mind is all important, just because this is not a mere physical act, but one in which two personalities meet and unite. Like the whole of married life, this most intimate part of it should be approached in a spirit of joyful adventure. With all honour and reverence for one another, and also with the perfect freedom and confidence which come from true love, husband and wife will discover together how best to enter most fully into the beauty of God's ordinance.

It is most essential that the act should be really mutual. The impulse, the expectation and the fulfilment should be shared by both. Both should desire it, and both should

rejoice in it. They should realise that the more completely they can help one another to take part gladly and willingly, the happier it will be for both. Neither of them should entertain any idea that so to take part in it would be unseemly or immodest. It may be said most reverently that perfect love casts out such fears.

This mutualness is not just a matter of sentiment; it is absolutely necessary, just because in this act body and mind work so closely together. Unless the mind of both husband and wife is rightly disposed, the body is not rightly prepared. On each occasion bodily changes have to take place in both; otherwise the man, for his part, could not effect union, and the wife, if she permitted union would do so only at the cost of real discomfort. These changes take place more slowly in the wife than in the husband. Therefore the husband should remember that all the expressions of fondness and affection that lead up to union are really necessary if the wife is to take her rightful share in it.

Once the act of intercourse has begun, it should be properly completed, both for the man and for the wife, otherwise there may be a strain on the nerves which is harmful. For the man the completion or "climax" of the act is clearly marked, together with the relief and satisfaction which it gives him. It should also bring a similar satisfaction to the wife. It should be remembered that the wife generally reaches her climax more slowly than the husband. He should therefore try to delay his climax in order to give her time; or, if he reaches his climax first, should continue union as long as is necessary for her. Experience will probably enable them to reach their climax together, which is most desirable.

It is often supposed that marriage must be consummated by a complete act of union on the wedding night. This idea is mistaken. There is no special reason why marriage should make such a sudden change. Some may be glad that it should do so. Others may well prefer that courtship should continue after marriage and lead to its fulfilment gradually and naturally. In any case, however much

it is desired, it may be several days before complete union is possible. There is a physical reason for this, namely, that the vagina is sometimes partly closed by a piece of membrane or skin called the hymen, which may be broken when the first complete union takes place. This may give a certain amount of pain—not serious in most cases and certainly not to be dreaded—and there may be slight bleeding. Even when the hymen is broken, it may take some time before the outlet of the vagina adapts itself so as to admit of intercourse without discomfort. Such difficulties should not be exaggerated. Consideration and forbearance on the part of the husband greatly help to overcome them, and there need be no further strain or hurt of any sort for the wife, and nothing to interfere with the happiness of union.

Certainly a considerate husband will not wish to give his wife unnecessary pain and distress by acting hastily or roughly in the early days of marriage. The reason why some husbands do behave inconsiderately is the common idea that intercourse is entirely the husband's affair. The golden rule is that intercourse should always be as welcome and as satisfying to the wife as to the husband. Therefore let him not expect too much at first; let him be prepared to control himself. Let both realise that married intercourse ought to be and will be rightly satisfying and delightful in due time, but they must help one another to that state by degrees. If there is real difficulty in reaching complete union after a reasonable time, the doctor should be consulted; the trouble can probably be put right very simply.

If it is felt that fuller information on any particular point would be helpful, do not hesitate to consult a doctor, or a married friend whom you can trust and respect.*

How often should intercourse take place? No definite rule can be laid down. Each married couple must find out

* Engaged couples requiring more information on the physical aspects of the married relationship should write to the Church of England Moral Welfare Council, 36, Victoria Street, S.W.1. for a booklet "*Married Intercourse*" (2½d. post free).

what is best for them. On one side is their natural fondness for one another and the personal inclination of each; on the other side the claims of prudence and of respect and consideration for each other. To find and pursue the right course will call for much self-control, as the following points will show.

(1) They should not come together so often as to damage the health of either. On this subject the wife should remember that the act is a greater tax on her husband's vitality than on hers; he is more likely to be physically tired by frequent intercourse than she is, especially if his occupation is sedentary. His energy of body and mind is very closely connected with his sex life, and while moderate intercourse will probably be good for him, any excess will make him less fit to fight the battle of life for her and her children.

(2) Intercourse should only take place when both want it and are ready for it. It may happen that one wants it when the other does not, and therefore the one who wants it may have to refrain. Both should try to meet the other's wishes as far as possible, even when it costs some sacrifice of personal inclination at the moment; but there are times when this is hardly possible—for instance when either is overstrained in mind or body, or is in anxiety or sorrow. Again, as the monthly period draws near, the wife may be disinclined for intercourse; if so, the husband should refrain.

The idea that because the wife promises in the Marriage Service to obey her husband, therefore he can demand intercourse whenever he likes, apart from her wishes, is utterly hateful and heathenish. He must be a poor sort of husband if he gets any satisfaction out of it when he is forcing his wife to submit against her will.

(3) If intercourse is too frequent, it may become mechanical; all the meaning and beauty may go out of it. Each time it should be meant and valued as the expression of a deep and growing love; it should never become cheap and common. Where intercourse becomes simply a bad habit, incessant and uncontrolled, it may well be that one or the

other partner is using it as a way of escape from strain in other directions. For example, a quarrel may be patched up by an attempt to resume physical intimacy without first achieving the genuine fellowship of understanding and reconciliation. If this method of settling a quarrel is tried it becomes more difficult to achieve fellowship on the personal level, and correspondingly easier to have recourse to physical intimacy to put an end to strain whenever it arises. Such a dissociation or separation of the physical and spiritual aspects of union may easily end in the development of a habit which may wreck married happiness. No doubt there are men for whom self-control is specially hard, but a wife can do much to help such a husband if she remembers that in him, as indeed in all men, passion is more quickly aroused than it is in her. She should therefore take pains to notice the kind of things that excite his passion and to avoid such things when necessary; at the same time, without allowing herself to appear cold or lacking in affection, she will know how to turn his thoughts into another channel. The idea that self-control in such cases must damage the health is mistaken. Even complete abstinence, if undertaken for sufficient reason and with good will, is not necessarily harmful; the body adjusts itself to restraint quite naturally. It need hardly be said that any excess of alcoholic drink makes control harder. Sometimes it is the wife for whom moderation is more difficult than for the husband; in that case the husband must take the lead in helping her to self-control. In either case the victory is half won if the difficulty is treated as a trouble which both share and for which they try to find the remedy together. Where inabstinence, during pregnancy or temporary separations, involves less strain, and self-control is the product of mutual love rather than sternly disciplined one-sided endeavours to achieve it.

(4) It is a good thing to deny oneself lawful things regularly so as to be ready for sudden calls on self-control. In the same way, husband and wife may feel it wise to

come together a little less often than they would otherwise think right, in order to be prepared for special strains on their loyalty. For instance, the husband may have to leave home for a period. That separation will be less troublesome to them if they have practised self-control in the way mentioned. The same applies to the time before and after the birth of a child, when intercourse is ruled out.

(5) This brings us to the question of intercourse during pregnancy. As soon as pregnancy begins, the welfare of mother and child is the first consideration.

As soon as the wife is known to be pregnant, the usual sign being that a monthly period is missed, it is not necessary to give up intercourse altogether, but it is obvious that more than ordinary care should be taken. This is especially true in regard to the first three months of pregnancy, owing to the greater risk of "miscarriage" taking place during that period. Intercourse should become less and less frequent as time goes on, and throughout pregnancy special care should be taken to avoid any lack of gentleness which might injure the mother or the child.

This may mean a great effort of self-control on the part of the husband; but the hope of a child gives him a fresh interest; and if he is truly in love with his wife, he will sympathise with what she is going through for love of him and for the sake of their child, and that will help him enormously to control himself, as many men have found rather to their surprise.

It should be recognised that pregnancy is a real nervous strain on the wife, and therefore during this period the husband will be specially careful to study her feelings and to subordinate his own inclinations to hers.

After childbirth there should certainly be no intercourse until the mother has had time to recover quite thoroughly. This will take at least six weeks.

If children do not come as soon as you hope and expect, go to a doctor for advice. The cause is just as likely to be on the husband's side as on the wife's.

There is no room in this book for any advice about

pregnancy and childbirth from the maternity point of view. We take it for granted that, as soon as you know that pregnancy has begun, you will at once apply to the antenatal clinic, or your family doctor. There is sure to be a clinic or a doctor within fairly easy reach, and if you take advice promptly, it will be better in every way for mother and child.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROBLEM OF CONCEPTION CONTROL.

Very often Christians are faced with moral problems about which there is great divergency of opinion within their own borders. There is, for example, the problem of pacifism. Many deplore this and desire that everything should be settled by authority. They should reflect, however, whether the fact that they are thrown back upon their own personal decisions is not part of their moral training in this world.

The Problem of Birth Control is one of the problems we have in mind. Many Christians are being called to a decision about it.

Up to a certain point there is agreement. It is generally agreed that it is right for certain reasons to limit the family. It is right to do so for the well-being of the mother, or again, for the proper upbringing of the children. This recognition of the rightness of limiting families for good reasons is in a sense a new departure. Not very long ago it was held to be the duty of married people to produce as many children as possible. "To be fruitful" was the one duty of married couples.

But Christians begin to differ acutely when the question of the method of limiting is faced. As long as the method of limitation of the family was confined to abstention from intercourse or the use of the so-called 'safe period' no special moral issue has been raised. But when the use of artificial contraceptives is suggested the divergency of opinion becomes acute. There are roughly speaking three schools of thought on this point.

First. There is the rigorist position. Those who hold this say that the use of contraceptives is in all cases wrong. A large body of Christians, including officially all members of the Roman Catholic Church, would take this line—using three arguments:

- (i) That the use of contraceptives is against nature.
- (ii) That the use of contraceptives defeats the primary purpose of marriage--the bearing of children.
- (iii) That contraceptives offend the aesthetic feelings, which is proof that their use is wrong.

Second. There is the "Lambeth" position. This name is used because it is the opinion expressed by the majority of the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 1930. According to this view of the matter the use of contraceptives is right in certain cases. A married couple, it is argued, may be morally justified in avoiding parenthood, as for example if the birth of a child were to impair seriously the health of the mother. Normally they will consider abstention from intercourse as the way to secure this object, but they may be led to reject this course for moral reasons. They may feel that because they are debarred from realising one of the purposes of marriage, the bearing of children, it would not be right to forego the other great purpose of marriage, the deepening and enhancing of married love, and therefore on moral grounds they may decide to use contraceptives. The upholders of the "Lambeth" view would say that in such circumstances the couple were acting rightly and were not merely adopting a second best course.

Third. There is the "liberal" position. It is difficult to draw the line between this and the second one dealt with above. But it might be said that the former would always regard the use of contraceptives as abnormal and the latter as normal. Those who hold the "liberal" view would state the fact that man is continually interfering with and controlling nature. The use of contraceptives must not therefore on that ground be condemned. If they are used wisely their use may lead to a happier and healthier life for parents and children. And therefore there is no moral reason against their use.

We thus see that there are divergencies of opinion amongst Christians. It is however necessary to add that there is very wide agreement upon the following points:

1. There is no justification for the use of contraceptives

for selfish motives. If parents for the sake of their own comfort or pleasure or to avoid self-denial or self-sacrifice refuse to have children they are doing something that is morally wrong.

2. The use of contraceptives within the married state is entirely different from their use outside it. Inter-course outside marriage whether with or without the use of contraceptives is against the teaching of Christianity.

What then are a married couple to do who are facing this problem? They may feel it right to take counsel with a Christian doctor or a priest, or both, but in the end it comes to their personal decision. They must desire to do the right thing and not the easiest thing; they must pray together to God for guidance and under the leading of God's Spirit come to a decision and pursue the right path as it is given them to see it.

CHAPTER V. THE CHURCH'S PART.

Marriage is older than the Christian Church. It goes back to the very beginning of the human race. Indeed marriage is natural to man, because it supplies an outlet for natural instincts and affections, and also provides for passing on human life and for the welfare of society. That is another way of saying that it is part of God's purpose for mankind.

In all ages the true character of marriage has been differently conceived. Marriage customs and marriage laws have changed with economic and social conditions and with varying standards of morality.

Part of the work of Jesus Christ was to restore marriage to what God meant it to be—the lifelong union of one man and one woman, founded on true love. The Christian Church, being the society which is charged with the duty of carrying on Our Lord's work, is bound to bear witness to His teaching about marriage. That witness is summed up in the Prayer Book Service.

The essential act of the Service is the solemn compact between bride and bridegroom, which is ratified and confirmed in God's name by the Priest. Those who are married in a Registry Office are content to have their compact recorded by the State, without seeking the blessing of the Church. Such marriages are truly valid, and as binding in all respects as any other. But marriage is such an important thing in life that those who believe in the Christian view of life will naturally wish their marriage to be solemnized in Church, so that they may be assured that God approves and blesses it.

The Service falls into three divisions—the Introduction, the Marriage proper, and the Benediction.

1. *The Introduction.* The opening exhortation explains the sanctity of marriage in the light of God's plan for human life and the teaching of Christ. It points out the necessity of entering upon marriage with a right attitude of mind and will, and sets forth the threefold purpose of marriage, namely, provision for the birth and education of children, expression of the natural instincts of love under due control, and complete companionship in body, soul and spirit.

The congregation are then asked if they know any reason why the marriage would be contrary to God's laws, and a similar question is put to bride and bridegroom. This completes the Introduction.

2. *The Marriage.* Bride and Bridegroom now make their compact with one another, first by answering "I will" to a question put to each of them by the Priest, and secondly by taking each other's hand in turn and repeating a form of words after the Priest.

It is to be noted first that the declarations and promises so made are most solemn. They are made "in the sight of God and in the face of this congregation," who are present as witnesses on God's behalf. It is impossible to deceive Almighty God; if there were anything insincere in your promises He would know it, and you would have to account for it to Him. The words in which the Church reminds you of God's judgment are stern, but if you make a regular habit of prayer, you will be regularly and constantly putting your lives before God, so that He may approve what is right, correct what is wrong, and strengthen your love by daily renewing in you the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Secondly, your promise to be faithful and true to one another does not simply mean that you will avoid what is commonly called infidelity, but that you will at all times and in all ways do all that lies in the power of each of you to show your love to one another and to make your marriage a blessing to you both. Marriage has to be re-made from day to day by constant consideration and unselfishness in thought, word and deed. Perhaps you cannot now see all that this means; but if you promise to do the very best

you can, God will accept your intention and make it more perfect as your married life goes on.

Of course the promises are mutual, that is to say, they are in every respect as binding on the husband as on the wife. Christian marriage is based on the complete equality of men and women before God, with Whom there is neither male nor female.

Next come the giving and receiving of the ring, with the prayer that follows, which shows that the ring is meant to be a perpetual reminder of the vows which you have made to one another.

This completes the special portion of the Service, in which you are the principals, the priest and congregation standing by as witnesses of your acts and words. But having done your part by taking each other as man and wife, you must look beyond yourselves to God who makes you one. Now therefore it remains for the Priest, as the officer and spokesman of God's Church, to declare that your marriage is the act of God. He takes your right hands and joins them with the words "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," thus proclaiming that it is indeed God who unites you. He then solemnly declares that as the outward sign of matrimony has been duly completed according to the forms required by the Church, you are now man and wife together "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." A short blessing concludes this part of the Service.

3. *The Benediction.* You are now man and wife; God has set His seal upon your marriage; henceforward you are responsible for your married life not only to one another but to God, and you can rely on the help of His grace, which will be with you if you seek it rightly.

So now your first act as man and wife is to follow the Priest to the Sanctuary for a short service of prayer for God's special blessing, that your marriage may lead you to eternal life with God, that you may be granted the gift of children, and that your natural fondness for one another may be deepened and consecrated by that same selfless love with which Christ loved us and died for us.

The Prayer Book says that it is desirable that the newly married pair should receive the Holy Communion together immediately after the marriage ceremony, or at the first opportunity thereafter.

Thus your married life begins with prayer for God's guidance and help in the fellowship of His Church. As it has begun in that way, it should go on in that way till death parts you. The blessing given you in the Marriage Service is not a supply of grace which will be sufficient for your whole married life; it is a promise that if you seek God's grace regularly by prayer and worship and sacrament, it will be abundantly bestowed on you. Too often married couples ask the Church to take the responsibility of joining them together in God's name, and then absent themselves from her fellowship and from the Sacraments by which love and goodness are strengthened. The result is that their own married life is impoverished, and the Church suffers discredit and loss.

Many married people make a point of coming specially to Church and to Holy Communion on or near the anniversary of their wedding day to give thanks for the happiness that marriage has brought them, and after examining themselves as to how each has done his or her part, to renew before God the solemn vows which they took when they were married.

The practice of religion should not be confined to worship in Church, but should be carried out in the home life. It is an excellent thing for husband and wife to say their prayers together, even in silence, or to join in saying the Lord's Prayer. Regular family prayers and Bible reading, in which all members of the household take part, can be most helpful, and such simple acts as saying Grace before and after meals are not to be despised. Not only do such habits make married life fuller and happier by linking it with the unseen and eternal, but they create an atmosphere in the home which is the best means of bringing up children "in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of His Holy Name."

Literature for further reading, which can be obtained from the Church of England Moral Welfare Council, 36, Victoria St., S.W.1., or from any bookseller:—

Christian Marriage and Modern Practice, by A. G. PIRE, M.C., M.A. (Student Christian Movement Press. 3/6, postage 3d.)

There is no better introduction than this book for those who wish to relate the meaning of Christian marriage to the rest of life.

The Sex Factor in Marriage, by DR. HELENA WRIGHT. (Noel Douglas. 3/6, postage 3d.)

This book gives what is in many aspects the best description of the physical aspects of the married relationship.

The Hygiene of Marriage, by DR. ISABEL E. HUTTON. (Heinemann. 5/-, postage 3d.)

Dr. Hutton's book is similar to that mentioned above, and in addition it discusses with qualified approval the question of "birth control."

Married Life and Birth Control, by DR. H. P. NEWS-HOLME. (Mothers' Union. 3d., postage rd.)

In this pamphlet the Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham gives a valuable account of the possibility of "birth-control" through "self-control."

The Church of England Moral Welfare Council does not necessarily endorse the views expressed by the writers of these books.

Uniform with "The Threshold of Marriage" (7d. each post free):

PARENTS' TALKS TO BOYS, *for the use of Parents and Guardians.*

THE GIFT OF SEX, *addressed to young men.*