

From the Hymnal 1940

Hymns for Holy Matrimony

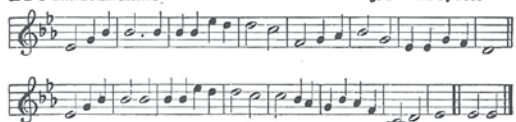
The Hymnal, 1940 contains a very brief section devoted to *Matrimony*. Three in number, the selections provide a basic repertoire which may be expanded considerably when the marriage is celebrated in the context of Holy Communion. The Hymnal, 1982 is not very much more effusive on the subject, with only four hymns for *Marriage*, a fact which should quiet the suspicions of any who move in more traditional circles but feel that they are being shortchanged by their older hymnal.

My study of the three selections available in The Hymnal, 1940 leads me to present them to the reader as a **Ballad**, a **Hymn**, and a **Benediction**. The Ballad (214) is beautiful and sentimental; the Hymn (215) provides the necessary theological content, with references to Scripture; and, The Benediction (216) is the pronouncement of a Trinitarian blessing upon the couple.

MATRIMONY

214 SANDRINGHAM

J. BARNBY, 1889



O PERFECT Love, all human thought transcending,
Lowly we kneel in prayer before thy throne,
That theirs may be the love that knows no ending,
Whom thou for evermore dost join in one.

- 2 O perfect Life, be thou their full assurance
Of tender charity and steadfast faith,
Of patient hope, and quiet, brave endurance,
With childlike trust that fears nor pain nor death.
- 3 Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
That dawns upon eternal love and life. Amen.

D. F. GURNEY, 1883

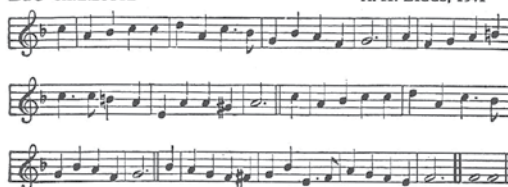
A **Ballad** – No. 214, *O Perfect Love* is such a well-known favorite for weddings, that I have even heard it amongst the Amish, where it is sung at almost every wedding, in 4-part harmony, *A Capella*. This ballad was written by Dorothy Frances Gurney in 1883 for the marriage of her sister. The reason I call it a ballad is that it is not a statement of Christian doctrine on marriage, but it is an expression of popular, romanticized sentiments, strongly influenced by the Christian faith. Any popular radio station devotes hours of programming, especially on Friday evenings, to songs of “everlasting love” and of being “together forever.” If Gurney’s ballad were made available to a call-in, all-request radio program of music in celebration of Holy Matrimony, no doubt it would be the most requested number. But the song has some problems if we consider it in the context of the Hymnal, the foremost of which is its description of Matrimony as “for ever-

more.” Eternal marriage may be the belief Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), but this is not what our Lord taught, for he declared that in the Resurrection *they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels*. Thus the vows made by the couple in the Anglican Rite for Matrimony are the more modest *until death do us part*, and a Christian widower or widow, separated by death from his or her spouse, is free to marry again.

Having expressed some criticisms of our ballad, let me praise some of its beautiful features. The invocation of ‘perfect Love’ is an address to God himself, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. We ‘lowly kneel in prayer’ before his throne, beseeching the blessing of the Holy Trinity upon the couple who will be united in Matrimony. We hope they will attain everlasting Love in the presence of God as his children, and we hope that this marriage will be a means to that end. *Love* is invoked in the first verse, and *Life* in the second, and they are combined in the concluding phrase “...the glorious unknown morrow that dawns upon eternal life and love”, providing a consistent theme that strengthens the overall unity of the piece. The lovely tune *Sandringham* is taken from an anthem composed by Joseph Barnby in 1889 for the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Fife.

215 CHARLOTTE

A. H. BIGGS, 1941



LORD, who at Cana's wedding feast
Didst as a guest appear,
Thou dearer far than earthly guest,
Vouchsafe thy presence here;
For holy thou indeed dost prove
The marriage vow to be,
Proclaiming it a type of love
Between the Church and thee.

- 2 The holiest vow that man can make,
The golden thread in life,
The bond that none may dare to break,
That bindeth man and wife;
Which, blest by thee, whate'er betides,
No evil shall destroy,
Through anxious days each care divides,
And doubles every joy.
- 3 On those who at thine altar kneel,
O Lord, thy blessing pour,
That each may wake the other's zeal
To love thee more and more:
O grant them here in peace to live,
In purity and love,
And, this world leaving, to receive
A crown of life above. Amen.

ADELAIDE THRUPP, 1853, and GODFREY THRING, 1882



By Fr. Daniel McGrath,
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D.Mus.

A **Hymn** – No. 215, *Lord, who at Cana's wedding feast* is the real hymn in my estimation, because with beauty and with clarity it expresses the true doctrine of the Church. It was written by Adelaide Thrupp and published in 1853, and further edited and expanded by Godfrey Thing and republished in 1882, entering our Hymnal in 1892. The hymn is addressed to God the Son, who graced a wedding feast at Cana with his presence. There he turned the sorrow of emptiness into the excellent wine of gladness by his first miracle. Any bride or groom could do no better than to invite this heavenly Guest to their wedding, for by his presence he declares their union 'holy' and 'blessed.' St. Paul proclaims Matrimony a 'mystery' or a 'sacrament' of the union of Christ and the Church. In the second verse of the hymn we find reference to the indissolubility of a valid marriage as a "bond that none dare break", a stern warning that men and women of today would do well to heed. There is also reference to a bit of wisdom that I learned from my grandmother, that a good marriage multiplies joys and divides sorrows. The multiplication of joys is undoubtedly a hint that the couple will one day welcome children into their home as God blesses them, and thus the friendly society of a Christian home puts an end to the many sorrows of loneliness. Holy Matrimony is a bond which may bring husband and wife closer to God, as we read in the final verse of the hymn. As they grow closer in a more perfect union, the love of God begins to awaken in the heart of each. Each spouse is inspired by the other to greater zeal and purity of life, and one day to win a "crown of life above". The tune *Charlotte* was submitted by Arthur H. Biggs to the Tunes Committee of the PECUSA Hymnal Commission in 1941 and selected by them for this hymn.

216 PETERSEN Halle, 1697

MAY the grace of Christ our Saviour,
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favor,
Rest upon them from above.

2 Thus may they abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford. Amen.

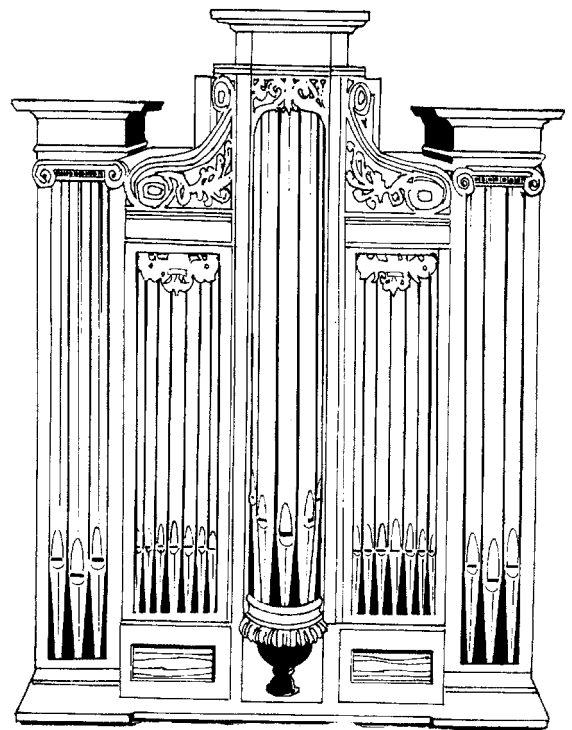
JOHN NEWTON, 1779

A **Benediction** – No. 216, *May the grace of Christ our Saviour*, begins as a paraphrase of the

three-fold Grace or Benediction of II Corinthians 13:14 (AV), "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." It was written by John Newton in 1779 as a single stanza of eight lines for use at the close of the Daily Offices. As an Anglican priest, Newton would of course have this very Benediction twice each day in the course of reading Morning and Evening Prayer. Certain alterations have been made to the text, especially the change from the first to the third person, making it more suitable for use at weddings. The tune *Petersen* is a German melody, harmonized by Charles Wood in 1910.

The Hymns and Anthems rubric of the prayer book (viii) permits the singing of hymns before and after any office in the book. In the event the Order of Matrimony is combined with a celebration of Holy Communion, more suitable hymns can be found in the Hymnal Indices, those dear friends of priests and organists. Of special interest will be the Topical Index which begins on page 799. Some topics for consideration might be the following: Christ (*Love of or Love to*), God (*Love of*), Home and Family, Praise and Self-Dedication.

Thus the provision of hymns for Matrimony in our Hymnal, while not overly abundant, is at least tasteful and adequate. All three are beautiful and tuneful, and each can serve its purpose at a traditional Anglican wedding.





The Marriage Ceremony

A contemporary language version of
“The Solemnization of Matrimony” in *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1662

The Service begins with the bridal procession after which a hymn may be sung.

The congregation sits and the Minister reads the following Introduction, as the man and woman stand before him.

Beloved in Christ, we have gathered here in the sight of God and in the presence of this congregation [or, these witnesses], to join together this man and this woman in marriage.

Marriage is an ordered relation and honorable state instituted by God in the time before man and woman sinned. It signifies the mystical union between Christ and his Church. Christ adorned and beautified this relation with both his presence and first miracle that he performed, at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Further, it is commended in Holy Scripture to be respected by all, and, therefore, it must not be entered upon, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the reasons for which marriage was ordained by God.

First, it was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.

Secondly, it was ordained that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God in man and woman, should be hallowed and directed aright.

Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual companionship, help, and comfort that husband and wife should provide for one another both in prosperity and adversity.

It is into this holy relation and state that these two persons come now to be joined. Therefore, if anyone can show any just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let that person now speak.

If no impediment is alleged, the Minister says to the man and woman:

I charge you both, as you will answer before God on the day of judgment when the secrets of all our hearts will be disclosed, that if either of you knows of any reason why you may not lawfully be joined together in marriage, you must now declare it. Further, each of you must recognize that those who marry contrary to what God’s Word requires are not joined together by God and neither is their marriage lawful.

If no impediment is stated, the Minister says to the man,

N. Will you take this woman, N., as your wife, to live together as God has ordained. Will you live daily in sacrificial love for her, comfort her, honor

and protect her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

I will.

N. will you take N. as your husband and live together as God has ordained? Will you love him, submit to him, honor him, and protect him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

I will.

Then the Minister shall say,

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

The Minister received the bride’s right hand from her father, or another person, and passes it to the bridegroom.

All stand to witness the marriage vows.

The bridegroom takes the bride’s right hand in his right hand and says:

I N. take you N. to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death, according to God’s holy law; and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands and the bride takes the bridegroom’s right hand in her right hand and says:

I N. take you N. to be my 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 obey, until we are parted by death, according to God’s holy law; and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands and the bridegroom takes a ring and places it on the fourth finger of the left hand of the bride. He holds the ring in place and repeats the following words after the Minister.

I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage. With my body I honor you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(If there is a second ring given by the bride to the bridegroom then the same words and procedure may be followed; but, as an alternative she may say:

This ring I give you in token and pledge of my constant faith and abiding love.

The couple may kneel as the Minister prays for them:

Etternal God, our Creator and Preserver, Giver of all spiritual grace, and Author of everlasting life, send your blessing upon your servants, N. and N., whom we bless in your Name. Grant that, as



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Isaac and Rebecca lived faithfully together, so they may surely fulfill and keep the vow and covenant they have made, of which this ring/these rings is/are a token and pledge. May they ever remain in perfect love and peace together as they live according to your holy laws; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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

Those whom God has joined together let not man separate.

The Minister addresses all the people.

N. and **N.** have consented together in holy matrimony and have witnessed the same before God and this congregation. They have made their vows to one another and have declared their marriage by the giving and exchanging of a ring/rings and the joining of hands. I therefore pronounce that they are husband and wife together; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Minister now blesses the husband and wife.

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

Here a Hymn or Psalm may be sung.

The husband and wife kneel before the holy Table and the Minister leads the congregation in prayer.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer in the traditional or contemporary version.

(a) **Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.**

(b) **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

Lord, save this man and his wife;

Who put their trust in you.

Lord send them help from heaven;

And defend them now and always.

Be unto them a tower of strength,

In the face of all evil and danger.

Lord, hear our prayer;

And let our cry come unto you.

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless **N.** and **N.** by sowing the seed of eternal life in their hearts; so that whatever they profitably learn from your holy Word they may indeed fulfill. Look mercifully upon them from heaven, Lord God, and bless them as you blessed Abraham and Sarah in ancient times, so that, obeying your will, and safe and secure in your protection, they may remain in your love to the end of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The following prayer shall be omitted when the woman is past child-bearing age or for medical reasons is unable to conceive.

Merciful Lord and heavenly Father, by whose gracious gift the human race is increased, bestow, we humbly pray, upon these two persons the heritage and gift of children; and grant that they may live together so long in godly life and honesty, that they may see their children brought up in Christian faith and virtue, to your praise and honor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, who by your mighty power created all things out of nothing and in an orderly manner; who then created the man, and woman out of the man, and both in your image and likeness; and who also taught that marriage is a life-long union, which never should be broken: Hear our prayer for these your servants that they may take to heart these truths; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Holy God, who have so elevated the state of marriage that in it is symbolized and represented the spiritual union between Christ, the Bridegroom, and his Church, the Bride: Look in mercy upon these your servants, that this man, **N.**, may love his wife according to your Word, imitating the way in which Christ loved and cherished the Church and gave himself for her; and also that this woman, **N.**, may be loving and pleasant, faithful and obedient to her husband; and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace be a follower of holy and godly wives and mothers who have gone before her. Be pleased to bless them both, and grant that they will inherit your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, who created our first parents, Adam and Eve, at the beginning of the world, and then caused them to be joined together in marriage; Pour upon you the riches of his grace, sanctify and bless you, that you may please him