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978-1-107-61388-1 - The Story of the Canadian Revision of the Prayer Book

W. J. Armitage and S. P. Matheson

Excerpt

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST STAGE—EARLY HISTORY

THE earlier history of Prayer Book revision is inseparably connected with the name of a most devoted layman, a leading member of the Canadian bar, and an earnest Churchman, Dr Matthew Wilson, K.C., long a striking figure in the Synod of the Diocese of Huron. He had for years cherished the hope that the priceless heritage of our Church, the Book of Common Prayer, would be so adapted to the spiritual needs of our Canadian people, and so enriched by prayers which would meet the conditions of our modern life, that it would become more valuable than ever in our expanding and growing Church. And whenever occasion offered, in Diocesan, Provincial and General Synod, he took the opportunity of expressing this pious hope, and used every means in his power to educate the minds of Church people in this direction.

There were doubtless many others who thought as he did, but Matthew Wilson, although seemingly the least aggressive of men, had a quiet, but none the less strong, spirit of persistence, which led him to keep to the front any conviction of his heart and mind. He was greatly honoured and respected in all our Synods, not only on account of his personal worth, but also because of his well-informed mind and excellent judgment. He began this movement, as was fitting and right, in the Synod of Huron, his native Diocese. One of the first recorded acts leading to revision was a letter from Matthew Wilson to his Diocesan, Dr Maurice Baldwin, the saintly Bishop of Huron. The reply to that letter is dated April 6th, 1896, and Bishop Baldwin did not hesitate to say at that early stage:

I most thoroughly approve of a Canadian edition of the Prayer-book, and think that it would be well to move in Synod on this matter, and will be much pleased by your bringing it forward. I think, however, that when it is settled upon to ask

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for a Canadian edition, the House of Bishops should decide as to what forms of prayer are to be printed in it. I expect (D.V.) to meet the Bishops on the 15th inst., and will bring the matter before them.

In his annual address to his Diocesan Synod, held in London, Ont., the 16th June, 1896, Bishop Baldwin said:

I trust that the movement now on foot to procure a Canadian Edition of the Book of Common Prayer will be successful in its efforts. The object of the promoters is to have an edition in which the distinctive prayers and offices authorized by the Provincial Synod may be printed in the text. Such an edition would greatly commend itself to the Clergy of Canada, although I imagine much opposition may be manifested to the scheme when discussed by the Church at large.

Matthew Wilson introduced his resolution along the lines of the Bishop's suggestion:

That the General Synod be respectfully memorialized to take such steps as may be deemed expedient and practicable to have printed a Prayer Book containing all the prayers or other matter framed for the service of the Church of England in Canada, and arranged for convenient use by Churchmen throughout British North America, and which may be issued with the authority of the General Synod, and used by the various Congregations within its jurisdiction.

The resolution took the Bishop by surprise. He thought it was too "venturesome," and saw very little hope of carrying out its suggestions, in the face of all the objections likely to be raised. But it had strong support. And twenty years later, Matthew Wilson loved to claim that, "long after all this action, the Lambeth Conference practically took the same view."

The action taken by the Huron Synod was indirect. The report of the Committee appointed to consider the recommendations in the Bishop's address dealt with the whole matter under review, under clause 6: "Prayer Book, Canadian Edition. We would recommend the adoption of the motion of which notice has been given by Mr Matthew Wilson, Q.C." To this the Synod agreed, and to this resolution may be

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traced the genesis of the whole work of Prayer Book revision in Canada.

It would have been impossible to have taken action earlier. The General Synod, which united the whole Church in Canada into one organized body, had been formed only in 1893. It alone had power to deal with questions affecting "doctrine, worship and discipline." At its second meeting, the first after its organization, the question of Prayer Book revision was duly brought before it for appropriate action.

The second Session of the General Synod was held in Winnipeg in September 1896. The resolution which Mr Matthew Wilson had moved in his own Diocese appeared in General Synod in the form of a Memorial. This Memorial was duly presented and read, and under motion made by Mr Wilson, seconded by Archdeacon Davis, was referred to the Committee on Doctrine, Worship and Discipline. The Upper House voted concurrence.

The Joint Committee on Doctrine, Worship and Discipline, met under its chairman, Dr Sweatman, Bishop of Toronto, Dean Partridge acting as Secretary, and reported that:

It is desirable, and we hereby recommend, that an Appendix be added to the Book of Common Prayer, containing

I. The following special forms of service:

- (a) A Thanksgiving Service for Harvest.
- (b) A Service for the Consecration of a Church.
- (c) A Service for the Consecration of a Churchyard.
- (d) A Service for the Institution of an Incumbent.
- (e) A Service for the Induction of an Incumbent.
- (f) A Form of Intercession for Missions.

II. Also the following prayers:

- (a) For the Governor-General and Lieutenant-Governors.
- (b) For the Dominion Parliament and Local Legislatures.
- (c) For the General, Provincial and Diocesan Synods, together with such prayers as may be authorized and put forth by the House of Bishops.

This action was a bold step on the part of the Committee, which had just been formed, and as yet hardly realized its powers.

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The Report met with the approval of the House of Bishops, who sent it down to the Lower House for their concurrence. It was then moved by Dean Partridge, seconded by Archdeacon Brigstocke, both of the Diocese of Fredericton, and resolved, that the Lower House should concur, and that their Lordships should be asked to take such steps as may be necessary for the putting forth of the services and prayers named in the Report, and the printing of them as an Appendix to the Book of Common Prayer. It is worthy of note that at this session of General Synod, the Diocese of Montreal asked the General Synod to take into consideration a Sunday School Liturgy for use in the Sunday Schools of the Church in the Dominion, and thus opened the way for the adoption of a Service for Children.

At the third session of the General Synod, held in Montreal in 1902, a Memorial was presented from the Diocese of Huron, requesting the General Synod:

To prepare and authorize for use in School Houses and Mission Stations, a third or alternative service of a simple character, for the Order of Morning and Evening Prayer, and also in Parish Churches where Evensong has been already said, or where its use is permitted, as a substitute therefor, by the Bishop of the Diocese.

When this Memorial came before the House, there were three different suggestions made as to the action that should be taken. The first was to refer it to a special Committee, the second to refer it to the Committee on Doctrine, Worship and Discipline, the third was to take it up in the ordinary course of business with cognate subjects. The third method was accepted by the Synod. It therefore came up with business in connection with the Prayer Book.

The resolutions presented were of the first importance, and had much to do with the preparatory steps which led to the actual work of revision. The main motion was made by Canon Welch, rector of St James' Cathedral, Toronto, and later vicar of Wakefield, who had as his seconder, Professor Clark, of Trinity College, Toronto, formerly vicar of Taunton. The motion was in the following terms:

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That the Upper House concurring, a joint Committee of both Houses be appointed: To publish an edition of the Book of Common Prayer with such additions and adaptations as may be required by the needs of the country.

It was a motion at once simple and all-embracing, making a beginning along the lines of revision, and allowing a large measure of liberty to the revisers.

It was moved in amendment by Matthew Wilson, K.C., of Chatham, Ont., seconded by the Rev. J. C. Farthing, then of Woodstock in the Diocese of Huron, now Bishop of Montreal:

That it is now convenient and desirable that an edition of the Book of Common Prayer be printed for use throughout Canada (by the action of a joint Committee of both Houses), and that such Prayer Book should contain, conveniently arranged, all the Prayers and Forms of Service applicable to and authorized for the use of Church Services in Canada, and should be issued with the authority of the General Synod and used by the various congregations within its jurisdiction; and that the Upper House be respectfully requested to take such action as may be deemed necessary to prepare a plan for the issue of such Canadian Prayer Book, and that (the Upper House concurring) a joint Committee of both Houses be appointed to assist in carrying out the object of this resolution, and to report at the next meeting of this Synod.

It was moved in amendment to the amendment, by the Rev. V. E. Harris, of the Diocese of Nova Scotia, seconded by Canon Low, of the Diocese of Ottawa:

That it is now convenient and desirable that an Appendix to the Book of Common Prayer be printed for use throughout Canada, and that such Appendix should contain, conveniently arranged, all the Prayers and Forms of Service applicable to and authorized for the use of Church Services in Canada, and should be issued with the authority of the General Synod and used by the various congregations within its jurisdiction, and that the Upper House be respectfully requested to take such action as by it be deemed necessary to procure the issue of such Appendix, and that, the Upper House concurring, a joint

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Committee of both Houses be appointed for carrying out the purposes of this resolution.

The amendment offered by Rev. V. E. Harris was lost, thus disposing, it would seem, of the question of an Appendix. The amendment of Mr Matthew Wilson was carried, apparently providing for a Canadian Prayer Book.

But the House of Bishops, whether intentionally or not, took other action. They concurred (at least so they state in Message No. 44, p. 69, *Journal of Third Session*) in Message GG from the Lower House, which they say was on an Appendix to the Book of Common Prayer, and they appointed a committee of five of their number:

To act with that of the Lower House in this matter, provided, that on the same Services being drawn up they be sent to the House of Bishops of the Province of Canada, the House of Bishops of the Province of Rupert's Land, and the Bishops of the Dioceses of British Columbia, and that on receiving the approval of a majority of them, the same may be published as an Appendix to the Book of Common Prayer.

Now it is quite evident, that there was no common ground of action, for the Lower House had expressly voted down the provision of an Appendix, when the subject was before that body, while the Upper House accepted the principle that merely an Appendix be provided. Seemingly, there was a deadlock. But the situation was completely met through the intuition of Mr Matthew Wilson, who, rather than see his cherished plans completely frustrated, moved at once, seconded by Canon Welch, the concurrence of the Lower House, with this message from the Upper House.

The word "Appendix" gained currency, and for a time it appeared as if it would indicate the character of the proposed revision. Although it does not appear in the Schedule of Acts of Synod, where No. 20 is marked: "Appointment of Joint Committee on additions to the Book of Common Prayer," it receives prominence in the list of Joint Committees of Both Houses: "On an Appendix to the Prayer Book." And to this Committee the Memorial of the Diocese of Huron was duly forwarded for appropriate action.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE APPENDIX

#### A FURTHER STAGE OF REVISION

THE Appendix had a sad and chequered history. It contained many excellent features, but it did not appeal to the great body of Church opinion. It doubtless did good, in that it prepared the way for a real enrichment of the Book of Common Prayer. The Committee charged with the work of preparation did much in the way of suggestion, but they left its compilation mainly to the Chairman, Dr H. T. Kingdon, Bishop of Fredericton. The Bishop received some assistance from Dr Partridge, the Dean of his Cathedral. Bishop Kingdon was a ripe scholar, and was deeply versed in liturgics; and Dean Partridge was a man of wide reading, and of rich experience in Church life and work. They were in many respects kindred minds, and were so situated that they could easily work together. The result was the ill-fated Appendix, of which now it is almost impossible to secure a copy. It has been relegated, if not to oblivion, to such places that memory fails to follow it. It was not until I had exhausted every apparent means for discovering a copy that I wrote to the present Bishop of Fredericton (Dr Richardson), in the hope that in the Archives of the Cathedral at Fredericton a copy might possibly be found. Bishop Richardson replied: "I do not know where you could find a copy of the appendix drawn up under the chairmanship of Bishop Kingdon. I have not seen one for many years."

The copy before me has a strange, indeed almost a romantic, history. Archdeacon Vroom, of King's College, Windsor, N.S., had long sought a copy but without success. One day while walking on the shores of the St Croix river, in his native province, where the tides of the Bay of Fundy flow in, he found a copy which had been washed up by the waves.

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THE PROPOSED APPENDIX, 1902–1905 [CH.

It is now a precious historical, not to say a liturgical, possession. There are all the features of a romance, for it was found in Bishop Kingdon's own diocese, had been wonderfully preserved from an ocean grave, and had been carried to dry land, and into a friendly hand, by the highest tides that this world knows.

But the Appendix itself had no tides of popular feeling in its favour. It met with nothing but the winds of adversity. At the General Synod of Quebec, it failed to weather the storm of opposition which beat upon it, and it went down to defeat, never to rise again.

The Joint Committee, which was appointed in 1902, at the Third Session of the General Synod, is called "On an Appendix to the Prayer Book." It consisted of the following members: the Bishops of Fredericton (Dr Kingdon) convener, Quebec (Dr Dunn), Toronto (Dr Sweatman), Saskatchewan and Calgary (Dr Pinkham), Ottawa (Dr Hamilton), Huron (Dr Baldwin), and Ontario (Dr Mills); Deans Matheson and Partridge; Archdeacons Naylor, Davis, Neales, Fortin and Pentreath; Canons Welch and Whitney; Rev. Dr Langtry, Mr Matthew Wilson, Captain Carter, Dr L. H. Davidson, Colonel Matheson, Dr J. A. Worrell and the Hon. Mr Justice J. N. Ritchie. It was a committee representative of the whole Church from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The initial mistake made in regard to the Appendix was that the Committee in charge of it seldom, if ever, met. It was the product of a correspondence school, of which Bishop Kingdon was the master. It was adopted by the Committee, if it was ever really adopted, in the form first presented, without a meeting called for that purpose. This proceeding raised the ire of that mildest and gentlest of Churchmen, Matthew Wilson, who had brought forward in the Lower House, with such persistence, the need of revision and enrichment.

Matthew Wilson addressed to the Bishop of Fredericton on the 5th October 1903, a strong protest. He desired to say:

That the Book is not what was in my mind at the time I took the matter up in the Synod of Huron, or at the time the motion



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was passed by the Central Synod, nor does it represent what I explained to the Lower House was my object.

I wished to have the present Book of Common Prayer *supplemented with appropriate and necessary additional matter and authorisations* for the use of shortened or varied services, and the *whole indexed* in the manner adopted by the S.P.C.K. in a little index which they paste in the front of some of the Prayer Books. This index would cover *both the Prayer Book and the Appendix*. The Prayer Book would then be printed in four, five, or six different sizes as the Canadian Book of Common Prayer, and the precise matter on any page in one book would represent *exactly the matter* on the *same pages* in a larger or smaller book. This would enable the minister to announce from the reading-desk the page.

I beg most respectfully to submit that your Lordship's proposed appendix cannot be approved without a meeting of the committee, and that receiving letters from members of the committee, even if your Lordship receive such approval from all except one, could not be an approval by the committee, because for an approval by the committee each member is not only entitled to express his dissent or approval, but is also entitled to use his influence in meeting to lead others to dissent or approve, and it is only by joint conference and action of the members of the committee, after all shall have had an opportunity to be present, that the committee can recommend to the House of Bishops the appendix in question.

Mr Wilson gave as a ground of his protest the expression of opinion by Dr Kingdon, that there can be no question that all matters connected with additions to the Prayer Book are of the utmost importance and should be most carefully considered, as they will be scrutinized severely. For that reason Mr Wilson urged: "it is of grave importance that all action of the committee should be regular."

Dr Kingdon's rejoinder is characteristic, and it throws a flood of light on the circumstances surrounding the compilation of the Appendix. The Bishop claimed that he had summoned the Committee to meet in Montreal, and that he could not have done more unless he had registered the summons.

Such as came in answer to the summons insisted that I should

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undertake the work at once and *hasten it* on as much as possible. This was far from my wish, but I try to submit to the majority. I rather thought it was a kind of retaliation for my previous action....There was only one member of the Lower House present, and as the matter emanated from that House I have been guided by the opinion of that member as to the course to be taken. He has said to me in writing: "This I understand to be the intention of the Synod." On this I have acted.

The sub-committee appointed to draw up the Appendix were the Bishops of Huron (Baldwin), Ottawa (Hamilton), Calgary (Pinkham) and myself. The first piece of work that I had attempted, covering some six or eight pages of MS., I sent to the Bishop of Huron, as senior, and asked him to make remarks upon it, and send it on to the Bishop of Ottawa. That manuscript, I suppose, has lighted some fires in London. The Bishop neither answered my letter nor sent on the MS. to Ottawa. A second time I wrote in February. This time I wrote to all three, but only received answers from Ottawa and Calgary.

I then sent what I had done to all three, and again the same two answered with a general approval. Then the booklet was issued to all members of the Committee, a majority gave consent to its being sent to the Bishops and this has been done. Of course individuals have to bow to the majority. The highest legal authority has decided that the *animus imponentis* does not of itself govern; therefore we cannot feel bound by your opinion on the floor of the house. For myself I do not like it at all. I feel that each diocese in this huge country would know its own mind best, and that each Bishop should put out for his own diocese, under the recognized *jus liturgicum*, such services, &c. of which the need has been felt. Then gradually it would be found and agreed upon that this or that was desirable and so some general agreement could be found.

With regard to this booklet, it could only be issued like the American "book appended" (I think) that the Church at large might see and criticize, then some days before the next meeting of the General Synod the Committee could be summoned and two days given to the work of preparing something which the joint Committee (could) present to the Synod as their report, whatever it be.

The abstracts from Bishop Kingdon's letter are rather