

SEEK TO DROP 'OBEY' FROM NUPTIAL RITE

Protestant Episcopal Commis- sioners to Recommend Impor- tant Prayer Book Changes.

REGARD WOMAN AS EQUAL

Also Ask That Bridegroom's Pledge of All His Worldly Goods Be Stricken Out.

Aside from recommending the omission of the word "obey" for the bride and the omission of the bridegroom's "with all my worldly good I thee endow," numerous other changes are set forth in the revised "Form of Solemnization of Matrimony," in the Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as it will be put before the triennial general convention of that communion. This will open in Portland on Sept. 6 and continue for three weeks. The revision has been made by a joint commission of Bishops, clergy and laymen.

If the revision is adopted, not only will the woman no longer have to promise to obey her husband, but she will no longer have to take a vow to serve him.

The proposed new ceremony makes the vow of the woman identical with that of the man, and a reason given by the commission is that this is in keeping with the new position of woman as the civic equal of man.

The officiating clergyman will say to the woman just what he has asked the man to promise, and this, with the pronoun changed to suit the woman, is:

"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?" And the woman must answer "I will."

Formerly the priest would ask the bride: "Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, 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?"

Final Vows Are Identical.

And later in the ceremony the bride will take the same vow that the bridegroom takes, simply again changing the pronoun, as follows:

"I [insert bride's name], take thee [insert bridegroom's name] to be 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."

In the present ritual the bride has to say: "I take thee to be 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, cherish and to obey till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth."

It is a matter of comment that the Roman Catholic Church in its age-old ritual for the celebration of matrimony does not ask the wife to promise to "obey" or to "serve" her husband, and that this ancient communion asks nothing of the woman that it does not ask of the man.

One reason for the proposal in the Protestant Episcopal Church to cease asking the bridegroom to endow his bride with all his "worldly goods" is that the law takes care of that anyway. Another reason is that there are bridegrooms who have no worldly goods with which to endow a bride.

A striking omission in the revised marriage service is that the clergyman will no longer ask in his prayer "that as Isaac and Rebecca lived faithfully together," so may this newly married couple. The principal reason for this is that some modern thinkers have come to doubt whether the married life of Isaac and Rebecca furnishes a perfect model, because Isaac represented her to be his sister when they went to Gerar to live.

The Roman Catholic ceremony, on which the Protestant Episcopal ceremony is largely based, does not cite Isaac and Rebecca.

The Revised Prayer.

The Episcopal prayer said after the bride and bridegroom have taken the vows, will read:

"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, living faithfully together, these persons 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."

An innovation, likewise borrowed largely from the Roman Catholic Sacrament of Matrimony, is the recommendation that Psalm cxxviii. be inserted into the ceremony. In this the Episcopal Church may put itself on record against race suicide and birth control. One verse from the Psalm is: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table." The last verse of this Psalm is: "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

At present there is nothing in the Episcopal ceremony about propagating the race. In the Roman Catholic ritual that note is sounded throughout, culminating in a prayer for the wife, "May she be fruitful in offspring."

Another innovation to be recommended at Portland will be the insertion into the official ritual of the blessing of the wedding ring which the officiating clergymen shall say before delivering the ring to the bridegroom. This prayer, which is much like that in the Roman Catholic sacrament, is:

"Bless, O Lord, this ring, that she who wears it may abide in Thy peace and continue in Thy favour, unto her life's end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

The Roman Catholic blessing on the ring is as follows:

"Bless, O Lord, this ring, which we bless in Thy name, that she who shall wear it, keeping faith unchanged with her husband, may abide in obedience to Thy will, and ever live in mutual love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Another marked change at Portland will be the taking out of the exhortation which the officiating clergyman reads at the beginning of the ceremony of all reference to the marriage at Cana of Galilee, at which Christ changed water into wine. Whether the Eighteenth Amendment has anything to do with this is not known. The whole phrase to be blue-pencilled is "which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of St. Paul to be honorable of all men."

Another rather striking change has to do with legal matters. It is that hereafter the officiating clergyman shall not declare that "if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's word doth allow their marriage is not lawful."

This is to be changed to read: "If any persons are joined together otherwise than in accordance with God's word, their marriage is not such as the Church alloweth."

The reason for this, of course, is that the law of the land will recognize it regardless of the form of the ceremony used. The Episcopal Church can only legislate for itself.