

The Mar Thoma Syrian Church
THE ORDER OF HOLY MATRIMONY



A TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

BY

GEORGE KUTTICKAL CHACKO
YOUTH CONSULTANT, SECOND ASSEMBLY
THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

WITH

A FOREWORD BY

EDWARD NASON WEST, D.D., LITT.D., D.TH.
CANON, CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, NEW YORK CITY

MOREHOUSE-GORHAM CO.
NEW YORK

FOREWORD

A translation of the Marriage Service of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church is a most welcome addition to the fund of Far Eastern liturgical knowledge now available to Western readers.

This particular Service preserves the Early Church's thought of marriage as a civil and social arrangement which, to use Tertullian's words, is "cemented by the Church, ratified by the oblation, and sealed with the benediction." The Crowning, characteristic of the Orthodox Liturgies, together with the major Benediction and Exhortation, keep the Rite in the early Christian tradition. In common with the Roman Rite, as recorded in the Ninth Century, there are vestigial remains of the pagan and more ancient culture which surrounded the Church. This is by way of observation, rather than criticism.

The translator's Preface is most helpful, and should be read with care before one attempts to comprehend the fluid and other-worldly beauty of this Rite. I am pleased to learn that the first time this translation will be used officially will be at his own marriage. In the touching wording of his own Church, I pray that the "twain" may know the blessing of the right hand of our Lord resting upon them.

EDWARD N. WEST

DEDICATED TO
OUR PARENTS

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

A Christian marriage according to the Rite of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church (*Syrian*, because of the use of Syriac in its Liturgy for centuries) is a marriage *by intention*. The context and the conduct of its solemnization bespeak the family concept, viz: that the union of the two adults is an event within the family of Christ. Even as the marriage is considered the coming together of two families, rather than that of two individuals, so the guarantee of their union is vested in, and vouched for, by the Church family, rather than by mutual vows and contract.

The all-pervasiveness of the family concept stems from the sociology of Indians in general, and Mar Thoma Syrian Christians in particular. This community, which Marco Polo referred to as the flourishing group of Christians who call themselves after Thomas, even today retains the marks of a well-established patriarchal society. The practice of individual choice of partners on the basis of mutual acquaintance, acquired through personal contacts in private or in public, is virtually unknown. But the society makes little allowance for ignorance of the life-partner arising out of institutionalized isolation between the sexes. The bride is expected to assume all the propriety and the deference due to her vast family of in-laws almost over-night. Therefore, the potentials of her (his) adapting herself (himself) to the in-laws assume heavy significance. In carefully choosing a bride or groom, the governing consideration is the propagation of the species — the family — rather than that of the happiness of the united.

In addition, the family, being both the judge and the jury, takes on the responsibility of weighing the potentials and prospects of each party. In "arranged" marriages, the influences are screened which go to mould the individuals, viz: the family, the upbringing, the education, et cetera. An inspection team of four elders from the groom's home town goes *to see the girl* at an appointed time. Should the girl meet with the approval of the team, there follows vigorous bargaining for the dowry. Subtle, as well as substantial, considerations enter into the settlement of this figure which has to be paid by the bride's parents to the bridegroom, generally in cash, although sometimes in kind, or both. Among the subtle con-

siderations are the prestige of the family, the looks of the groom-to-be; among the substantial considerations are the educational expenses incurred for the bridegroom-to-be, his present income, and potential earning power, including inheritance. The dowry is handed over to the father of the groom, who must support the son through school, there being practically no means of earning anything while one is still in school. Once the dowry is agreed upon, the date of the marriage is fixed. Before the date is finally decided, however, the groom is likely to have a chance to *see the girl* at an appointed hour when he would be received by the bride's family. With the enlightenment of higher education, the groom-to-be and the bride-to-be are now being given the option to say "yes" or "no" to the proposed mate; but, by and large, an agreement by the parties to the marriage is almost to be taken for granted. Here again, the members bow to the interest of the species, and this bowing to the parental desire is regarded as a virtuous act.

As in any other situation, however, there is more than mere sociology involved in a Syrian Christian marriage. Marriage is the affirmation and extension of the family's many ties. In most instances, the new couple lives with the bridegroom's parents. This economic dependence, incidentally, adds justification for the depositing of the dowry with the bridegroom's father. The bride addresses the groom's relations by the same title as the groom — his father as her father; his mother, her mother, and *vice versa*. This is not merely terminological exactitude, however. The marriage ceremony itself emphasizes the grafting of the bride onto a new family. As soon as the bridegroom puts the wedding garment on the bride, the groom's sister replaces the bride's sister who, up to this time, stood immediately behind the bride — symbolizing the new family to which the bride belongs thereafter.

It is perhaps a logical sequel to the family orientation that the marriage ceremony should be one stressing intention rather than contract, for, in the family, as it is understood in India, tacit intent is more imperative than an explicit contract associated as it is with the world outside of the nexus of close relationship.

The Blessing of the Rings. Whether marriages are made in heaven is not the point. The Mar Thoma Order of Holy Matrimony is concerned with marriages made in conformity with heaven, hence the continual calling of attention to the Marriage of Christ to the

Church. Solomon's *Song of Songs* is quoted freely; ascription of praise is made "unto Him who chose the daughter of gentiles as His Church," "unto Lord Messiah, the heavenly bridegroom." The Priest puts the ring on the fingers of both the bridegroom and the bride, as by the hands of the Holy Apostles, with the prayer that the right hand of Lord Jesus the Messiah be extended to the couple.

The Crowning. As soon as the rings are placed on the fingers of the bride and groom, there follows the *Prayer for the bride and bridegroom*. Concluding the Office of the Blessing of the Rings with a benediction, the second Office, that of The Crowning, commences. The blessings of the God who blessed Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sara, Isaac and Rebekah, are invoked on the bride and the groom. When the Reader (in the absence of an ordained Deacon) concludes the reading of the appointed Epistle (from the fifth chapter of Ephesians), the Priest joins the hands of the bride and the groom, who then listen to the Gospel for the day. Immediately following, is the prayer before Crowning: *These crowns, and the heads upon which they are placed, are sanctified and perfected in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

The Wedding Necklace and the Wedding Dress. With the Crowning, the wedding is solemnized; but since the couple does not live in heaven, but on earth, there follow several sociological customs which evidence the marriage.

The sign of marriage in the Hindu community which completely surrounds the Mar Thoma Syrian Christians, is a particular kind of string with a gold centerpiece. The same symbolism is, of course, adopted by the Mar Thoma Church.

The Hindu marriage ceremony is literally called *the giving of the dress* — the giving by the groom of the first piece of dress cloth which he buys as husband. The same custom is followed in the Church. The bridegroom puts over the head of the bride the wedding garment, made of fine thread and having a broad gold border, the fineness and breadth depending upon the economic status of the groom. Seven threads are drawn from this garment and woven together into one string, and a gold centerpiece of the size of the husk of a grain of rice is hung upon it. The centerpiece is flat on the outside, but has the sign of the Cross made by dots on the inside. The Priest places this string on the neck of the bride and the bridegroom then moves behind her and ties it. He then puts the wedding dress on her head.

Hoothma (Concluding prayer). The only times the bride and groom ever speak is when the crown is placed on their heads individually and the ring is put on their fingers. When the Priest says to the bride: "May the Lord crown Thee with the crown of righteousness; and adorn thee with the adornment which perisheth not; Be Thou happy all thy life, ascribing praise unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," the bride says "Amen." The bridegroom does the same when the crown is placed on his head.

Vows are not taken; instead, the marriage ceremony is concluded with an Exhortation to the bride and groom in which their sacred duty to each other is enjoined upon them in the name of "One who knoweth the heart and the mind." In the particular sociological background this is far more binding than any contract which the twain could have uttered.

The translator wishes to express his gratefulness to Canon Edward Nason West who kindly scrutinized the manuscript and made some most valuable suggestions, and who graced this work with a Foreword.

New York—July, 1957.

The Order of Holy Matrimony

The bridegroom and the bride come forward to the chancel; where the bride will stand to the right of the groom.

First Office: The Blessing of The Rings

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

People: May blessings and mercy be showered upon us frail and weak sinners, for ever in both the worlds Amen.

THE PREFATORY PRAYER

Priest: O Lord, make us worthy of imperishable joy with Thee. May the beginning of our joys and the fulfillment of our happiness be in Thee. Grant that our body and spirit may find their joy in Thee. By Thy grace, may our sorrows be effaced; by Thy blessing, may our prosperity be enriched; and our benedictions increased. By Thy blessing, may our bridegrooms achieve perfection, and may our brides achieve perfection. Grant us to rejoice with Thee, and in the company of all the saints who have pleased Thee from the beginning: in the company of Thy saints and in the ranks of Thy beloved. O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we would ascribe glory and praise unto Thee, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: Blessed is He who gladdened the heavenly and mundane hosts. O Messiah, full of blessings, gladden the ranks of Thy worshippers.

O Lord, stretch forth Thy right hand, and bless the rings that the priest offers in Thy holy name.

The Holy Church was betrothed unto the Messiah by the ring. And it partook of His Holy body and blood.

He who is worshipped and glorified by those above and those below, and He who is the substance of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He is worthy of worship.*

PRAYER

Priest: O Lord God, may Thy peace which set heaven and earth, height and depth at peace with each other, unite these, our

*Psalm 51 may be used here.

brother and sister, who are come together. O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grant that these two may have perfect unity so that they love each other all their life, and joyfully accept each other, now and ever, unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

KUKKALION

MUSMOOR: RESPONSIVE READING

Priest: My heart createth seasonable words: I will submit unto the king my creation.

People: Grace is poured on thy lips. Because of this, God hath blessed Thee for ever. Lord bless us (*Barekmore*).

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

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

EKBA

Priest: A Solomon said in a figure:
What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefst among ten thousand.

Israel is His garden. He is stronger than the cedars of Lebanon.

Because He is like unto God; and because He is glorious, we praise Him.

Reader:* Let us stand in reverence before the Lord (*Stowmen Kalos*).

People: Lord have mercy (*Kyrie-eleison*).

PRUMION

(Introduction to a Sedra: i.e., a poem or preface)

Priest: Let us beseech the Lord for His mercy and grace.

People: O Lord who blessest, aid us with Thy blessing.

Priest: May we be made worthy ceaselessly to offer praise and glory, laud and honour and the ascription of all excellence unto Thee.

*In the absence of an ordained Deacon.

Unto Him who chose the daughter of gentiles as His Church, cleansed it from all dirt and fault by His guiltless and holy blood, who settled the marriage for the Church on earth, and became engaged to it, who reclaimed it from under the bondage of evil, and freed it from all debts and trespasses — Unto Lord Messiah, the heavenly Bridegroom, now and ever, and unto ages of ages be ascribed praise and honour, and worship, as is most meet at this time of the office of the blessing of the rings of Thy servants.

People: Amen.

SEDRA

(“Order” — a set form of prayer, meditation and praise)

Priest: O Lord God, glorious beyond all human comprehension, bounteous in righteousness at all times, and farthest from all unrighteousness, source of divine blessing and river of goodness, Thou art the holy oil which is imperishable, passionless and immortal. Thou art the One who ordained that the joy of men and women be perfected through the ring and that the happiness of those who are betrothed be perfected thereby. O Lord God, bless Thou these rings and mercifully make blessed that which is accursed. O Lord, even as Thou didst bless the ring of the Holy Church, bless Thou these rings also with Thy divine blessings.

O Lord God, grant that our son, this bridegroom, and our daughter, this bride, be accomplished in wisdom and stature. Mercifully grant, O Lord, that their marriage be free from all uncleanness and hatred. O Lord God, make the twain unceasingly happy both in this world and the world to come. Adorn them with all blessings throughout their life in this passing bridechamber; and grant that they may be received joyfully into the heavenly bridechamber where angels and principalities rejoice eternally. Lord, free Thou these who stand in Thy presence from sin and hatred, uncleanness and trespasses. May these be blessed by Thee. May they glorify Thee; may they continually praise Thee, Thy Father, and the Holy Spirit, continually in Thy presence, unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: When the heavenly Bridegroom betrothed the Holy Church,

He entrusted it to Simon and John. He appointed Simon as the housekeeper and John, the preacher. He called them unto Him, and commanded that they should take good care of the Church which was bought by His precious blood. *Barekmore.*

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

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

Priest: O thou, faithful Church, fear not; nor be troubled. As thou didst not forsake me and take another, I will not forsake thee and take another. Do not be troubled even if heaven and earth pass away in the last days; for your throne is established in the house of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

People: O Lord, bless us and aid us.

PRAYER

Priest: O Thou, true Bridegroom, who betrothest unto Thyself virgin and clean spirits, grant that these Thy servants who have mutually agreed to marry, and have accepted Thee as the mediator of their nuptials through us, frail ones, who stand in the presence of Thy greatness, may we be worthy of the sweet fragrance of exemplary conduct. May they have true love, harmony, peace, and unassailable unity. Strengthen Thou them to mutually maintain purity of body and spirit. May they ascribe honour and glory to Thee, Thy Father, and the Holy Spirit, unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Priest takes the rings in his hand.

Priest: Praise for ever be unto Thee, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who, by Thy grace and multitude of blessings, blestest these rings.

People: Amen.

The Priest blesses the rings.

Priest: In the name of the Father +, the Son +, and the life-giving Holy Spirit +, these rings are being blest in order that the joy of the children of the Holy Church may be perfected.

People: Amen.

The Priest puts the ring on the fourth finger of the right hand of the bridegroom.

Priest: May the right hand of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be mercifully stretched unto Thee. May thou obtain the blessings of His grace. May thou receive the blessing of His grace along with this ring which is the symbol of thy troth. May the same right hand which is full of blessing and righteousness be with thee throughout thy life and guard thee.

Bridegroom and People: Amen.

The Priest puts the ring on the fourth finger of the left hand of the bride.

Priest: May the right hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is full of blessings, be stretched forth unto thee. Accept thou this ring which is the symbol of thy betrothal from the hands of the priest, even as from the hands of the Holy Apostles. Thou shalt ascribe glory and praise to Him, to His Father, and to the Holy Spirit, in peace of mind and spirit, and joy of heart.

Bride and People: Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM

Priest: May the Lord who perfected the joy of the Holy Church through His Messiah, perfect with truth and justice, these our children who are betrothed. May He grant them heavenly blessings along with the rings that they have received. May He adorn them with modesty and propriety. Even as the settlement of marriage of Isaac and Rebecca was sealed by the gold ornaments, may He perfect the twain by rings of justice. May He gladden the bridegroom with His salvation. May He endow this bride with adornments which neither age nor perish. May God grant that they exercise their conscience with maturity which hath a fragrance passing the fragrance of the sweetest flower. May God save them from evil and envious people who hate humanity; may He deliver them from the evil ones who corrupt the purity of marriage. May the Lord grant them seasons of prosperity and years of blessing. O Lord, hearken unto the requests of us, frail and weak sinners, who stand before

Thy excellence, and give the twain children of blessing and times of happiness. Multiply unto them the riches of good works. Stablish them in true faith in Thee. Give them the grace that they may stand so fast in it that their children may be heirs thereof. Increase Thy blessings and mercy upon those who are present at this marriage. Keep Thou this bridegroom and bride by Thy victory-giving Cross. O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shower upon us Thy blessings, unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: I am the Church; the Church which is the bride of the Almighty.

The Holy Church saith: I am blest because He betrothed me. I worship the Bridegroom who came to betroth me. All creation rejoiced that I who was poor suddenly became rich on the day of His betrothal. It is blessing to me that I have become great in excellence.

He prepared the bridechamber for me on high so that I might enjoy myself with my friends. I entered it and sat in it. It is blessing to me that I praise Him.

He took me out of the temple of idols and revealed to me the hidden secrets.

He has promised me that He will be with me always, even unto the end of the world.

My husband gave me all the heritage that he brought over from His Father's household. Therefore I worship Him.

Woe unto the Evil One who treacherously dealt with me. I became unclean by idol worship. Praise be to the Messiah who saved me. It is blessing to me that I became worthy of it.

He put on me the armour of the spirit by the Water of Baptism. The ring which is His holy body and blood He put on my finger.

The bridegroom is like unto the Sun; the bride is like unto the day; and the wedding feast is like unto a fragrant tree.

BENEDICTION

Priest: O ye faithful, who have come prepared to participate in this witness which is justified by God, may the Lord give you: returns unto your labour, some thirtyfold, some sixty-

fold, and some an hundredfold. May He ever grant you blessings. And may the Cross of our Lord be with you day and night, and guard you from the Evil One and his hosts for ever.

People: Amen.

Second Office: Crowning

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

People: May blessings and mercy be showered upon us, frail and weak sinners, for ever in both the worlds Amen.

PRELIMINARY PRAYER

Priest: O Lord God, make us worthy of that wedding feast which shall not pass away, and the bridechamber which shall not perish. Invite us unto Thy eternal joys along with them who are invited to that wedding feast. Grant that we, together with them and in their midst, shall ascribe praise and glory unto Thee, Thy Father, and Holy Spirit, unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

When the Priest blesses the bride and the groom, they shall bow and make the sign of the Cross.

Priest: May the God who blessed our forefathers, bless these Thy servants + in the multitude of His mercies.

People: Bless us, O God.

Priest: May the God who blessed Adam and Eve, bless these Thy servants + in the multitude of His mercies.

People: Bless us, O God.

Priest: May the God who blessed Abraham and Sara, bless these Thy servants + in the multitude of His mercies.

People: Bless us, O God.

Priest: May the God who blessed Isaac and Rebekah, bless these Thy servants + in the multitude of His mercies.

People: Bless us, O God.

Priest: May the God who blessed Joseph in Egypt, bless these Thy servants + in the multitude of His mercies.

People: Bless us, O God.

PRAYER

Priest: O Lord, glorify with the bounty of Thy blessings, these Thy servants who are become one. Gladden them with Thy good endowments. Fill them with the joy of Thy divine laws. Grant O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that they may sing praises unto Thee with joy and mirth, and that they may rejoice in Thy presence unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

MUSMOOR: RESPONSIVE READING

Priest: O Lord, the king will take pleasure in Thy strength; he shall rejoice greatly in Thy salvation.

People: For, Thou hast prepared his way with the blessing of righteousness; and hast placed the glorious crown on his head. *Barekmore.*

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

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

Priest: O thou the Church, the Bridegroom hath stablished thy bridechamber in the heavens. As He promised, He hath raised Thee in the heights above Thrones, Principalities, and Powers.

Reader: *StowmenKalos.*

People: *Kyrie-eleison.*

PRUMION

Priest: Let us beseech the Lord for His mercy and grace.

People: O Lord, who blessest, aid us with Thy blessing.

Priest: May we be made worthy ceaselessly to offer praise and glory, laud and honour, and the ascription of all excellence unto Thee.

Unto Him who is and hath been, who is the same unto generations of generations, the Creator of all things,

The Eternal Logos unto whom His angels surrounding His throne ascribe glory,
The glorious Eternal One, who, in the multitude of His mercies, turned our kind unto Himself —
Who giveth freely crowns of joy unto brides and grooms —
be praise unto His excellence. Praise, honour and glory it is meet to give unto Him both now at this time of the office of the crowning of Thy servants, and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

SEDRA

Priest: O Lord God, whom all the heavenly hosts glorify in fear and trembling, and before Whose excellence the ranks of the Cherubims are tremulous and flurried with awe; Who, in Thy indescribable mercy and incomparable grace, art pleased with the praises of us of low estate, and art happy with the service of us frail and mundane people; glorify all Thy servants who travel afar yet abide within the sovereignty of Thy excellence, and, especially, the twain who have taken shelter under the shadow of Thy mercy, and under the wings of Thy grace.
Keep them in good health that they may be excellent in all their doings; O Lord, give them grace to walk in the straight path which leadeth unto the Kingdom of Heaven, that they may be perfect in spiritual gifts, and engage in the divine economy profitable unto body and soul. O Lord, grant that they love eternal life, and be far from those under the death of sin. Unite the hearts of the twain to draw nigh unto Thy holiness, and to flee from the slavery of the accursed Devil. Grant that both they and we be servants of righteousness in Thy spiritual vineyard, and strong in the earnestness of devotion unto Thee, and in the observance of Thy commandments. O Lord, make us equal to the company of Thy saints, loving one another, and hating the works of the Evil One; and make us obedient unto Thy Godhead.
O Thou who art good and lovest mankind, to Thee we would ascribe honour and praise, and unto Thy Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: Solomon the King speaketh unto thee, the Church, in love: Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold, thou art fair. Thy lips drop as the honeycomb. The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. Thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee, O Church. Since thou worshippest His Cross, King Messiah guardeth thee. *Barekmore.*

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

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

Priest: O Daughter of aliens, how fair art thou, how fair art thou; thou art like unto the sun that riseth upon the whole world. On thy forehead is the seal of the Cross. Thy pure lips sing praises; on thy lips is the blood of the Son of God: and thy children sing praises day and night.

People: O Lord, bless us and aid us.

PRAYER

Priest: O Lord, who wast invited to Cana for the wedding feast, and who, as the Bridegroom of truth and justice, didst turn water into wine, and who lovest mankind, accept Thou our prayers by Thy grace, and sanctify these twain who have bowed their heads before thine altar. Lay Thou Thy right hand, which is full of mercy and blessing, upon these two. Gladden Thou them in Thy spiritual bridechamber. Make both them and us worthy of that wedding feast which is promised unto the saints who have loved Thee and observed Thy commandments. Grant that these twain and we may stand at Thy right hand, and, witnessing Thy grace, may ascribe praise and glory unto Thee, now, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Reader: From the epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, the fifth chapter —

People: Praise be unto the Lord of the Apostles. O Lord, give us Thy grace to discern Thy Word.

Reader: My brethren, give thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.

Alleluia, Alleluia (praise the Lord).

Reader: Brethren, let us with order, reverence and holy fear, listen to the life-giving Word of the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Priest joins the right hand of the bride with the right hand of the groom. Thereafter the Priest reads the Gospel appointed for the day.

Priest: The life-giving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming life and salvation to the world, as recorded by the Evangelist Mathew, in the nineteenth chapter, beginning at the first verse:

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and the twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined, let no man put asunder.

Peace be unto you.

People: And with thy spirit.

Priest: These crowns, and the heads upon which they are placed, are sanctified and perfected in the name of the Father +, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit +.

People: Amen.

The Priest waves the crown three times over the head of the bridegroom.

*You married women must subordinate yourselves to your husbands, as you do to the Lord, for a husband is the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, which is his body, and is saved by him." *The Bible*. An American Translation, Chicago, 1935.

Priest: The crown descends in splendour from heaven from the hands of our Lord.

The crown that the priest places on the head of the bridegroom is meet for him.

People: O Lord gladden the priests and deacons with thy blessings, the bridegrooms by their crowns, and the brides in their bridechambers.

O Lord, lay Thou Thy right hand which is full of all blessings upon the bridegroom and the bride, and bless the crowns on their heads.

May the bridegroom, and the wedding guests be blest by the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

O Lord, bless Thou with divine blessings the brides and grooms, and guests, both men and women, at the wedding feast.

O Lord, stretch forth Thou Thy right hand from the heights and bless the bride and groom who have bowed down their heads before Thy presence.

O Lord, open Thou the door of Thy treasury in which is wealth of immeasurable plentitude, and send perfect blessings unto the bride and groom.

O Lord, guard Thou the twain with Thy strong right hand, that they may walk in the path of righteousness in a manner pleasing unto Thy good pleasure.

O Lord, hide Thou them under the shadow of Thy blessings, that they may complete their lives in purity and holiness.

The Priest places the crown upon the head of the bridegroom.

Priest: May the Lord crown thee with the crown of righteousness; adorn thee with the adornment which perisheth not; and armour thee with the armour that shall not fail before all the prowess of the Enemy.

Bridegroom and People: Amen.

The Priest waves the crown three times over the head of the bride.

Priest: The crown descends in splendour from heaven from the hands of our Lord.

The crown that the priest places on the head of the bride is meet for her.

People: O Lord, gladden the priests and deacons with Thy blessings, the bridegrooms by their crowns, and the brides in their bridechamber.
O Thou the True Bridegroom, whose bedchamber standeth for ever, come Thou soon unto us and let us rejoice with Thee for ever.
May our Lord make for thee the crown of justice which surpasseth all the flowers of the forest and the fragrant flowers of the woods.
May the Lord sanctify the purity of thy bed. May there spring from thee, the just, the saintly, and rulers.
O Messiah, our Bridegroom, lighten Thou our eyes with Thy light so that we may behold the beauty of Thy glory, and rejoice in Thee uninterruptedly.
May our Lord make the crown to be justice unto thee. Thou shalt ascribe praise unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Priest places the crown upon the head of the bride.

Priest: May the Lord crown Thee with the crown of righteousness; and adorn thee with the adornment which perisheth not; Be thou happy all thy life, ascribing praise unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Bride and People: Amen.

The Blessings on the Bride and Groom.

Priest: May the Lord crown Thee with the crown of righteousness; take delight in your lives and sanctify your communion. May the heavenly Bridegroom seal your bridal status with the seal of truth. Even as the Messiah delighted in His Church, so you must delight in each other. May the right hand of blessings descend upon you, and guard you from all troubles. May the angel of peace abide with you, and keep you from the treachery of the Evil One. May God guard you from the envy which killeth. May He make both of you happy each with the other, and remove all sorrow from you. Even as Abraham delighted in Isaac, Isaac in Jacob, and Jacob in Joseph, so may God grant unto you children of righteousness that you may delight in them. May the blessing abide with you which God gave Noah and his children, saying: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. May the blessings upon

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also abide with you. May God give you the dew of heaven from above, and the richness of the earth. May the blessing also abide with you which Jacob gave unto his son Joseph, saying that God shall be with you. May the blessings of those who have loved God and have pleased His will be upon you, and upon the crowns that have been placed upon your heads by the priest. May all people rejoice and sing praises because the Lord's name is invoked upon you. May God prosper you with plenty, wealth, and all good fortune. Even as the sins of the sinful woman were pardoned, so may your debts and trespasses also be redeemed. Even as the thief upon the right hand, so may you also be inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. May the Almighty, who descended on Mount Sinai to covenant with the bride brought out from the land of Egypt, glorify you and our whole company. We should ascribe praise unto the Lord of heaven and earth, now and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Priest: O Thou who established the Garden of Eden, Thou art the young man who hast betrothed me. Send me the sweet winds that cool me from Thy gardens.
O Lord, I am the bride who is betrothed unto Thee in Thy name. Show mercy unto me as I have taken refuge in Thee, O Bridegroom of truth and justice.
By Thy Cross Thou fulfilllest my dowry; by Thy Passion Thou didst free me. Thou hast prepared a bridechamber in the heights for me; and hast called me to Thy own.
Robbers fell on me and tried to destroy my beauty. Because of my love toward Thee, I felled them and won freedom from slavery.

The bridegroom ties the wedding necklace around the bride, and puts the wedding garment on her.

The Priest blesses them as follows, and the bride and groom make the sign of the Cross, bowing.

Priest: O Son of God, stretch forth Thy right hand and bless the bride and groom, and the crowns that are set on their heads.

O Lord, bless Thou the bride and groom according to

their names: may the years of their life be blessed in this world.

O Lord, may this assembly be blessed for ever with all earthly and heavenly blessings.

O Lord, bless Thou the praise which cometh from the mouth of Thy servants. May they sing pure praises on the harp unto Thee.

HOOTHMA

(Concluding Prayer)

Priest: Beloved brethren, at this hour, as we stand in the House of God, we are required, by the venerable tradition given unto us by the Holy Apostles and preserved to us by our forefathers, to give an exhortation unto the faithful, and charge the twain who stand before us that they be earnest in truth, in justice, and in good works.

Now, little children, know that you stand in the presence of God, before the Cross and the Holy Gospel, before this assembly, before One who knoweth the heart and the mind: not before One who knoweth not nor careth. We have joined you each to the other, and from this day forward God alone shall mediate between us, for I shall be free of guilt in aught that ye do against His commandments.

May the mercy and blessings of God come upon, and abide with, the priests, the deacones, and the faithful, the bridegroom and the bride, and the guests at the wedding feast. May the right hand of our Lord Jesus Christ rest for ever upon the two who have been joined together.

People: Amen.

Priest: Again, believers, know that this commandment that each one of you examine how the relationship with his wife should be, is unto all of you. For, she hath left her relations and become one with her husband. Therefore, he should please her and treat her gently. Even though he be naked, he should clothe her. Even though he hunger, he should feed her. Even though he thirst, he should give her to drink. It is therefore only meet that she should do unto him even as he unto her, and that she should serve him fittingly. She should in all things act in love and devotion towards him. May the grace of our Lord

Jesus Christ be upon you and upon us, now and for ever, world without end.

People: Amen.

BENEDICTION

Priest: Every one of you is blest by the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. May the Lord God sanctify and bless every one of you who came prepared, and participated in this divine service. And, may God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, hearken unto and accept the prayers of us, weak and frail people, before His throne on high.

People: Amen.