Understanding the Prayer Book

A Commentary

The Association for Common Prayer

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Foreword

The distinctive character of Anglicanism as a form of Christian faith and life is constituted chiefly by its tradition of common prayer. From century to century, in its various versions and revisions, the Book of Common Prayer has provided the faithful with an ordered system of public worship, which is obedient to the Word of God, logical and balanced in its theological and devotional emphases, and noble in its language. It has been our guide in the reading and interpretation of Holy Scripture, and our standard in devotional and pastoral practice; and, in general, it has shaped, and continues to shape, our spirituality as Anglicans.

This little volume gathers together a series of essays prepared by the Association for Common Prayer, in the hope that they may be useful in helping us, amidst the religious and moral confusions of our own times, towards a deeper understanding and fuller appropriation of our rich spiritual heritage, that we may learn to live more perfectly the ordered life of Christian devotion, praying "with the spirit, and with the understanding also".

R.D. Crouse

Editor's Preface

The Association for Common Prayer offers this book to the Anglican Church of Canada in the hope that it will be of some assistance in our common devotional life. The primary intention of the book is to provide a simple, practical commentary to the Book of Common Prayer. To this end, numerous individuals have contributed articles on the various services. Thus, the final product is a reflection of the efforts of many writers. This provides for variations in style and emphasis from chapter to chapter. Nevertheless, the picture of the Prayer Book that emerges is one that is unified and consistent. For, it is the belief of the Association for Common Prayer that our Prayer Book is not only unified in character, but also a means of unifying our Church.

Our greatest desire as an Association is to see a renewal of the spirit of common prayer within the Anglican Church. That spirit is one which over the past centuries has found its expression in the Book of Common Prayer. Perhaps, if we devote ourselves more diligently to the effort of appreciating the spiritual treasures that we have inherited, we may avoid the loss of them. To that end, we dedicate this volume as an educational aid towards the rediscovery of the Prayer Book.

Barry Craig, Editor

The Prayer Book and Tradition

The Book of Common Prayer has been described by the Rev'd Evan Daniel as a great Cathedral. Its origins lie in ancient days, its various parts designed and built in many locations over the ages. Its very stones bear the marks of having been brought from distant places. Everywhere we look there is a wonderful variety of architecture. Some sections are simple, powerful and direct. Still other areas are richly detailed and require much time to appreciate fully. Yet, amidst all of this diversity, there is a single dominant theme: this is a temple built for the service of Almighty God. All that it has gathered together from time and place is directed towards the worship of the Lord. In this activity of prayer and praise, the whole structure becomes a single, unified creature. It is this unity which is derived from variety that is at the heart of the Book of Common Prayer.

In order to understand the value of this great possession, we must know something of the rich tradition which both led to and found its flowering in the Book of Common Prayer. For the Prayer Book did not, as we might suppose, come into existence out of the blue. Rather, it was the product of centuries of prayer, study, and worship. Indeed, our Canadian Book of Common Prayer contains elements from virtually every Christian century. To use this book is to enter into the spiritual life of the entire Christian tradition. It is to this tradition that we must now turn.

The practice of worshipping God by means of ordered, common prayer existed long before the time of Jesus. We can find evidence of ordered forms of prayer in Deuteronomy 21:7-8; Numbers 6:22 and 10:35-36. As well, many of the Psalms were intended for common use in regular Jewish worship. It is also known that the ancient Jews had certain ordered prayers, hymns and readings which were intended to be used on various occasions. This idea of structured, common prayer, in which the congregation could participate, forms the basis for our own pattern of worship.

We know, too, that our Lord, while here on earth, participated regularly in the Temple and synagogue services, taking his part in the order of worship. Our Lord clearly intended that this life of ordered and common prayer would continue in his Church. After all, Jesus gave the exact wording of that most holy prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven..." To this day, Christians of whatever denomination recognize the unifying power of this common prayer. That the tradition of praying common words to-

gether continued with the Apostles is also clear. Acts 4:24-30 records that the followers of the Lord lifted up their voices "with one accord", in prayer to God.

In the centuries following the time of the New Testament, the Christian Church expanded rapidly and broadly. With this tremendous growth in the Body of Christ, there was a corresponding growth and maturation of the common prayers of the Church. The general form of the Holy Communion service became something which was identifiable by Christians everywhere. Soon, the same prayers were being used in thousands of different churches. Before the formulation of the Creeds, or the wide distribution of the complete Bible, it was the shared life of prayer which united the Church.

Through the period which we generally refer to as the Middle Ages, the Christian religion came to prominence in every country in Europe. Society was involved in the life of the Church (and vice versa) at nearly every level. The services of the Church grew ever more complex and refined. Both the Church in the East (Greece, Russia, etc.) and in the West (Italy, Germany, France, England, etc.) developed relatively fixed forms of worship. As well as the services of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism, there arose forms for saying morning and evening prayers. To this were added ceremonies for Holy Matrimony, Ordination, ministry to the sick, and so on. These various services were contained in different books and were not generally available to lay people.

In England, as everywhere else in Western Europe, church services were conducted in Latin throughout this period. However, the vast majority of the population was entirely ignorant of this language, and consequently many attended services that they could not understand. When the language barrier was added to the great complexity of the ceremonies, the result was that the worship of the Church became quite removed from the pattern of the New Testament. In addition, as always happens with even the best institutions in this world, human errors crept in and distracted people from the true teaching of Scripture. As the Original Preface to the first Prayer Book (1549) states:

> There was never anything by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted.
>
> *(Book of Common Prayer, page 715)*

It was in part to correct these problems that the Reformation took place. Although the Reformation touched every part of Europe, it is to England that we shall especially direct our attention. In that country, the difficulties with the public worship of the Church were as great as anywhere in Christendom. By the 1530's King Henry VIII had ordered that the Scriptures be translated into English and a copy placed in every church so that the people could at least hear the Word of God read in a language that they understood. Think of that glorious day when common Christian men and women heard, for the first time, the Word of God read in their own language!

However, there was much more to be done in order to make worship into what our Lord intended in the first place. The services themselves needed to be translated. As well, those superstitious elements which had crept into the public prayers had to be removed. This task of reforming the common prayers of the English Church fell largely to a man named Thomas Cranmer.

In 1549, Cranmer, who was Archbishop of Canterbury, produced the Book of Common Prayer. The purpose of this work was to furnish the English-speaking people with a godly and devout form of worship in their own language. According to the principles which are stated in the Preface to that Book, the form of worship was to be marked by simplicity of ceremony and dignity of expression. The orderly presentation of Holy Scripture was seen as fundamental to the entire enterprise.

Those superstitious practices and beliefs which had corrupted the worship of the Church were removed or corrected. The guiding principle was expressed thus: "nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same; and that in such a Language and Order as is most easy and plain for the understanding both of the Readers and Hearers".

The effect of these changes was to make the public worship of the Church both true to Scripture and accessible for the average Christian. The prayers of the Church had now become "common" in the sense that they could be commonly understood and offered up to God.

However, there was another sense in which the public worship was to become "common". By the "Act of Uniformity of 1549", the Book of Common Prayer was made obligatory throughout England. Soon the entire realm would be united in offering up the same prayers each and every

Sunday. It was a religious unity which England had never known. The Preface explained,

> And whereas heretofore there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in Churches within this Realm; some following Salisbury Use, some Hereford Use, and some the Use of Bangor, some of York, some of Lincoln; now from henceforth all the whole Realm shall have but one Use.

Thomas Cranmer understood that the key to religious peace and a godly order within the Church did not lie in the dominance of any particular faction or preface. Rather, if worship was to unite the people of God, it must first of all be based entirely upon that which is common to all Christian people, the Holy Scripture. Then, the expression of this scriptural worship must be in a form that did not obscure the sense of God's Word. Finally, Cranmer understood that such a product was quite beyond the grasp of his abilities, or indeed, any single author or age. Thus, the archbishop used the entire treasury of Christian devotion as a resource. In the end, his Prayer Book was more a compilation than a composition. Gathering prayers and ceremonies from many centuries and countries, the Book of Common Prayer sought to represent an expression of the total Christian life.

In order for this great enterprise of uniformity to be translated into a real spiritual unity there would have to be general goodwill amongst members of the Church. Such cooperation was not immediately forthcoming, however. Far too many people were still insistent that "their position" should dominate over all others. As long as people were unwilling to submit their private opinions to the greater good of religious peace and unity, the Book of Common Prayer could not unite the English Church.

Thus, for slightly over one hundred years following the publication of the first Prayer Book, the Church was torn by controversy. For a while one faction would find favour or power and impose its views on everyone. Then, the rival position would rise to the fore. For some time, the Church was in no less a state of confusion than it had been prior to the Reformation. There was so much division that prayer had, once again, ceased to be common.

It was in the year 1662 that the fifth version of the Book of Common Prayer was published. The primary purpose of this work was to restore common prayer to the English people. This was accomplished through

a masterful balancing of opposing positions. Much like the original BCP of 1549, the 1662 Prayer Book sought to present a more comprehensive expression of Christian worship. The entire tradition of the Christian Church, from the New Testament times, through the early Church and Middle Ages was represented. To this were added elements of worship and prayer which had arisen out of the struggles following the Reformation. This was a book that so fully gathered up the Christian tradition that it was able to bring the long-sought peace to the English Church. So successful was this revision that it continued, without significant change, until this present century.

In this present century, the Anglican Church of Canada has twice revised the Book of Common Prayer. The first of these two revisions, that of 1918, was relatively minor. The second revision, carried out in 1959, was somewhat more extensive. Prayers were added to the section containing occasional prayers and thanksgivings, in order to cover aspects of life especially relevant to the twentieth century. There were alterations made to the Holy Communion service, including a reconstruction of the Prayer of Consecration. Nevertheless, despite these and many other minor changes, the present Canadian Book of Common Prayer would be recognized easily by anyone familiar only with the Prayer Book of 1662. Indeed, the Canadian revisers were careful to ensure that their work was not opposed to the earlier Prayer Book.

> And always there has been the understanding that no alterations should be made which would involve or imply any change of doctrine of the Church as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer...
>
> *(Preface to the Canadian revision of 1959)*

Thus, as Anglicans in Canada, we have the privilege in our public worship of praying with one accord with the saints throughout the ages. When we move through the beautiful solemnity of the Communion service, we are hearing the same prayers which Christians have heard for centuries.

What we have endeavoured to present in this brief historical overview is the comprehensive nature of the Book of Common Prayer. Our Prayer Book is not the product of any one person. Nor indeed does it come from any one culture or any particular age. Rather, it gathers up treasures from all Christendom, regardless of period or place. This great

collection exists to lead us towards a full, loving, and instructed relationship with the Lord. It is this tradition of praying in common, not just with the members of our own congregation, but with the whole Church, that moves our worship-life. We do not just join in prayer with those who live in this life at the same time as we do. Rather, we are joined with all the faithful, from the time of our Lord until the present, in common prayer, offered up to God.

The Prayer Book and Scripture

As Anglicans, we are blessed in many ways. Not the least among these blessings is the fact that ours is a thoroughly scriptural Church. Her doctrines, Creeds, sacraments, and orders of ministers — all are founded upon the teaching of the Word of God as interpreted by the Church of the Apostles. Even the worship we are privileged to offer Almighty God according to the Book of Common Prayer is altogether scriptural. Indeed, it was the express desire of the framers of the Prayer Book that this be so. In the "Original Preface" to the Prayer Book, found printed on page 715 of our Canadian Book of Common Prayer it is stated that one of the main problems with the services of the Church before their reformation was that the reading of Scripture had been largely replaced by readings from other sources such as the lives of the saints and uncertain legends, but in this Book "nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same..."

In fact, fully two-thirds of the Book of Common Prayer consists of extracts from the Bible — canticles, Epistles and Gospels, the Psalter — all have been taken directly from the Word of God to render Anglican worship uniquely scriptural. Add to this the amount of Scripture which the Prayer Book Table of Lessons (pages xvi - xlvii) assumes will be read as part of daily and Sunday worship, and it can be readily seen that the Prayer Book course of prayer and praise is scriptural both in *form* and *content*.

The Scriptural Form of the Book of Common Prayer

In his Epistle to the Romans (chs. 4 & 5) St. Paul states that the way to eternal life involves a knowledge of the saving acts of God in Christ, a responsive faith in those acts which is counted as righteousness, which in turn results in the sanctification (the making holy) of the believer, which is eternal life. The very foundation of our hope of eternal life is then a knowledge of God's saving acts in Jesus Christ. This is, of course, the Gospel, or "Good News" of mankind's release from bondage to sin and death which comes through the life and death of God's Son. Like the Jewish religion of the Old Testament, the Christian faith which fulfills it is an historical religion, based on certain essential facts. Although it can be expanded upon, the Gospel was summarised by the Apostle when he

said, "Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:1-6). In order to be brought to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, we must then know the facts about Jesus.

The form which the Book of Common Prayer takes is designed to put before the faithful user of the Book, on a regular basis, the essential facts about Jesus' life and teaching. This form, inherited from Catholic tradition and ultimately the Gospel record itself was, at the time of the Reformation, simplified and purged of much of its non-biblical content. By following the Prayer Book Calendar and Table of Lessons, both in daily and Sunday worship, we are assured of being presented with all the events in our Lord's life, and that our faith is ever-deepened. Thus, we regularly commemorate our Lord's birth, his passion and death, his resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Comforter, as well as the events in his life and ministry of less importance. We also drink deeply, according to this scheme, of his teaching, and witness the miracles which speak of his divine nature. And on saints' days we are reminded of how Christ works in the lives of holy men and women and are so moved, it is hoped, to greater effort in running the race which is set before us.

We are not, however, restricted in the course of the Church Year to the Gospels alone, but we also read through the Epistles as illustrations of the Gospel in action, and as a schoolhouse of Christian doctrine. The Old Testament is also to be read in its entirety, along with portions of the Apocrypha, according to the Prayer Book plan, for there is found the Gospel in prophetic symbol. There can be no opposition between the two Testaments, for both speak to us of God's saving acts in history.

If the order of lessons laid out in the Prayer Book is joined with the regular use of the Psalter, the Old Testament is read through once in a year, and the New Testament in its entirety at least twice. How could one help but become intimately familiar with "the facts" upon which our salvation rests? How could one not be moved to greater faith in God and determination to serve him, if this habit were followed regularly?

The Scriptural Content of the Book of Common Prayer

The Scripture used in Prayer Book worship, both that printed in the book, such as the Psalter and the Epistles and Gospels, and that outlined in the Table of Lessons, is of course joined to that one-third of the Prayer Book which is not scriptural extracts. Such material would include

various prayers, exhortations, instructions, and forms of administration of the sacraments. If the Book of Common Prayer is to be regarded as a thoroughly scriptural book, it must be shown that these sections are not contradictory or indifferent to the reading of Holy Scripture. They must be shown, rather, to be essentially scriptural and a further aid in that sanctification of the Christian believer which has its beginning in the regular reading or hearing of Holy Scripture itself.

The Original Preface (1549) quoted above states clearly that even in those sections of the Prayer Book which are not scriptural extracts, there should not be found anything which is not in agreement with the Scriptures. It is, of course, beyond the limits of this short paper to show that this requirement has been met and maintained through the Prayer Book's several editions and revisions. And yet, it is surely not too bold a claim to make that the "man-composed" portions of the Book of Common Prayer are indeed scriptural. If they are not, then the work of the Reformers of the sixteenth century was at least partially in vain, and the efforts of later revisors unfaithful to the original aim of the Prayer Book's framers.

For the moment, it will have to suffice to examine the non-biblical portions of the Prayer Book in a highly selective way, pointing to examples within the three categories that the bulk of the material falls: teaching portions of the Prayer Book, prayers, and the sacraments. There is, naturally, a great deal of overlap within these categories — a prayer, for example, might be used as a method of teaching, but according to the classical Anglican understanding of the process of sanctification, knowledge leads to prayer, and prayer is sealed in sacrament (see, for example, the fifth book of Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*). It is essential, then, that not only that which teaches the Gospel be thoroughly scriptural, but that the response in prayer and the mysterious means by which God's grace is given us in the sacraments also be thoroughly scriptural.

The three Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and St. Athanasius') are the most obvious examples of the teaching portions of the Prayer Book. They are designed to reinforce and consolidate in the believer's mind the truths found dispersed throughout Holy Scripture. The same can be said, and has been shown to be true by many authors, of the Prayer Book Catechism and the exhortations found in several of the Prayer Book services, whether it be the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, Holy Communion, or the occasional offices such as the Ordination service.

Prayer is the soul's natural response to the apprehension of God's saving work in Jesus Christ — in praise, in thanksgiving, in intercession, we approach the God who chose to approach us by taking upon himself our very nature. The only prayer found in the Book of Common Prayer which is an extract from the Bible is the Lord's Prayer, and yet it is true to say that all of the other prayers found there are inspired by Scripture, governed by that which is in accord with God's will. It has been objected, in the past, and in this modern day when spontaneity is valued above order, that set prayers are unduly restrictive of the soul's response to the knowledge of God's love. But it is again St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans who says, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us..." (Romans 8:26). Prayer inspired by Scripture, and filled with scriptural phrases and doctrine must be seen by us as a work of the Holy Spirit among us, a means by which our weak spirits can be molded according to the will of God.

When we think of the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer, the "collects", (the special prayers which accompany the Epistles and Gospels throughout the Church Year, and are used in other contexts in the Prayer Book) come to mind. The collects, which are of ancient origin, are models of scriptural prayer, for they generally open with an invocation which teaches us something of God's nature or of some way in which God has manifested himself in the world. This is followed by a petition for God's favour in accord with his express will in the Scriptures. And in conclusion, God is praised through Jesus Christ, often in union with the Holy Spirit. All three sections of a collect are scriptural, as an analysis of the collect for Christmas Day shows:

1. Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him,
   Compare: John 3:16; John 4:14; Hebrews 2:16; John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16

2. and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin:
   Compare: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:26-27; Matthew 1:24-25; Galatians 4:4

3. Grant that we, being regenerate,
   Compare: John 3:3-5; Rom. 3:4; Colossians 2:11-12;

2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9.

4. and made thy children by adoption and grace,
   Compare: John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4-6.

5. may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.
   Compare: Titus 3:5; Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16, Isaiah 40:31.

Similar analyses could be done on any one of the collects in the Prayer Book, or on the other prayers such as the Prayer for the Church, the General Thanksgiving, or those to be used on various occasions found beginning on page 38 in our Canadian Book. The point is that as a scriptural Church we pray scripturally and for that we should give thanks.

But if our Book of Common Prayer's consistency with the teaching of Holy Scripture, and its ability to mould hearts and minds in that teaching is to be judged according to the scriptural nature of its prayers, will not its sacramental teaching come under as rigorous a scrutiny? Whether what the Prayer Book teaches about the sacraments is scriptural or not is of crucial importance in judging the whole, for in the sacramental teaching of a Church her highest ideals, those of the soul's communication with God, are contained.

The services in the Prayer Book which contain the administration of the sacraments are, of course, combinations of other elements mentioned above — readings from Scripture, exhortations which teach and admonish, and prayers. But are these elements combined so as to produce a truly scriptural understanding of the soul's mystical union with God? It is the teaching of the Prayer Book, both in the Thirty-Nine Articles (Article XXV) and the Catechism (page 550) that there are sacraments ordained by Christ in Holy Scripture: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. That this is defensible out of Scripture is beyond doubt. At the end of St. Matthew's Gospel the words of Jesus are recorded: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). And so we know that it is God's will that we make disciples through Holy Baptism. The New Testament gives four accounts of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-30;

Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24) and from them it is clear that Jesus intended this meal to be a "perpetual memorial of that his precious death until his coming again".

What is not always so readily admitted, however, is that what the Book of Common Prayer teaches about the *nature* of the sacraments is consistent with Holy Scripture. The teaching of the Prayer Book is that the sacraments convey grace, that is, that through Holy Baptism and Holy Communion God gives himself, spiritually. Thus in the Catechism we read:

> *Catechist:* What do we mean by this word Sacrament?
>
> *Answer:* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given to us by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive this grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof.
>
> *(Book of Common Prayer, page 550)*

This Prayer Book definition of a sacrament, which is borne out in the services of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion takes us to the very root of our Anglican faith as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer, and the plan for sanctification it offers. When we were considering above the form which the Prayer Book takes, we said that ours is a faith based on facts, facts about a God who has acted in history. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ — God became Man and dwelt among us. Nothing could be more scriptural then, than our understanding of the sacraments, for through them God continues to work in space and time. He continues to work in history, in the lives of men.

In form and in content, in Bible reading and other Scripture-based teaching, in prayer and sacrament, the Book of Common Prayer shapes the souls of Anglicans according to scriptural ideals. How blessed indeed we are to have this "goodly heritage"! Let us use it with thanksgiving and so form our souls for heaven.

The Order for Morning Prayer

When one of the disciples asked for instruction in prayer, our Lord responded by giving one common prayer to them all. "When ye pray, say, Our Father..." (Luke 11:1-4). The Lord's Prayer is more than a form of words: it is the first and most fundamental order for Christian common prayer. That order begins with the adoration of God as Father and source of all. This adoration is the life of heaven itself. There, all things are united in the enjoyment of God and are in harmony with his perfect will. Through the hallowing of God's name we are drawn into his peace and learn to make the prayer of heaven our own here on earth. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This we do by learning, day by day, our dependence upon God's grace, given us in Word and sacrament, to keep us alive to his will and bring his kingdom to us. "Give us this day our daily bread."

But still we trespass against the love of God. We must recognize, with the Psalmist, that "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss,/ O Lord, who may abide it?" God's holiness is infinite, and nothing can stand in comparison with it. But so too is his mercy; the Psalmist continues, "But there is forgiveness with thee;/ therefore shalt thou be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4). Lest we fall short of the mercy of God, either through dread of his wrath or false confidence in ourselves, we are to go on to pray God's forgiveness, both for ourselves and our neighbours. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Supplied with our daily bread, forgiven, and mindful of the final triumph of God's kingdom in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, we come to pray for the continuance and completion of the good work God has begun in us through the operation of his Holy Spirit, so that in all things his power and glory may be praised and adored.

The pattern of our Lord's Prayer is the pattern for our Order for Morning Prayer. The Exhortation (page 4) helps us to see the connection between the two. Our purpose in praying this Order is first "to render thanks" for God's goodness and "to hear his most holy Word" in the lessons. In closing, we are "to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul". We begin with praise and thanksgiving, continue with meditation upon the will and word of God made known to us in Scripture, and conclude with petition and interces-

sion for ourselves and others.

To follow our Prayer Book Order is indeed to pray as Christ has taught and commanded. The name of our Father in heaven is hallowed in the praises of the Psalms (pages 6-7). In the lessons that follow, the coming of God's kingdom is revealed to us. The Old Testament lesson shows us that kingdom as promised and prepared for us in the Law and the Prophets. In the New Testament lesson, we see that kingdom established in the reign of Christ crucified, and extended in the labours of the Apostles and the life of the Church. By the regular reading of Scripture in the lessons we are supplied with the whole Word of God that is to be our daily bread. (See the Table of Lessons, pages xvi-xlvii). Finally, in the versicles and responses, collects, and prayers that conclude the Order (pages 11-15), we ask, in accordance with Christ's prayer, for forgivenesss, defence and deliverance from all evil by the guidance of his Holy Spirit. From this we can see, not only how much of our Morning Prayer is made up of Scripture, but also that its very order is rooted in the one prayer that we may be sure is acceptable to the Father, for it was taught us from the lips of his Son.

The sequence of Psalms, lessons, canticles and intercessions in Morning Prayer trains us to offer the worship the Father seeks. Its order brings devotion and doctrine together, enabling us to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, page 3). It provides for the regular and complete reading of Scripture so that we might "continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true religion" (Original Preface, 1549, page 715). In the *Te Deum*, the *Benedictus*, and the Apostles' Creed (pages 7-10), our reading of Scripture is guided and informed by the witness and wisdom of the undivided Church.

By alternate acts of praise, proclamation and prayer, we both receive and respond, acknowledge and aspire. Our prayers kindle the desire to know God more clearly, and the knowledge given in his Word inspires us to love him more dearly. So, by our prayers and praises, we are made ready to receive God's Word, and hearing, we are moved to return to our devotions refreshed and supplied with new reasons to pray. In all of this we are following the counsel of St. Paul that inspiration and instruction should balance and interpret each other. We are brought to "pray with the spirit and pray with the understanding also". (1 Corinthians 14:15)

Now it is sometimes suggested that the settled order and familiarity

of the prayers hinder spontaneity. If by this is meant that sometimes we do not feel comfortable or specially inspired by all that we pray all of the time, then no one could disagree. However, it is not the prayers themselves that cause the discomfort or the boredom. More often than not it is the condition of the person praying them. But when we pray, we want to become what we pray, instead of remaining what we are when we begin. By desiring that they *may* be true of us, we can begin to make the prayers truly our own.

If, on the other hand, it is thought that a settled pattern of prayer lacks variety, then we have only to look at the changes and chances that we are subject to in mind, body and estate, to find all the variety that we could wish. Whether it be sickness or health, loss or gain, need or blessing in our outward condition, or joy, despair, thankfulness, envy, inspiration, or spiritual dryness within — each condition we experience will bring out a different emphasis and meaning in a familiar prayer or response. We shall find the same words on one occasion consoling us, and on another checking our pride. By the stability of its order, Morning Prayer teaches us the secrets of our own unstable hearts. We shall be brought to know the infinite patience and love of God, "merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

It is because our thoughts are not God's thoughts, nor his ways our own, that Morning Prayer is introduced by a penitential preparation. The sentences from Scripture (pages 1-3) call us to worship, but also remind us of our unreadiness to offer it acceptably. Before we can call upon God as our Father, we must recollect the obedience that we owe to him. The Exhortation (page 4) applies these sentences to our condition, reminding us that we not only disobey, we also "dissemble and cloke" our disobedience before the face of Almighty God. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, we hide and make excuses, blaming circumstances or the suggestions of others (Genesis 3:8-13).

Sin is the great barrier to our communion with God and with one another. Our souls must be clean if we are to draw near to him and he to us in common prayer. But we are not exhorted to come clean and confess so that God may pronounce again the old curse. We confess our disobedience relying upon the obedience of Christ, the second Adam, who was crucified for our sins and raised again to make his righteousness our own. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made to live." (1 Corin-

thians 15:22; Romans 5:18). As the Absolution declares, God desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his own wandering ways into the one way of Christ, and so come to share his life.

Our preparation concludes with the Lord's Prayer, which we offer here in thanksgiving for the pardon we have received, and as the foundation for the worship we are to offer. Thomas Comber, (an Anglican writer of the 17th century) suggests we pray the Lord's Prayer at this point to the glory of God, desiring his honour to be manifest, and being mindful that we need all the graces of reverence, fear, submission, and obedience, in order to hallow God's name.

Pardoned and prepared, we now offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving with versicles taken from that book of praise shared by the Old Israel and the New: the Book of Psalms. Through the Psalms that follow, our lips are opened to hallow God's name with the very words prayed by David, the prophets, the Apostles, and Christ himself. The *Venite* (Psalm 95, pages 6-7), recalls the reason for our praise and the manner in which we are to offer it. It teaches us that each morning is a new "To-day", a new summons to hear God's voice and to follow his ways, so that we may enter into the rest of heaven. The proper Psalms for the day (either read according to the table on page lv, or the divisions printed at the top of each page of the Psalter itself) bring us into the prayer life of Christ. We come to share his mind as expressed in the varied character and circumstances of each Psalm. We learn, as he did, to hallow the Father's name in sorrow as well as joy, in adversity as well as triumph. In this way, the Psalms help us to bring our every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

After offering praise in the Psalms, we come to the next part of Morning Prayer, corresponding to the next petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". In the Old Testament lesson, we witness the coming of God's rule, from his ordering of chaos at the creation to his election, deliverance and protection of the chosen people, Israel, the seed of his new creation in Christ. These lessons bring before us the whole of God's preparation for Christ. This preparation is essential if we are to recognize and respond to God's final action in his Son. Christ tells us, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will be they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Likewise, the Nicene Creed (page 71) declares Christ's Resurrection to be

"according to the Scriptures", namely, the Law, Prophets and the Psalms of our Old Testament. The first lesson in Morning Prayer trains us in the faith of our fathers, and brings us to share their hope in the one, true and living God, made good in Christ. (See Articles of Religion, especially VII, "Of the Old Testament", page 701.)

At first glance, no doubt, we will find many of the Old Testament readings difficult to understand and follow. But here, especially, we are to practice patience in waiting upon God's Word spoken of old, "in many and various ways", to the fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). If we do so, then we may truly come to share the insight and inspiration granted to Zachariah. His response, placed on our lips in the *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68-79, pages 9-10) can then be our own recognition of God's clear address to us in the New Testament of his Son.

The Old Testament lesson is followed by the ancient hymn, *Te Deum Laudamus* — "We praise thee, O God" (pages 7-9). This hymn underlines the harmony of the Law and the Gospel as well as showing the unity and continuity of the Church under both Testaments. It is set out in three parts. The first surveys the whole extent of God's kingdom, embracing both heaven and earth. Numbered among its members are the angelic hosts who serve God ceaselessly, together with the Church Triumphant — the prophets, Apostles, and martyrs — with whom the Church Militant here on earth enjoys fellowship in the communion of saints. In the second part, the Incarnate Son of God is praised as the focus and source of this universal communion with the Father. The saving mysteries of Christ's incarnation, sacrifice, ascension and heavenly intercession are celebrated to prepare us for our meditation on them as these are about to be read. Christ's opening of the kingdom to us leads us to pray in the third part for the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit, as we seek to live each day in keeping with our high calling in Christ.

In the New Testament lesson, we behold the Word made flesh dwelling among us (John 1:14). Here we are supplied with that living bread from heaven which satisfies and saves. In Christ, the Father's will is accomplished on earth in order to bring us to his kingdom. As Christ tells his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). In the *Benedictus* that follows (pages 9-10), we rejoice in the Son's saving work and in the realization of the righteousness and holiness longed for by the prophets. The *Benedictus* also

puts us in mind of our continuing need for repentance, the virtue which, like the Lord's forerunner, John the Baptist, prepares our souls and points us to Christ's saving sacrifice. Received in repentance and faith, the Good News of the Gospel is more than a bare narration of Christ's life: it is the application of that life to our own, and a means of our identification with him in the eyes of our Father.

After hearing God's Word in the lessons, we respond with the confession of our faith in its saving truth, in the words of the Apostles' Creed. Reciting the Creed is also a renewal of the faith professed at our Baptism, (pages 526 & 535) through which we died and rose again with Christ and were made living members of his Body. In the Creed, we bear witness with the Church to the salvation brought to us in Word and sacrament. The recitation of the Creed marks the transition to the petitions and intercessions that conclude Morning Prayer.

This final section, beginning with the mutual salutation ("The Lord be with you/And with thy spirit") and the threefold prayer for mercy, (page 10), corresponds to the closing petitions of the Lord's Prayer for forgiveness, defence and deliverance. At this point the Lord's Prayer itself is offered a second time. It was prayed at the beginning as the foundation of everything that was to follow: here it is the crown of all we have offered. It serves to consecrate our intercessions, offered in union with those of Christ, whose mind has been communicated to us by all that we have said and done by this point in our common prayer. In everything we have prayed, we have sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Now, we go on in the assurance that our Father will give us whatever else may best answer our special needs and circumstances.

The versicles and responses follow next (page 11). These are based upon the Psalms, and expand upon the final petition of the Lord's Prayer. They also supply the scriptural basis for the collects and prayers that we are about to offer, and there is a close connection between them. There are six pairs of versicles and responses. The first invites us to meditate upon the specific expression of God's mercy conveyed to us in the Collect of the Day which follows. This collect serves a double purpose: first, it draws our daily prayer into the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered in the Eucharist; secondly, it binds our worship into the larger cycle of praise that makes up the Christian Year (pages 93 and following). In the remaining versicles and responses we pray for the Queen and those in au-

thority (this compares with the prayers offered on pages 12-13), for clergy and congregations (compare to the prayer on page 13), and for grace and peace (which are further desired in the second and third collects, which follow the Collect of the Day, pages 11-12).

Our Order for Morning Prayer concludes with whatever particular petitions and thanksgivings we desire at special times to offer before God. As well as those prayers found on pages 14-15, we may find others which are of assistance on pages 39-61. The Order concludes with two final prayers. The first is the ancient prayer, ascribed to St. John Chrysostom, built upon Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:19-20. Here Jesus tells his disciples of the infinite power of prayer when offered with one accord in his name. This unity of prayer is combined with the unity of God — Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the Grace which concludes Morning Prayer.

The Order for Evening Prayer

The Order for Evening Prayer is an act of worship addressed to Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This service of worship may be prayed publicly or in private. As stated on page lvi of the Book of Common Prayer, all clergy must say it daily, "unless prevented by sickness or other urgent cause..." It was also the intention of those who were responsible for producing the Prayer Book that the services of Morning and Evening Prayer might be said daily by lay people. Evening Prayer is a means whereby we can, towards the end of the day or at the end of the day, offer up prayer and praise to the Lord. In this form of common prayer, we implore God's mercy, hear his holy Word, praise him in Psalms and canticles, and bring before him our needs.

As we learn from the Old Testament, it was the custom to pray to the Lord frequently throughout the day. The Psalmist tells us, "seven times a day do I praise thee" (Psalm 119:164). Surrounding the Temple worship of our Lord's time, the people frequently offered up prayer to God, particularly in the morning and in the evening. In the New Testament, we learn that the Apostles were all together in one place at the third hour (9:00 a.m.) when they received the Holy Ghost at Pentecost (Acts 2:15). The Acts of the Apostles also records that Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). An early Christian writer of the second century tells us that it was the Christian custom at that time to offer prayers to God in both the morning and evening. It is precisely this biblical and early Christian practice which our Prayer Book continues in its services for Morning and Evening Prayer.

The Order for Evening Prayer begins with what are called the "opening sentences" on pages 17-18 of the Prayer Book. These sentences are to be said by the "minister", that is the person conducting the service. The minister may be an ordained person or any lay Christian. These sentences set the tone for the first part of the service by reminding us either of our duty to worship God or to confess our sins to him. Occasionally these sentences express the theme of particular seasons such as Lent, Christmas, or Easter.

Following the sentences, the Exhortation is read by the minister. If one is using the service as a private devotion, this Exhortation can be omitted. The Exhortation is really a short sermon on the nature and pur-

pose of public worship. It first speaks about Scripture which urges us to confess our sins to God in order to receive his forgiveness. It then calls our attention to the need for us to come together as Christians for public worship. In public worship we give thanks to God for the benefits that he bestows upon us, we hear his holy Word, we praise him, and we pray for both our spiritual and physical needs.

The Confession of our sins is to be said while kneeling. This is the way in which we can reflect in our bodies the inward humility that we ought to have in our souls. Since we are made up of body and soul, it is appropriate that when we confess our sins, our bodies as well as our souls should be humbled. The Confession is a general one, but we should all recall in our hearts, the ways in which we, as individuals, have erred and strayed from God's path. We have sinned by being disobedient to him. We have either not done what we should have done or done things we should not have done. Recognizing our failings, we beg God to have mercy upon us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

The Absolution, or forgiveness of sins, is to be pronounced by the priest alone. Only priests and bishops have the authority to say the Absolution. Their authority comes from our Lord himself. The power to forgive sins was given by Christ to his Apostles (John 20:23). This authority was in turn handed on from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops of the Church. The bishops in turn confer this power to priests when they ordain them by the laying on of hands. Thus, the forgiveness of sins is not possible because of any qualities that the priest or bishop possesses, but by virtue of Jesus Christ. So it is that the Absolution is pronounced "through Jesus Christ our Lord". The entire congregation is to respond by saying "Amen" at the end of the Absolution. By this means, the congregration participates in this part of the service. As Archdeacon Vroom, former Dean of Divinity at King's College, Halifax, said:

> The service is varied throughout by interchange between priest and people, so as to preserve due attention. It is not a one man service in which the congregation are merely listening, but the people are made to feel that the service is their own.

In private use of the Order for Evening Prayer, the Confession may be said or omitted, while the Absolution is always omitted.

The Confession and Absolution of our sins has prepared us for of-

fering our praises and thanksgivings to God. It is only as confessed and forgiven sinners that we are able to come before the Lord. The Lord's Prayer, which follows the Absolution, completes the first part of the service. The Lord's Prayer in this place constitutes our thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sins. Thus, the longer form is used. The conclusion, which begins, "For thine is the kingdom...", is called the doxology. The doxology is omitted in places where the primary intention of the prayer is not thanksgiving.

The versicles and responses follow the Lord's Prayer. These pairs of verses are entirely scriptural. We can find them if we look at Psalms 51:15 and 70:1. In saying them, we are desiring God's help in order that we can praise him. As in all other activities in life, our prayers must receive God's assistance if they are to be done according to his will. Following this, everyone who is present at the service stands as the minister leads them in saying, "Glory be to the Father..." This is an act of praise to God the Holy Trinity, modelled upon such scriptural passages as Isaiah 6:3 and Luke 2:13.

Our praise of Almighty God continues with the Psalms directed to be said in the Order. The Psalter (Book of Psalms) has been used in the Lord's worship for over twenty-five centuries. They were used in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem. Our Lord himself would have used the Psalms in both public worship and his private spiritual life. With the coming of the Christian Church, the Psalter became part of Christian worship and devotion. The Psalms express for us, in words more beautiful and fitting than any we could compose, our every thought and emotion. In the Psalter we find the means to bring before God our anxieties and joys. Through them we are able to praise God in words which he has himself inspired. Thus, the Psalms are the great devotional treasure house of the Church. The Psalms can be read through once a month, by following the markings on each page, or they may be read through every two months by using the table found on page lv.

Following the reading of the Psalms, the service moves to the first lesson, which is taken either from the Old Testament or the Apocrypha. As Archdeacon Vroom says:

> It has been claimed, and that claim could hardly be disputed, that the Anglican Church provides with greater care than any other religious body, for the complete and orderly read-

ing of Holy Scripture in Divine Service.

The reading of Scripture is essential to our worship. In all her services of worship, the Anglican Church, through the Book of Common Prayer, demands that Scripture be read. As Article VI (of the Thirty-Nine Articles) states,

> Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.
>
> *(Book of Common Prayer, page 700)*

Given the importance and unique character of Scripture, the Prayer Book takes great care to set forth a reasonable and orderly method for reading the Bible. Rather than reading certain passages over and over again, the Prayer Book gives us an understanding of the whole of Holy Scripture.

After the Old Testament lesson is read, we respond in the words of the *Magnificat*, or "The Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary''. This song comes to us directly from Scripture and has been used by Christians in public worship for centuries. Taken from Luke 1:46-55, it is a song of thanksgiving to Almighty God. Mary is giving thanks for having been chosen as the mother of our Lord. We in turn give thanks for Mary's Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. This hymn naturally follows the Old Testament reading as it refers to God's promise to "Abraham and his seed forever". The reading from the Old Testament is thus to be understood in the light which our Christian faith gives to us. The promises of the Old Covenant come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Following the *Magnificat*, we are moved to consider more carefully the fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ. Thus, we next read the New Testament lesson. As the Old Testament has given us the promise, so the New Testament gives us the realization of that promise. The Old Testament has spoken of the truth in images and shadows. Now, in the New Covenant, we see the Way, the Truth, and the Life with clarity.

After the New Testament lesson, we sing or say the *Nunc Dimittis*. Also called "The Song of Simeon", this hymn of praise comes from Luke 2:29-35. When our Lord's parents took him to the Temple as a baby, the aged Simeon took the child into his arms and uttered these inspired words. We have heard how the Old Testament promises have been fulfilled in

our New Testament reading. Now in the *Nunc Dimittis*, we give thanks, with Simeon, for the salvation brought about by Christ. With Simeon, as we lay ourselves down to rest, we commit everything into God's loving hands. Whether we rest in our beds or in our graves, we rest with Jesus. We give ourselves to him who is the light of the world and in his hands we place all our cares, anxieties and hopes.

The Apostles' Creed follows the *Nunc Dimittis*. By saying this Creed, we are drawing together the fundamental truths that we have heard throughout Holy Scripture. The Apostles' Creed is the one which is used at our Baptism and repeated again, by us, at our Confirmation. Every time we recite it, we should remember that it is *our* Creed in this very special way. The faith expressed in the Creed is *our* faith. The Creed sums up what has come before this point in the service and it provides the foundation upon which our prayers are built in the rest of the service. Firmly rooted in the truth of the faith, as it was derived from Holy Scripture, we are now able to turn to God in prayer.

We begin the section of the service which is made up of prayer by asking, "Lord, have mercy upon us." This three-fold prayer for God's mercy is the same one which we use in the service of Holy Communion (see page 70). Before we presume to call God, "Our Father", we must ask for his mercy. It is his loving kindness that allows us to be his children. It is this address to God, "Our Father who art in heaven...", which fittingly moves into the next part of the service. The Lord's Prayer was given to us by Jesus as the perfect pattern for all our prayers. Indeed, as the previous chapter showed, the Orders for Morning and Evening Prayer are entirely modelled upon the Lord's Prayer.

Following the Lord's Prayer, we pray according to a series of versicles and responses. These are taken primarily out of the Psalms and sum up all of the collects which are to follow. The first of the three collects directed to be said is the particular one for the given point in the Church Year. Both this, the Collect of the Day, and a second collect, for peace, are said at both Morning and Evening Prayer. The third collect, "for Aid against all Perils", is said only at Evening Prayer. In this prayer, we ask that God would defend us "from all perils and dangers of this night". This includes things which threaten the soul as well as the body. At Morning Prayer, the third collect prays for grace to guide us in the day to come. Now at the end of the day, we place ourselves in the hands of the God, "who neither

slumbers nor sleeps", and with whom "darkness and light are both alike".

As in the Order for Morning Prayer, other prayers from elsewhere in the Prayer Book can be added at this point, as we have special needs. Evening Prayer ends with the prayer of St. John Chrysostom and the Grace. St. John Chrysostom was a Christian preacher and bishop of the fourth century. The "desires and petitions" which that prayer sums up are all brought before God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the closing Grace from 2 Corinthians 13:14 reminds us.

The Litany

Following the Order for Evening Prayer (and the optional canticles), the Litany is found on page 30 of the Book of Common Prayer. This solemn and beautiful form of prayer was the first part of the Prayer Book to be offered to the Church in English. Appearing first in 1544, our present Litany has nourished millions of Anglicans the world over. Sadly however, the Litany has, in recent times, fallen into neglect. It is hoped that through a greater appreciation of the structure and meaning of this ancient service, its use may be revived, to the glory of God and the strengthening of his Church.

The word "litany" simply means "a prayer" or "an entreating". However, that distinctive character of "petition and response", which we associate with the Litany, has been its real meaning for centuries. The first litanies were composed as early as the fourth century. However, Holy Scripture contains several examples of litanies which were used long before the time of Christ. (Joel 2:17 has often been pointed to as such an example.) In the early Christian Church, litanies were often used in times of crisis, such as during floods or other natural disasters. We might guess that they would also have provided comfort during times of persecution and strife. Litanies were so important to the early Church that the great Anglican writer Richard Hooker remarked, "Litanies were then the very strength, stay, and comfort of God's Church". Throughout the Middle Ages also, litanies were used regularly in every portion of the Church, with the exact form varying from region to region.

It was during a period of great religious upheaval that King Henry VIII directed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to compose a litany in English for the Anglican Church. The purpose of this litany was to bring unity to the Church in light of, "the miserable state of all Christendom, being at present... so plagued with hatreds and dissensions". Accordingly, the first English litany was published in 1544 and met with great success. So popular was this English litany that the demand increased for more prayers in the language of the people. This movement culminated in the publication of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549.

The Litany that we have in our present Prayer Book is basically the same as the one composed by Cranmer in 1544, although slight changes have been made at different times. The Prayer Book provides the follow-

ing instructions for its use:

> The Litany should always be used at least once a month on a Sunday, and is commended for use on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Rogation Days.

Although intended for public worship, the Litany can also be of great use in one's personal devotional life. Countless Anglicans over the centuries have turned to it in times of illness, anxiety, or other trials.

In composing this litany, Archbishop Cranmer sought above all things, to be true to the Word of God. Thus, every clause of the Litany is based upon some passage of Holy Scripture. In addition, Cranmer drew his material from across the ages of the Christian tradition. Some of our present Litany is based upon prayers of the early Church, while other inspiration comes from litanies used during the Middle Ages. As well, the ideas of many members of other reformed denominations were used. The intention was to produce a litany that would answer the spiritual needs of all men and women.

Unlike all other services in the Prayer Book, the Litany is entirely made up of prayers. That is to say, there are no canticles, Scripture readings or Psalms in the Litany. It is entirely devoted to directly addressing God, according to several forms of prayer. To use the Litany is to believe that God listens to our prayers and that he directly affects the ordering of our lives in this world. As Canon W.C.E. Newbolt said years ago:

> Before we kneel down to say a prayer like this, it means that we have made up our minds that God hears, and that God knows, and that God loves; he is no creature of human fancy, Who sits aloof from man... unmoved, untouched, unthoughtful, as the awful wail of this suffering world beats against the fast-closed door of Heaven. It is a prayer addressed to the One Who has power to do all things, and the heart to listen to any petition, however humble.

Thus, in the Litany, we bring before God our every need, in a systematic and reverent way. In effect, the Litany allows us to organise our scattered prayers into one orderly prayer. In this way, we can join with our Christian brothers and sisters in bringing our common prayers before the Lord.

The Litany has, therefore, a very definite and carefully constructed order. Rather than restricting the Holy Spirit's action in our prayers, it allows us to more fully enter into the Spirit of God. By disciplining our

souls, we are less likely to be distracted by passing thoughts. In order to aid in this practice of discipline, the Litany is made up of Invocations, Deprecations, Obsecrations, Intercessions, and concluding prayers. Each of these parts plays a vital role in the interwoven structure of the Litany.

The first section of the Litany, the Invocations, prepares the way and sets the tone for all that is to follow. Fundamentally, the Litany is prayer to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As the eighteenth century Anglican author, Charles Wheatly observes,

> This invocation is the sum of the whole Litany, being a particular address for mercy, first to each person in the glorious Trinity, and then to them all together.

All our prayers depend upon the mercy of God and thus we begin the Litany by a most solemn invocation of the Holy Trinity for mercy towards us. By faith in this divine mercy, we are able to make the next step in our approach to God.

The next section of the Litany, the Deprecations, begins with the prayer, "Remember not, Lord, our offences...". The word "deprecation" means a prayer for the deliverance *from* something. Thus, the deprecations generally begin "From all...", and end, "Good Lord, deliver us." This section of the Litany can be regarded as an expansion of the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil". We ask that our former sins might not be remembered before we proceed to be delivered from future evils. The deprecations move from the most general plea (for deliverance from sin and mischief) to the more particular evils from which we wish to be protected. The order of the prayers in the deprecations is most carefully worked out. First, and most naturally, we pray about those evils which begin closest to home. Thus in the first two verses we pray for deliverance from the various sins that threaten our souls. All of those temptations that attack us, from pride to uncharitableness, are covered. Next, we pray for protection against those perils that threaten us from outside. In this, we ask God's mercy in deliverance from natural disasters and from human wickedness. The final section of the deprecations pleads that we might be spared those evils which afflict human society. Such things as conspiracy, heresy (purposefully holding beliefs contrary to the teaching of the Church), and schism (dividing the Body of Christ), are mentioned here.

The next three petitions, which all begin with the word "By" are called the Obsecrations. This word means that we are seeking God's mercy "by

virtue of something". That by which we are appealing is, in this case, the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each one of these verses brings forward particular aspects of Christ's work as assisting us in our troubles. All of Jesus' life, from his "holy Incarnation", through his "Agony and bloody Sweat", to his "Coming again in glory", is seen as vitally important to our salvation. As we pray these obsecrations, we ought to consider in our minds the various parts of our Lord's life that we are naming. At each point, we ought to be thankful to God. We ought to meditate, when we have some time, upon the meaning of each of our Saviour's acts. As we come to understand the significance of every moment of his life, we shall grow in our appreciation of God's love for us. He has so cared for his children that our salvation has been obtained by this wonderful means. There was nothing accidental in Christ's life. Everything that he did was part of God's plan to save us. This section concludes with a prayer for deliverance not *from* tribulation, but *in* all times of tribulation. There will certainly be times that we will be tried. Therefore, we do not only pray to be delivered from evil but also to be protected when we are surrounded by evil. We are reminded that we are as close to evil in times of prosperity, when everything appears to be going well, as we are when we are in hard times.

From our own needs, we turn in the next part of the Litany to considering the needs of others. The Intercessions begin with a confession of our own sinfulness. By this, we are reminded that we can pray for others only by the mercy of God. The Lord takes our love, stained as it is with our own selfishness and pride, and directs it as it should be, to the assistance of our brothers and sisters. Thus, we can intercede for others, our weak love strengthened by the grace of God. This is the principle that lies at the heart of all Christian prayer.

As was the case with the three previous sections of the Litany, the Intercessions are ordered in a natural and logical way. The Rev. Mr. Wheatly remarks upon,

> the admirable method and order of these intercessions, which are so exact, and natural, that every degree of men follow in their due place; and, at the same time, so comprehensive, that we can think of no sorts of persons but who are enumerated, and for whom all those things are asked which all and every of them stand in need of.

We pray for both the Church and state, with the Church coming first,

as is proper. Following the prayers for the Queen (who here represents the state), we turn to more particular classes of people. The ministers of the Church (bishops, priests, and deacons) are prayed for and then the ministers of the government ("those set in authority"). We pray for other aspects of our society as well (judges, the armed forces, teachers, etc.). Following all of these general categories, the Intercessions turn to particular needs. All who are disadvantaged in their souls are included along with those whose outward circumstances are unfavourable. Should any person have been omitted, for whom we ought to have prayed, the petition "To have mercy upon all men", is added. "Men" here refers to persons, male and female. To encourage us to pray in a spirit of love, we pray for our enemies as well. The Intercessions conclude with a prayer that we might have true repentance. Unless our own lives are directed toward God, our intercessions can have no effect. This forms a fitting conclusion for this section of the Litany.

The final part of the Litany is made up of concluding versicles and responses and various prayers. These prayers serve to gather together all that we have prayed for during the course of the Litany. We thus pray to the Lord to hear us and to have mercy upon us. All of our prayers are collected and presented to God as we say the Lord's Prayer. This perfect form of prayer, given to us by Christ himself, is the summation and perfection of all Christian prayer. Following this the Litany concludes (if it is being used as a separate service) with the Prayer of St. John Chrysostom and the Grace.

In the Litany then, we have an ordered and comprehensive means by which we can offer public prayer to God, for us and for all people. By using this form of prayer, we join our souls to millions of our brothers and sisters who have gone before us. Like all other forms of prayer, however, the Litany requires attentiveness and a spirit of devotion. Without these, it becomes empty words. To conclude with the words of Canon Newbolt:

> Certainly, if we believed more, and loved more, and tried more, we should not find the Litany so difficult a devotion as it is; for here we have brought before us, and put upon our lips when we approach God, several things which our indolence might tempt us to neglect — prayer for others, prayer for ourselves, a consecration of all life's joys and troubles, by bringing them, one by one, before the never-wearied tenderness of God.

The Holy Communion

The service of Holy Communion, instituted by our Lord himself at the last Supper to be a memorial of his body broken and his blood shed for us, has always been celebrated by Christians in response to his commandment that we should "do this in remembrance" of him. There are many references to the service in the New Testament (see especially 1 Corinthians 11:23-29), and many other early Christian writings give us explanations of the meaning of the service, and examples of the forms of service actually used. It is clear that from the very beginning, this service has been the central act of Christian worship, in which, celebrating the Cross and Passion of our Saviour, we find "means of grace and hope of glory". Because Jesus "gave thanks" at the Last Supper, and because we join in thanksgiving for the redemption through his Cross, we sometimes call the service by its ancient Greek name, "Eucharist", which simply means "thanksgiving".

While the essence of the service remains always the same, its form naturally varied considerably in different times and places, and the form of the "Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist" as we find it in our 1962 Canadian revision of the Prayer Book is the result of many centuries of liturgical development. Some knowledge of that history will help us understand more fully the meaning of the service.

Our Prayer Book service descends, through several revisions, from "the Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion Commonly Called the Masse" in the first English Prayer Book of 1549. Archbishop Cranmer, the chief architect of that rite, paid close attention to ancient Christian texts, and to proposals made by continental Reformers (both Protestant and Catholic); but his work was basically a translation and revision of the medieval Latin service used in England, as found especially in the Sarum Missal, which was, in turn, a variant of the so-called "Western" rite, common throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, and tracing its origins back to the early Christian centuries. The principles of that revision are explained in the original "Preface" of 1549, which is printed, (with slight alterations made in 1552 and 1662, with the spelling modernized), in our present Prayer Book on pages 715-17.

Archbishop Cranmer and his colleagues had the delicate task of balancing the claims of ancient catholic liturgical tradition with the ideals

of the Reformation. That is to say, the service had to be translated from Latin into English, and revised, without unnecessary disruption, in such a way as to make it understandable to the people, to ensure its conformity to the clear Word of God in Holy Scripture, and to encourage devout participation, edification, and more frequent reception of Communion. To many Reformers, including Cranmer himself, the 1549 book seemed too conservative, and it was quickly followed by the Prayer Book of 1552. Subsequent revisions (including our own of 1962) represent, in general, modifications and enrichments of the 1552 service, tending generally in the direction of the more traditional service of 1549. Thus, the history of the Holy Communion service typifies the character of Anglicanism as both Catholic and Reformed: preserving what is good in the centuries-old tradition of Christian witness, and at the same time holding that tradition always in obedience to the Word of God in Holy Scripture.

As we turn now to the service of Holy Communion, as we have it in our Book of Common Prayer, we should first notice the preliminary instructions (called "rubrics" because they were traditionally printed in red) on page 66, which remind us of our duty to participate frequently, "after due preparation", in this sacrament. What is meant by "due preparation", is explained partly in these rubrics, more fully in the Exhortations (pages 88-92), and in the Catechism, where we are told that those who come to the Lord's Supper must

> "examine themselves, whether they truly repent of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead the new life; have a living faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men".
>
> *(Book of Common Prayer, page 552)*

The opening prayers of the service, on page 67, were introduced in 1549, from the Sarum Missal, where they formed part of the priest's private preparation for the service. The Lord's Prayer here, together with its "Amen", is still said by the priest alone; but the Collect for Purity has become a prayer of preparation for the whole congregation, in which all join by saying the "Amen". The Ten Commandments (introduced in 1552), for which we now usually substitute our Lord's Summary of the Law (page 69), remind us of the holiness of God, into whose presence we have come, and of our duty of moral and spiritual purity, in humble obedience to his will. We respond with the ancient Christian litany, "Lord,

have mercy upon us". Thus concludes our common public preparation for the service: we come in humble obedience to God's will, trusting in his mercy to purify our hearts and minds that we may be fit partakers of the holy gifts he promises.

The Collect for the Queen (page 70) was introduced at this point in the service of 1549, and has now been made optional. No doubt the prominence of this prayer in the old English Prayer Books had much to do with the special relationship of the established Church to the Crown, and the political turmoil of the times. While we are still in duty bound to pray for our Christian monarch, we do that later in the service, and therefore this collect is nowadays often omitted.

We proceed to what are called the "Propers of the Day", that is to say, the collect, Epistle, and Gospel especially appointed for the particular Sunday or holy day we are celebrating. The origin of the term "collect" is uncertain; it may mean the prayer that takes place when the congregation has gathered together (i.e. "collected"), or it may mean the prayer which gathers our intercessions, or the theme of the day, in one common prayer. Some of these collects are relatively modern compositions, but they are mostly very ancient prayers, known as early as the fifth or sixth century, or even earlier. They came into the Prayer Book from the Sarum Missal, as did the similarly ancient selection of Scripture readings for the Epistle and Gospel. From time to time (e.g. in our 1962 revision), a few of the readings have been altered, by lengthening or shortening a lesson or occasionally substituting a new one for an old one, but basically, the pattern is still the ancient one. These "Propers" present the Church's message from the Scriptures for the particular day, and should be studied thoughtfully, in order to understand their common theme. Arranged according to the Christian Year (from Advent through Trinity Season), they set before us the pattern of Christian truth, and instruct us in the development of moral and spiritual life.

Our service treats the reading of the Gospel lesson with special reverence, because it proclaims the words and deeds of Christ himself. Therefore, we are directed to stand when it is read, and make the joyful acclamation, "Glory be to thee, O Lord", and "Praise be to thee, O Christ". Sometimes, there is a hymn, or Psalm (see pages l-liv for proper Psalms) between the Epistle and Gospel. It is called the "Gradual", because traditionally it was sung as the deacon went to the step (Latin: *gradus*) to read

the Gospel.

Now, having been instructed by the Word of God in Holy Scripture, we make an affirmation of our faith, in the Nicene Creed (page 71). The word "creed" comes from the Latin *credo*, which means "I believe". This statement of Christian faith, a summary of essential truths revealed to us in Holy Scripture, comes from ancient councils of the Church (Nicea, 325 A.D.; Constantinople, 381 A.D.). It is carefully, and sometimes very technically worded, because it was originally a defence against subtle and dangerous heresies. For instance, its precise statements about Jesus as the "only-begotten Son of God", etc., were a refutation of the Arian heresy, which said that Jesus was "like" God, but less than God and therefore not really God at all. The Creed insists that Jesus is "of one substance with the Father". These precise statements of Christian doctrine, although not always easy to understand, are still vitally important, because the false opinions are still prevalent in the modern world.

After the Creed comes the sermon, in which the preacher seeks to help us understand more fully the Scripture lessons we have heard, and the faith we have affirmed. The sermon should also help us to relate those truths to our own personal circumstances, and thus help us to grow in our own moral and spiritual life. The sermon concludes the "instructional" part of the service (sometimes called the "Liturgy of the Word"), and encourages our "living faith", as we now go on to celebrate the Sacrament.

The Offertory (page 72-74) has two elements: our "oblations", or offerings of bread and wine to be consecrated; and our "alms", which are our charitable gifts for the relief of the poor, and generally for the financial support of the Church's work. Associated with the Offertory is the Intercession (page 75-76). Together with our gifts ("alms and oblations") which represent our life and work, we offer our intercessions for the universal Church, praying that God will inspire it with "the spirit of truth, unity, and concord". The prayer is comprehensive: first, it calls to mind the universal Church, all God's people, all nations and their rulers, (especially Elizabeth our Queen); then, all bishops, priests, and deacons, (especially our bishop), and all congregations (especially this congregation here present); all in special need; remembering finally the faithful departed, praying that the whole Church (we with them) may be partakers of God's heavenly kingdom. Originally, this prayer came later in the service, as part of the Prayer of Consecration, (as in the old Latin service

in the Sarum Missal), and was moved to its present position, in 1552. In this position, it corresponds to the "Great Intercession", a feature of some ancient Christian liturgies.

The first part of the Holy Communion service, then, consists of instruction in the Christian faith, by way of the Epistle and Gospel lessons and the sermon, and the affirmation of that faith in the Creed and the prayers. Now, in the second part of the service, we proceed to the actual celebration of the Sacrament which our Lord himself ordained and commanded us to continue. In the early centuries of Christianity, there was a very clear division between these two parts of the service: those who were preparing to become Christians would be present for the first part, receiving instruction, while only those already baptized and confirmed would remain for the second part. In later centuries, when it was assumed that the whole community was fully Christian, that division in the service tended to disappear.

The English Reformers, concerned to encourage more frequent reception of Communion by the people, and more serious preparation for its worthy reception, reintroduced such a division in the service. They provided (in 1552) that if there were none to receive the Sacrament with the priest, the service should end after the Intercession (in which case, the service is usually called "Ante-Communion"). Only if there were to be communicants would the second (sacramental) part of the service be said, and it would include a corporate, penitential preparation of the communicants. Thus, they introduced the Exhortations (pages 88-92), which, shortened and revised, are still directed to be used at certain times. These Exhortations speak of the importance of receiving the Sacrament, and of what is required for worthy reception. The Reformers also introduced the Invitation ("Ye that do truly and earnestly repent"), the Confession and Absolution, and the "Comfortable Words" (pages 76-78), as a penitential preparation for Communion.

The medieval service included Confession and Absolution, but only as a part of the preparation of the ministers; members of the congregation communicated rarely, and when they did so, were required to make a private confession beforehand. The Reformers (first in 1548, in the Latin service, and then in the 1549 English Prayer Book) provided for public Confession and Absolution (and the Prayer of Humble Access, page 83), at the time of Communion. In the 1552 Prayer Book, the Confession and

Absolution, and the Comfortable Words (giving scriptural assurance of forgiveness) were moved to their present position, as a preparation for all who intend to participate in the sacramental part of the service. This penitential element in our Prayer Book service is very emphatic, echoing St. Paul's solemn warning (1 Corinthians 11:28-29):

> Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Our common preparation (in faith and repentance) now completed, with our hearts lightened by assurance of God's forgiveness of our sins, we move on to the Thanksgiving and Consecration (pages 78-83). The *Sursum Corda* ("Lift up your hearts"), the Proper Preface (relating our thanksgiving to special occasions in the Christian Year), the *Sanctus* ("Holy, Holy, Holy") and the *Benedictus* ("Blessed is he that cometh") are very ancient elements of the service. We are reminded that as we draw near the sacramental Presence of our Lord, in thankful adoration of the great work which God has wrought for our redemption, we are joined with the whole Church, in heaven and earth, "at all times, and in all places", "with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven". The *Benedictus* is, of course, the cry of the Hebrew multitude on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:9), welcoming the promised King, who goes on to the sacrifice of Calvary. Thus, it is a fitting anticipation of the consecration of the Sacrament ordained, as the Catechism says (page 551), "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ". The glory of God fills heaven and earth, but is manifest, above all, in the Cross.

The great climax of the whole service is the Prayer of Consecration (pages 82-83). The original form of this prayer (in 1549) followed quite clearly the old Latin form, but in 1552 it was much shortened and simplified, by moving the intercessions earlier in the service, and moving the latter part of the prayer ("Prayer of Oblation") to a position after the Communion. The intention of the Reformers, in reducing the complexity of the old Prayer of Consecration, was to emphasise as directly and forcefully as possible the meaning of the Sacrament as a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ: "His one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." They wished to focus as sharply as possible on the

essential meaning, and to remove anything which might seem to distract from that focus. Archbishop Cranmer expressed the point very clearly:

> The priest should declare the death and passion of Christ, and all the people should look upon the cross in the mount of Calvary... And this is the priest and people's sacrifice, not to be propitiators for sin... but to worship continually in mystery what was once offered for the price of sin.

Modern Anglican Prayer Book revisers have generally felt that the 1552 Prayer of Consecration was too stark and abrupt (ending with the Words of Institution) and have re-inserted the "Prayer of Oblation" (revised) into it (as in our 1962 Canadian Prayer Book; the part beginning, "Wherefore, O Father", page 82). Nevertheless, the emphasis still clearly remains upon Christ's sacrifice for us, and upon his own words and actions at the Last Supper, which he commanded us to continue. As St. Paul says, we "show forth his death until he come". The meaning of the commemoration is beautifully expressed in William Bright's well-known Communion hymn:

> *And now, O Father, mindful of the love*
> *That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree,*
> *And having with us him that pleads above,*
> *We here present, we here spread forth to thee*
> *That only Offering perfect in thine eyes,*
> *The one true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.*

The *Pax* ("The peace of the Lord", page 83) naturally follows the consecration, because it is Christ's sacrifice alone which makes our peace with God. The Prayer of Humble Access ("We do not presume", page 83), which was already part of the "Communion devotions" added to the Latin service in 1548, allows us one final moment of spiritual preparation before we receive the holy Sacrament of our Lord's Body given for us, and his Blood shed for us on Calvary.

At the time of Communion, the traditional hymn, the *Agnus Dei* ("O Lamb of God"), and other appropriate hymns may be sung. The Sacrament is administered with a form of words which is actually double. The first part, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ...", "The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...", was a traditional form, used in the 1549 Prayer Book; the second part, "Take and eat this...", "Drink this...", was the form substituted in 1552. In the Prayer Book of 1559, the two forms were simply

joined together, combining two Anglican emphases: first, the objective reality of Christ's presence in the Sacrament; second, the importance of our spiritual reception of the Sacrament, "by faith, with thanksgiving".

"Communion" means, in the first place, our union with our Lord in this Sacrament; and it also implies our union with one another, as members of Christ's Body. Archbishop Cranmer expressed the thought beautifully:

> For like as bread is made of a great number of grains of corn, ground, baken, and so joined together, that thereof is made one loaf; and an infinite number of grapes be pressed together in one vessel, and thereof is made wine; like-wise is the whole multitude of true Christian people spiritually joined, first to Christ, and then among themselves together in one faith, one Baptism, one Holy Spirit, one knot and bond of love... As bread and wine which we do eat be turned into our flesh and blood, even so be all faithful Christians spiritually turned into the body of Christ, and so be joined unto Christ and also together among themselves, that they do make one mystical body of Christ, as St. Paul saith: "We be one bread and one body, as many as be partakers of one bread and one cup."

The Communion is appropriately followed by prayers of thanksgiving. The Lord's Prayer, which traditionally preceded the Communion, was placed here in 1552, with its "doxology" ("For thine is the kingdom...") added; and it is followed by a prayer (page 85), in which, giving thanks for "spiritual food", we offer ourselves, as members of Christ's Body, "to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice". This prayer is followed by the ancient hymn of thanksgiving, *Gloria in Excelsis* (page 86). The traditional place for this hymn was at the beginning of the service, but there can be no doubt that it serves also as a magnificent conclusion. Perhaps the Reformers, in placing it here, were thinking of the "hymn" which concluded the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30).

The service concludes with the Blessing, which speaks of the peace, knowledge and love which must fill the hearts and minds of all who faithfully share in this holy Sacrament. For, as Archbishop Cranmer expressed it,

> In the receiving of the holy supper of our Lord, we be put in remembrance of his death, and of the whole mystery of our

redemption... Wherefore, in this sacrament (if it be rightly received with a true faith) we be assured that our sins be forgiven, and the league of peace and the testament of God is confirmed between him and us, so that whoever by a true faith doth eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood, hath everlasting life by him.

The Christian Year

The Christian Year is the cycle of Sundays, special seasons, and saints' days which the Church has designed for the celebration of the great events of our Lord's life, and the setting forth of the major truths of our Christian religion. The Christian Year proclaims the Gospel of God's love and teaches us all the doctrines of Christianity, from day to day and week to week. In conjunction with the Calendar (found in our Prayer Books on pages ix-xii) and the Table of Lessons (pages xvi-xlvii), the Christian Year provides us with a practical means of bringing each day and period of our lives into a direct relation to the Christian faith. As we move through the wonderfully ordered seasons of the Church Year we get an appreciation of the entire breadth of the religion which we profess.

God's people in Old Testament times observed sacred seasons and holy days, as appointed by the Lord. These holy times included the Feast of Tabernacles (see Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:13-15), the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:23, 27-32 and Numbers 29:7-11), the Passover (Exodus 12) and Pentecost (Deuteronomy 16:9). The holy days and seasons of Old Testament times pointed towards the better things to come, which found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

In course of time, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born and lived here on earth as our Saviour. Christ took some of the Old Testament festivals, such as the Passover; and gave them a new meaning and purpose. After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost. From that day on, the Christian Church began to grow. The life of the Church found its truest expression in worship and service. The Christian Year grew out of the organised worship of the early Christian Church. It was a wonderfully natural development. The great Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost arose to commemorate in a distinct manner, three most important events. Gradually the observance of other holy seasons grew and developed and in addition, special days were set aside to commemorate the saints.

The Church Year is divided into two main parts. The first part extends from Advent to Trinity Sunday, and is mainly concerned with the great "facts" of our religion, especially the historical details of the life of Christ. It is the portion of the Christian Year that deals with fact and faith. The second main part of the Church Year extends from Trinity Sunday to

Advent, and is intended to emphasize practical instruction on the duties of Christian life. It is the season of conduct, and of the practice of holy living. It is only by means of the faith, acquired in the first part of the Church Year, that the practice of our religion can be implemented in the second half. Faith and works (or "Creed and Deed") are thus united.

The saints' days, which are scattered throughout the Christian Year, commemorate the lives of many of those who have followed Christ. We remember in particular, the Apostles, those whose lives showed forth the saving power of God's grace. In the celebration of the festivals of the saints, we are provided with scriptural teaching and sound practical examples for own lives. Thus, the entire Christian Year is of great practical value. Providing us with a complete system of Christian teaching, it is a constant witness to the truths of our holy religion.

All that has been said above will be verified simply by examining the various seasons of the Church Year in order.

ADVENT

The Church Year begins with Advent, which sets before us the preparation for Christ's first coming and points forward to his second coming in glory. To many people, the Advent season simply marks the approach of Christmas. However, we should not neglect the full riches of the meaning of this holy season. The key word is "coming" (which is what "advent" means). We prepare to remember Christ's first coming at Christmas; we also proclaim the message of Christ's "second coming" at the end of time, as the Judge of all. Finally, the Advent season bids us to be mindful of God's coming to us now in our daily lives, especially through his Word and sacraments.

In times gone by, the emphasis of the season was on preparation for Christ's coming by penitence and fasting. In more recent times it has become customary to stress the joyful anticipation that also belongs to this season. Perhaps the truest attitude to take is one of happy expectancy combined with a serious and thoughtful consideration of the true meaning of Christmas. To this we might add a prayerful self-appraisal of our own souls, so that we might be ready to receive the King when he comes. As Christians we must try to counteract the shallow commercialism that characterizes the pre-Christmas season in our society. Our preparation for Christmas should be a *holy* one, bearing in mind the true meaning of this sacred time.

In the Book of Common Prayer, the collects, Epistles, and Gospels for the Advent season are all set around the theme of preparation. The first Sunday in Advent stresses the duty of preparing earnestly, as we pray that we may "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light". The solemn warnings from Romans 13 and the Gospel story (Matthew 21) about the people of Jerusalem preparing to welcome Christ, help us to set the scene for our own preparation. The second Sunday emphasizes the way in which we are prepared by the Word of God. The Epistle contains the words,

> Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

and in the Gospel the Lord assures us that, "my words shall not pass away". In light of this, we often refer to this as "Bible Sunday". The third Sunday is about the Church's role in preparation for the coming of Christ. On this day we think of the ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons. The fourth Sunday is concerned with preparation by Christ himself. We learn that the inward and spiritual presence of Christ is needed if we are to be ready for his outward and visible coming. We are bidden to "rejoice" because "the Lord is at hand". The season of Advent is characterized by expectation and preparation, joy and repentance.

CHRISTMAS

Our word "Christmas" comes from the Old English "Christes Masse", or Christ's Mass. The season begins, of course, with Christmas Day and lasts until January 5, the Eve of Epiphany. The liturgical colour for Christmas is white, symbolic of purity and joy, and used on all great festivals of Christ.

Christmas is a tremendously significant season. In the birth of the child of Bethlehem, God gave us the gift of himself. In Christ we see "Emmanuel" — God with us — the Word made flesh. All the Scripture readings for the Christmas season, appointed in the Book of Common Prayer, abound with a sense of holy awe and wonder at this glorious display of God's love. In the Christian Year, the Christmas season has a triple focus: the actual birth of Christ, the proclamation of this news to the shepherds, and the eternal Sonship of Jesus. This threefold emphasis is found in the appointed collects, Epistles, and Gospels for Christmas

and the Sunday after Christmas. The first set of Scripture readings for Christmas (page 105) emphasizes the eternity of the Son of God who became man for our sakes. The second set of lessons (page 107) tells of Jesus' birth and the making known of that event to all mankind in the persons of the shepherds. The proper readings appointed for the Sunday after Christmas recall the actual birth of Jesus. The entire Church season of Christmas should be a twelve-day period of joy and thanksgiving for the outpouring of God's love in the gift of the Christ child.

EPIPHANY

The Epiphany season begins on January 6 with the celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. The word "epiphany" means "appearance" or "becoming manifest". We begin the Epiphany season by commemorating the visit of the Magi (wise men) to the infant Christ Child (see the Epistle and Gospel for the Epiphany, pages 117-118). The first showing of the Christ Child was to God's chosen people, the Jews, represented by the shepherds of Bethlehem. The second showing forth of Christ is to the Gentile world, (the rest of the world), represented here by the Magi. The Epiphany shows that God's plan of salvation is drawn upon the greatest lines possible. All barriers are broken down. Jesus is shown to be the Saviour of Jew and Gentile alike.

By long-standing tradition, the feast of the Epiphany has had a three-fold emphasis: the coming of the Wise Men, the Baptism of Jesus, and the first miracle of Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee. In our Prayer Book, these three times are represented by the readings for the Epiphany (page 117), the readings for the Baptism of our Lord (pages 119-121), and the Gospel for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany (page 125).

In these, as in all the readings throughout the Epiphany season, the theme is that in Jesus we see a showing forth of the glory of God in human form. Jesus is "God in man made manifest" (Hymn #96, *The Book of Common Praise*). In the Gospel for the First Sunday after the Epiphany (page 123), we see the wisdom of God displayed in the boy Jesus in the Temple. In the Gospel readings for the remainder of the Epiphany season, we see Christ's divine power in healing the sick man and calming the storm. The greatest testimony to our Lord's majesty is given in the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany in the description of his second coming at the end of time.

PRE-LENT

The Book of Common Prayer (pages 132 and following) appoints three Sundays before Lent. These are known by their ancient (and difficult to pronounce) names: Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima. The Latin names for these Sundays indicate that they are the seventieth, sixtieth, and fiftieth (approximately) days before Easter. This season is a preparation for the holy Lenten season of fasting and self-denial. Pre-Lent calls us back from our Christmas and Epiphany feasting and joy to a more serious and sober attitude. The Epistles and Gospels appointed for these three Sundays encourage us to reflect on the virtues that are necessary for holiness of life.

The final Sunday in Pre-Lent combines two related elements. In the Epistle, the greatest of all virtues is praised in the familiar words of St. Paul. This is intended to prepare us for our Lenten disciplines by providing us with a proper perspective. All duties that we might take up or all acts of self-denial we might perform only have value insomuch as they are inspired by charity. Without charity, our acts of self-discipline are merely vain exercises, noisy self-delusions. The Gospel lesson prepares us for what lies ahead, at the end of the coming Lenten season. With the Twelve, we are told of the approaching Passion of our Lord. All of our self-denials and spiritual exercises, no matter how difficult, are as nothing compared to the sufferings of our Lord. We are taught in these lessons, (and in the collect), that our salvation lies not in our works, but in charity, which is a gift from God.

LENT

Our word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lecten*, meaning "the time of the lengthening of days", or simply, "spring". Lent, as we know it, extends for forty days (not including the Sundays) beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week and is set apart for special emphasis.

Lent is a period of solemn preparation for the great festival of Easter. The purpose of Lent is to renew and strengthen our spiritual lives and to deepen our faith. It is a time to repent of our past sins and to consecrate our lives anew to God's service. The spirit of Lent is not necessarily gloomy or sad. A firm resolve to walk in holiness of life and to practice self-examination can lead to an inner peace and joy. The Exhortation

found in the Penitential Service (page 611) tells us that Lent is a time for self-examination and repentance, prayer, fasting and self-denial, and reading and meditation upon God's Holy Word.

The collects, Epistles and Gospels for the season of Lent are suitably chosen to instruct us in the meaning of this holy period. On Ash Wednesday, we are taught the duty and nature of fasting, as the expression of earnest penitence and special prayer. On this day, we especially repent of our sins and ask God's forgiveness. The first three Sundays of Lent teach us about the various types of temptation with which we may be confronted as well as the reality of Satan's power.

The message of Lent unfolds in two parts. Lent begins with the consideration of sin, but ends with teaching about the character of God's mercy in pardoning us through the Cross. The transition between these two great themes takes place on the Fourth Sunday in Lent. The collect, Epistle, and Gospel for that day are concerned with God's grace and the spiritual refreshment which God gives us. The Gospel story about Jesus feeding the five thousand reminds us that he is the spiritual food for our souls.

On the Fifth Sunday in Lent (also known as Passion Sunday) we are taught the doctrine of the Cross. On Good Friday we will remember the historical event of our Lord's crucifixion and death, but on Passion Sunday, before commemorating this awesome event, we are taught its significance. The Epistle (Hebrews 9) teaches us that Christ's death was the atoning sacrifice for sin. The Gospel reminds us of the "cup of suffering" which Christ would drink and contains the words, "the Son of Man came... to give his life a ransom for many".

HOLY WEEK

We should enter into Holy Week with repentance and devotion as we relive, in reverent imagination, those momentous events of long ago which brought about our salvation. On Palm Sunday, we share the joy of the crowds long ago welcoming Jesus to the city of Jerusalem. In spirit, we eat and drink with him at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. On Good Friday, we follow his footsteps to Calvary, and see him shedding his blood for us, in his one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. On Holy Saturday we quietly await the joyful news of his resurrection. Then on Easter Day, the joyful news of Christ's resurrection bursts afresh upon the world — CHRIST IS RISEN!

Each day of Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Good Friday, the Book of Common Prayer presents readings from the Gospels which set forth, in painful detail, the story of our Lord's passion and death. On Good Friday, we especially remember the actual day of Christ's crucifixion. Good Friday is the most solemn day of the Church Year, when we feel sorrow for our sins which crucified our Lord. With this sorrowful repentance is combined a deep thankfulness for the redemption won for us on this day, so many years ago.

EASTER

The sadness of Good Friday and the quiet expectancy of Holy Saturday lead us to the joy of Easter — the greatest of Christian festivals. The Resurrection throws the magnificent light of understanding over Christ's life and death. The Resurrection is Christ's victory over death and so accomplishes our salvation, which was begun with the Incarnation and sealed by the Crucifixion. Without the Resurrection, "our faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Thus Easter stands at the very summit of the Christian Year.

Easter Day is the first of the forty days of the Easter season, symbolic of the forty days that our Lord appeared after his Resurrection before he ascended into heaven. Throughout these forty days, we continue to celebrate with joy the Resurrection of Christ and its implications for us. The Resurrection holds out the hope of everlasting life to the Christian believer ("Because I live, you shall live also", John 14:19). The Epistle for Easter Day (page 183) reminds us that we are to mortify (put to death) our evil desires, and to rise to newness of life, here and now, by setting our minds "on things above, not on earthly things". The Sundays following Easter set before us the meaning and character of this new life in Christ.

ASCENSION

On the fortieth day after Easter Sunday, the Church observes Ascension Day. This is a commemoration of another great event in human history. On the Day of Ascension our Lord was taken up from this world into the glory of heaven. Our Lord Jesus has ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father. Human nature in Jesus Christ has taken its place in the Kingdom. There, beside his Father, our Lord continually prays for us as "our only mediator and advocate".

PENTECOST

Pentecost (or Whitsunday) is the fiftieth day after Easter. This great festival commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. According to the promise of Christ, this divine presence is to remain with the Church always. The Scripture readings appointed for Whitsunday and Whitsun Week all focus around the person, mission, and work of the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Holy Trinity. With this Sunday, we complete the first part of the Church Year in which we have followed the course by which God redeemed us and sanctified us.

TRINITY SUNDAY

Trinity Sunday is the day appointed for us to think about one of the greatest and most important doctrines of the Christian faith. God has revealed himself to us as the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday marks the centre point of the Christian Year. It sums up the first half of the Christian Year, during which we have considered the mighty acts of the Holy Trinity. Also, Trinity Sunday, as the first of the long Trinity series, looks forward to the godly life which must be lived by those who have received the full revelation of God. Thus, in the Lesson, "a door is opened in heaven", and we are allowed to lift our thoughts to the very nature of God. In the Gospel, we are reminded that the new life of the Christian which leads ultimately to that heavenly vision, begins with Baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (see Matthew 28:19).

TRINITY SEASON

The Trinity Season occupies about one half of the Christian Year, that is, from Trinity Sunday through to Advent. The length of the Trinity Season varies from twenty-three to twenty-seven Sundays. It is a distinctively Anglican custom to name these Sundays "such-and-such *after Trinity*". This dates back to the very ancient times of the Christian Church. By this, we are reminded that it is through the grace initially received at our Baptism that we begin our Christian lives.

Trinity Season is intended to emphasize practical instruction in the duties of a Christian life. The Gospel readings for these Sundays are drawn from the parables and miracles of our Lord. By reading these, we are intended to apply the teaching and example of Christ in our own daily

lives. Similarly the Epistle readings emphasize those charitable duties which we are called to perform as Christians. Sunday by Sunday we are instructed in the Christian virtues, such as faith, hope, charity, patience, forgiveness and so on.

SAINTS' DAYS

The Book of Common Prayer sets forth a Calendar of Festivals on pages ix-xii. The ones which are "appointed to be observed" are printed in heavy type. These major feasts are provided with collects, Epistles, and Gospels on pages 260-301. The observance of these "Saints' Days" and other holy days goes back many centuries.

We remember the saints and celebrate on special days their memory for a variety of reasons. In commemorating the saints we are thanking God for the works of grace that he has performed in the lives of men and women through the ages. We turn primarily to the central figures of the New Testament, in whom God placed particular blessings in order to perform special work. Thus, the Apostles and the Virgin Mary all have their places in the Calendar of the Saints. As well, we celebrate special events in the life of our Lord such as the Transfiguration (August 6). In remembering the saints, we pray that God may so fill us with his Holy Spirit that we may follow the example of them and together with them inherit his heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray that all Church members will come more and more to appreciate the Christian Year. By moving through it year after year, we grow steadily in the Faith. The Christian Year sets before us, in a well-ordered fashion, all the truth of the Christian religion. Thus, we are taught both what we ought to believe and how we ought to live.

The Psalter

A young man once asked the 7th century Egyptian monk Abba Philimon, "Why, Father, do you find more joy in the Psalms than in any other part of divine Scripture?" He replied,

> My son, God has impressed the power of the Psalms on my poor soul as he did on the soul of the prophet David. I cannot be separated from the sweetness of the visions about which they speak: they embrace all Scripture.

Here in Abba Philimon's answer, we find the secret of the timeless attractiveness of the Psalms to all those who turn to them. Their power lies in their "embracing all of Scripture". By this, they cover the whole range of the relations between God and man. This great strength, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has led the Church to always give a prominent place to the Psalms in the worship of Almighty God.

From the opening, "Blessed is the man..." (Psalm 1:1), to the closing, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6), the Psalms sing to us of a living, active relationship between God and man. Like all good poetry, the soul of man is revealed to us and like all Scripture, the ways of God are made known also. The Psalms have been described as,

> the prayers of the Old Testament in which God inspired the feeling that his children ought to have towards him and the words they ought to use when speaking to him. They were recited by Jesus himself, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the early martyrs. The Christian Church has adopted them unchanged for her official prayer.
>
> (*The Jerusalem Bible*, "Introduction to the Psalms")

For those who like to categorize, the Psalms, very broadly speaking, can be divided into three literary types: 1) hymns, 2) entreaties, and 3) thanksgivings. Those which can be listed as hymns are: Psalms 8, 9, 19, 29, 33, 46-48, 76, 84, 87, 93, 96-100, 103-106, 113, 114, 117, 122, 135, 136, 145-150. Generally speaking, this type of Psalm has an invitation to praise, worship, thank or bless God at the beginning and gives reasons for this praise such as: 1) the wonders of God in nature, 2) the wonders of God in his act of creation, and 3) the wonders of God in human history. Usually, they conclude with an expression of hope for future blessings.

The second main group of Psalms, the "entreaties", are addressed directly to God, with an appeal to him for help. Various misfortunes are generally recounted in the body of the Psalm, with an appeal for deliverance. Many of these Psalms (12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 106, 123, 129, and 137) concern general catastrophes that have befallen or are about to befall Israel. Still other entreaties are addressed to the Lord in relation to individual problems and difficulties. These more "personal" Psalms include 3, 5-7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 38, 42, 43, 51, 54-57, 59, 63, 64, 69-71, 77, 86, 102, 120, 130, and 140-143.

The third general group of Psalms are those which may be called Psalms of thanksgiving. These are usually identified as Psalms 18, 21, 30, 33, 34, 40, 65-68, 92, 116, 118, 124, 129, 138, and 144. These Psalms may speak to us, as may the other two categories, in different ways according to the situations in which we find ourselves.

As well as being categorised according to their literary types, the Psalms have traditionally been divided into five "books" as a parallel to the first five books of the Old Testament (called the Pentateuch). These five "books" are: Psalms 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; and 107-150. Also, certain of the Psalms have been grouped together around a single theme, such as the Seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143), the lmprecatory Psalms, which invoke the divine vengeance (58, 68:21-23, 69:23-29, 109:5-19, and 137:7-9), and the Songs of Ascent (120-134). Through the course of these fifteen Psalms, the soul itself "ascends" to "the courts of the house of our God" (Psalm 134:2). There are other varieties of Psalms such as the "alphabetical Psalms", so called because each verse or group of verses begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 provides an example of this pattern.

This categorization of the Psalms gives us a hint of the vast range of the relationships between God and man expressed in these holy songs. The great 17th century English preacher John Donne expressed it this way:

> The Psalms are the manna of the Church. As Manna tasted to every man like that he likes best, so do the Psalms minister instruction, and satisfaction, to every man, in every emergency and occasion. David was not only a clear prophet of Christ himself, but a prophet of every particular Christian; he foretells what I, what any, shall do, and suffer, and say. And the whole book of Psalms is *Oleum effusum* — an

> ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores... a balm that searches all wounds; so there are certain Psalms that are Imperial Psalms, that command over all affections, and spread themselves over all occasions, Catholic, universal Psalms, that apply themselves to all necessities.

About thirteen hundred years prior to the preaching of Donne's sermon, St. Athanasius wrote a letter, in which he said,

> (In relation to other books of Scripture)... the book of Psalms has a certain grace of its own, and a distinctive exactitude of expression. For, it possesses this marvel — namely, that it contains even the emotions of each soul. In the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things (what one ought to and what one ought not to do)... also is taught *how* to possess the image deriving from the words. Therefore, it teaches not only to disregard passions, but also *how* one must heal passion through speaking and acting. In the Psalms it is written how one must bear sufferings, what one must say to one suffering afflictions, what to say after afflictions, how each person is tested, and what the words of those who hope in God are.

Beyond this comprehensive and moral teaching, the Psalms offer further comfort. For, to those who approach them in faith and prayer, they speak "as being (our) own words". Thus, the Psalms not only teach us how to pray, they also give us the very words we may use!

There can be no debate over the fact that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ knew and used the Psalms. There is well-documented evidence that the Psalms were part and parcel of the synagogue worship in which Jesus participated every day. The Psalms have been in continual use for nearly three thousand years, spanning the time of their composition to the present. When Jesus was grilled by the scribes and Sadducees regarding the resurrection, he responded by quoting the Psalms,

> How say they that Christ is David's Son? And David himself saith in the Book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?
>
> *(Luke 20:41-44 & Psalm 110:1)*

Jesus also affirmed the prophetic character of the Psalms when he was eating of the fish and honeycomb with his Apostles after his resurrection.

He said to them,

> This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.
>
> *(Luke 24:44)*

In addition to these direct quotations from and references to the Psalms, there are many passages in the New Testament where the Psalms are quoted without being acknowledged. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, the Psalms are quoted at least 45 times. The entire early Church was expected to be very familiar wih the Psalms.

The Church followed the example of Jesus and heeded the admonitions of St. Paul by whole-heartedly embracing this "Book which covers the entire range of relations between God and man". This was especially the case in the convents, monasteries and other religious communities of the Church. We have accounts of how the earliest of these groups made use of the Psalms. John Cassian, a 5th century monk and writer, noted in his *Institutes*:

> We have found that many in different countries, according to the fancy of their mind, have made for themselves different rules and arrangements in this matter. For some have appointed that each night twenty or thirty Psalms should be said... Others have even tried to go beyond this number. The system and regulations that we have seen are almost as many in number as the monasteries... which we have visited.

Clearly, at an early stage, religious communities made great use of the Psalms. Eventually, the manner of reciting the Psalms became more or less standardized throughout the various communities. Appropriate Psalms became associated with particular "hours" of the day. A schedule was developed which allowed the whole of the Psalter to be recited in the course of each week. Because many monks were illiterate and the printing press did not yet exist, new monks learned the Psalms by heart.

The ancient monastic offices of Mattins and Prime formed the basis for the Book of Common Prayer office of Morning Prayer. The offices of Vespers and Compline were combined to serve as the source for Evening Prayer in our Prayer Book. The rubric after the *Venite* in the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI (1549) read:

> Then shall follow certain Psalms in order as they have been

> appointed in a table made for the purpose, except there be proper Psalms appointed for that day. And at the end of every Psalm throughout the year, and likewise at the end of the *Benedictus, Benedicite, Magnificat*, and *Nunc Dimittis*, shall be repeated, Glory be to the Father and to the Son, &c.

In the practice of concluding the Psalms with "Glory be to the Father... etc", the Prayer Book is following a custom dating from at least the 4th century.

As in the rubric after the *Venite*, a rubric after the opening versicles and responses in the Evening Prayer service directs that Psalms are to be recited according to the table provided. This table originally arranged for all of the Psalms to be read through every month during Morning and Evening Prayer. In our present Prayer Book, certain portions of the Psalms (as detailed on page xlix) are omitted from this cycle.

In the first Prayer Books, the Psalter was not included. But, since 1662, the Psalms have been printed within the Prayer Book. Prior to this time, they had been issued as separate volumes. One of these early Psalters, which was based upon Miles Coverdale's translations of the Psalms, was the one selected for inclusion in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Thus, the version of the Psalms found in our present Prayer Book differs from that found in the King James Version of the Bible.

Another feature of the various Psalters which may differ is the numbering of the verses. There are two main numbering systems. One is based upon the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament prepared in 300 B.C.), while the other is based upon the Hebrew Old Testament. The present Prayer Book Psalter follows the Hebrew numeration. The Latin translation of the Psalms varies from the Prayer Book version as a result of this difference.

Although the numeration may follow the Hebrew, Coverdale's (and thus the Prayer Book's) translation is based on the Latin Vulgate version of St. Jerome, a 4th century biblical scholar. The particular beauty of the Prayer Book version is most clearly appreciated in public worship. It is perhaps the best of all translations when it comes to public recitation. Of Miles Coverdale, C.S. Lewis says,

> Even of the old translators, he is by no means the most accurate... But in beauty, in poetry, he and St. Jerome, the great Latin translator, are beyond all whom I know.

It is as a result of this rhythmical beauty which flows throughout the Prayer Book Psalter, that we are able so easily to commit verses, or entire Psalms, to memory.

In reading the Psalms, there are some things which must be borne in mind if one is to fully appreciate them. First of all, it must be remembered that the Psalms are poetry. As Lewis points out:

> Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than the logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry. They must be read as poems if they are to be understood; no less than French must be read as French or English as English. Otherwise, we shall miss what is in them and think we see what is not.

Thus, the Psalms are studied most profitably when they are read slowly, with consideration. Unlike a newspaper story, their meaning does not always lie on the surface.

The second peculiarity is in the unusual way the Psalms are constructed so that in almost every verse, the idea or theme is stated two ways. This style has the technical name of "parallelism". For an example, in the first verse of the *Venite* (Psalm 95), we read, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord", in the first half. The second half of the verse says, "let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation". The singing of the first half of the verse is paralleled in the rejoicing of the second half. Likewise, "the Lord", in the first half, is linked to "the strength of our salvation", in the second.

Through such devices as this, the Holy Spirit has caused the Scriptures to exist in a form which lends itself to our memory. We remember the phrases, the images, the verses because of their beauty. The poetry does not exist as mere cleverness, but rather that we might come to a deeper appreciation of the truth that is veiled behind the words.

The Psalter, the 150 poems which "embrace all Scripture", is found on pages 331 to 521 of the Book of Common Prayer. Following the practice of earlier Prayer Books, the instruction for the use of the Psalter along with accompanying tables is found on pages xlviii to lv, immediately following the Table of Lessons. Because many of us do not have the time to "mine" the Psalter for an appropriate Psalm, the Church has graciously provided on page xlviii a table of "Psalms and Lessons for Special Occasions". Then

follow the instructions for how to use the Psalms, including their use at the Eucharist. Pages 1 to liv contain a table of "Psalms to be used on Sundays and Holy-days", again eliminating the need for each person to search the Psalter for particularly appropriate Psalms. This table also helps to fulfill the overall purpose of the Book of Common Prayer — the provision of a *common* form by which all members of our particular branch of the Catholic Church might worship God together. The final table provides a method of saying the Psalms which is less demanding than the one-month cycle laid out in the Psalter itself, (according to the labels at the beginning of each group of Psalms, repeated at the tops of the pages).

There are three items worth highlighting in these tables and instructions. The first of these is the provision for the use of the Psalter at the Holy Eucharist. Poetry oft-times does speak more clearly than prose and the use of "God's poetry" can complement and expound the thoughts expressed in the collect, Epistle, and Gospel. As well, these Psalms "to be used on Sundays and Holy-days'' can be employed during our private devotions, before and after receiving Communion.

Secondly, the instructions direct that "the Psalter is to be read through once a month as it is there appointed". Only then comes the "unless", which gives permission for those who say their offices daily, to use fewer Psalms on weekdays. The question that anyone opting for the shortening of the recitation of daily Psalms needs to ask is: "Why do I want to shorten my worship of God by reducing my use of the poetry, of the hymns of praise, that he has lovingly given me?"

Thirdly, the instructions direct that, "the *Gloria Patri* is to be said or sung after each Psalm, or numbered portion of a Psalm, or after the whole selection of Psalms" (page xlix). As Lowther Clarke indicated in his book, *Liturgy and Worship*:

> The purpose of the doxology (i.e. the *Gloria Patri*) is to turn the Psalms and Canticles of the Old Testament into Christian hymns, by affirming belief in the God who, though only fully revealed in Trinity to the Church of the New Testament, is nevertheless known by the Church of Old.

Not only does the *Gloria Patri* ("Glory be to the Father... etc.") affirm our belief in the Trinity, it also serves to crown the "hymns of praise" we lay at our Father's feet, to adorn the poetry which "embraces all Scripture", with the glorious proclamation that embodies the activity of all the hosts

of heaven. That activity is the giving of glory to God in the highest. The *Gloria Patri* is the fulfilling of the purpose of the Psalms, because it is a participation in the eternal worship of God in heaven. There, God willing, we will declare perfectly, with the glory that God gives us and with pure hearts and holy love:

> Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost:
> As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
> without end. Amen.

Holy Baptism

There are three services of Holy Baptism found in our Book of Common Prayer. There is the service of "The Ministration of Holy Baptism to Children to be Used in the Church", which is probably the service with which most of us are familiar. There is also a service for "The Ministration of Holy Baptism to Such as are of Riper Years". This service is designed to be used when baptizing those who have reached the age when they are able to answer for themselves. There is also a service of "Private Baptism", which is to be used in such cases as when the person being baptized is critically ill.

It has been often noted by scholars that there are two normal patterns of Holy Baptism in the New Testament. The first is the baptism of adult converts who have come to the Christian faith from another religion (Acts 8:27-39, Acts 10). The second pattern is the baptism of whole houses or whole families (Acts 16:25-34, Acts 18:8).

The life of the Christian family is a matter of great importance to the writers of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 7:1-17, Ephesians 6:1-14, Ephesians 5:22-23, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, Colossians 3:18-21). It seems only natural that just as Hebrew children were made members of the Old Covenant and were able to share the blessings and promises (Genesis 17:9-14), so Christian children should also be able to share in the New Covenant which is even more gracious. Just as children were included in the Old Covenant through circumcision, so children are also brought into the New Covenant through Baptism (Deuteronomy 10:16, Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11-12). Given what our Lord said about little children and the Kingdom of God, the early Church could not have dared to do otherwise than allow children to be partakers of the New Covenant (Matthew 19:13-15, Matthew 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17). ln any event, it soon became the pattern that adult converts, after extensive training and preparation, were baptized and the children of Christian parents were also baptized with sponsors making promises on their behalf. This is the pattern of our Prayer Book.

Introduction — the Rubrics

It is clear from the very title of the service that the place most suitable for Holy Baptism is the Church: the house of God. The church building is

that place in every community that has been set apart for the worship of God. The church is God's house and the common home of every Christian. It is there that we gather for common prayer. In the house of God we hear the Word of God read and preached, and it is there that we gather around the Lord's Table for our Communion meal. We come to God's house to be received into his family and to become his children by adoption and grace.

The fact that a child is being made a member of God's family and is being received as such, is symbolized by the fact that in most churches the font, where the Baptism takes place, is located near the entrance of the church. It must always be remembered that the Church is a spiritual family. You cannot "join" the Church any more than you can simply "join" a family. You can only be made a member of a family by being born into a family or by being adopted by a family. Because the Church is a spiritual family, the only way in which a person can be made a member is by being spiritually reborn or spiritually adopted by God. Both of these miracles occur in Holy Baptism.

The first of the rubrics found on page 522 in the Prayer Book directs that the minister of the parish admonish the people to bring their children to the church for Baptism as soon as possible after birth. Notice that the minister is not merely to instruct or suggest, but to "admonish" the people. This means that he is to "put it in their minds" that they should bring their children as soon as possible after birth.

There have been various rules at various times within the Church concerning when a Baptism may take place. It was the custom in the early Church to administer Baptism during the seasons of Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost. Later, it was the custom to baptize between Easter Eve and Whitsuntide. The reason for limiting Baptism to these seasons of the Church Year was that during these times, the dominant themes and teaching in the Scripture lessons were those which best enabled the people to understand the meaning of Holy Baptism. For example, since Baptism affords us the grace necessary to die unto our old self and rise to new life in Christ, what better time to practice Baptism than at Easter? Since Baptism involves our receiving the Holy Spirit and our spiritual re-creation, what better time to celebrate the service than at Pentecost?

The rubrics as they now stand in our Prayer Book regarding the time when Holy Baptism ought to be administered underline the importance of Christian family life. As we have already mentioned, the Christian fam-

ily is of crucial importance to the New Testament writers. It is clear that the fact that the Christian Church is the family of God does not lessen the importance of a Christian's natural family. In fact, just the reverse is true. The Christian family is the image of the relationship between our Lord and his Church (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Events which take place within the life of our natural family are celebrated by our spiritual family in the house of God. When a child is born, the mother and her husband ought to go to church for the service of "Thanksgiving After Childbirth" (page 573). Then, as soon as the mother and child are able, the child is taken to the church to be received into God's family by spiritual adoption and rebirth. He is then received into his spiritual family.

The service of Baptism is to take place within the Church's normal life of worship. The parents of the child are to contact the minister of the parish giving him "due notice" of their desire to have their child baptized. The service is to be conducted by the minister in charge of the parish. This is most often a priest, but in the absence of a priest, a deacon may officiate.

The rubrics direct that the service be held on a Sunday or on one of the Church's holy days. The rubrics further direct that the service begin after the last lesson at Morning or Evening Prayer. It is becoming an increasingly common practice and the general rule that the service of Baptism be held on Sunday at the main service of the day and, since in most parishes the main service is the service of Holy Communion, we see more and more Baptisms being celebrated within the context of the Holy Eucharist. The rubrics to which we refer were written at a time when the services of Morning and Evening Prayer were conducted more frequently than the Holy Communion, or else conducted just before the Holy Communion. It seems to be the intention of the rubric that the Baptism take place at a time when the majority of people would be in the church. At any rate, it is clear that to celebrate the service of Holy Baptism within the context of Morning or Evening Prayer is in keeping with the tradition and rubrics of our Prayer Book. Moreover, having the Baptism following the second lesson at Morning Prayer is highly appropriate since the *Benedictus* which comes next is a wonderful hymn of praise for what has been accomplished.

The rubric which addresses the question of the number of godparents

has varied from time to time. The minimum requirements for the godparents is that they be baptized and able to make the promises which the service demands of them. Parents may act as godparents or sponsors (the terms are here interchangeable) of their own children only in very rare cases where it is necessary that they do so. A minimum of one godfather and one godmother is called for by the rubric. It is considered ideal, however, to have two godfathers and one godmother for a male child and two godmothers and one godfather for a female child. There does not seem to be any rule limiting the number of sponsors a child may have. The Prince of Wales, for example, had four godfathers and four godmothers.

What do sponsors do? The duties of the godparents are clearly outlined in the baptismal service. We will examine these duties in some detail a little later in this chapter. A godparent is one who represents the Christian Church. The godparents act on behalf of God's spiritual family into which the child being baptized is received. There are those who have the belief that the purpose of the godparent is to look after the child if anything happens to the natural parents. It is rather unclear just where this belief came from, but it has no basis in the teaching of the Church. A godparent is under the same obligation as any Christian when it comes to the physical and social well-being of children. A godparent makes promises regarding the spiritual well-being of a child. He promises to pray and do all that he can to see that the child is raised as a Christian and learns the Christian faith. He is, however, under no obligation to raise or adopt the child in the parents' absence. On the other hand, it is probably not a bad idea for parents, when choosing godparents, to ask themselves if the person they are choosing as a sponsor would be the kind of person they would want to see raising their child. People really should be very careful in selecting sponsors, bearing in mind the promises they make.

The rubrics direct that before proceeding with the service, the priest is to enquire and receive assurance that the child brought for Baptism has not already received the sacrament. The sacrament of Holy Baptism has an indelible effect upon those who rightly receive it. This means that what has been accomplished for us through Baptism can never be erased or taken away. Baptism is an instrument through which we receive adoption as God's children and spiritual rebirth (Article XXVII, page 709). These gifts, once given, can never be removed. Consequently, Baptism can never be repeated. It is nowadays assumed that the minister has already

acquired this information before the service, but at one time the question of whether the child had already been baptized was asked as a part of the service.

The rubrics direct that the congregation may remain standing throughout the service. Anglicans are used to kneeling for prayer, but since during the service the people will be turned to face the font, provision is made for the people to remain standing for the prayers.

The priest, parents, sponsors, and candidate for Baptism are directed by the rubrics to assemble at the font. Once assembled, the priest is, in the presence of the people, to fill the font with pure water. In ancient times the water in the font was changed only twice a year, on the Saturday before Easter and the Saturday before Whitsuntide. Our first Prayer Book of 1549 directed that the water be changed at least once a month and before any child was to be baptized therein. This rubric ensured that the water used for Baptism was fresh and clean.

The priest is directed to fill the font with water. Although the amount of water is of no real significance so far as Baptism is concerned, it is expected that enough water will be poured into the font to allow the priest to follow the rubric on page 528 in which he is instructed to either dip the child into the water or to pour the water over the child. It was common practice at one time to dip a child into the water at the time of Baptism. Most priests today follow the second option and pour the water over the child.

The Service

The priest begins the service by reading the introduction on page 523. This introduction serves the purpose of briefly summarizing what we are about to do in the service and why it is being done. The question of why we baptize is addressed first. We baptize because God wills that all men be saved (Matthew 18:11, John 12:47, 1 Timothy 1:15, John 3:16). From what are we saved? "God willeth all men to be saved from the fault and corruption of the nature which they inherit, as well as from the actual sins which they commit".

Each of us is born out of fellowship with God. This is the meaning of the doctrine of original sin. Our human nature is corrupt. This results in our being naturally inclined to do that which is contrary to God's law. Each of us is born in need of God's forgiveness. We need to be restored to

an entirely new and proper relationship with God. In order for this to be accomplished, we need to be spiritually reborn.

This new and proper relationship with God, which begins with our new birth (John 3:3-8), is something which we by nature cannot have. We cannot bring this new birth about in ourselves any more than we could have caused our own conception and natural birth. Only God can restore us to fellowship with himself. God accomplishes this in us by adoption and spiritual rebirth in our Baptism. The people are instructed to pray for this miracle on the child's behalf.

The priest is then directed to pray one or both of the prayers on page 523. The first of these prayers refers to our Lord sanctifying water for the mystical washing away of sin. Baptism is a spiritual washing. The outward and visible sign of this washing is the water that is poured over the child.

When something is sanctified it is set apart and prepared for use in God's service. We often read about such washings in the Old Testament. The priests, before engaging in God's service, were commanded by the Law to participate in ritual washing as a means of preparing and purifying themselves (Exodus 29:4, Leviticus 8:6, Hebrews 10:22). This washing was not merely a way of becoming physically prepared for God's word, but also had a deeper spiritual significance and represented the inward washing of the soul from all the sins which would hinder the service of God (Psalm 51:2 & 7, Jeremiah 4:14, John 13:5-10, Acts 22:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11).

Baptism is our inward washing. When we are baptized we are set apart for God's service. This setting apart marks the beginning of our Christian life. The prayer goes on to ask that the child being baptized will grow in faith, hope, and charity. These three virtues are considered absolutely necessary for the growth of a Christian soul (1 Corinthians 13). It must be remembered that Baptism is the beginning of a Christian's life. If we are to grow and continue in grace then we must also come to have an active and living faith that is grounded upon the love of God. With this in mind we pray that the child being baptized may pass through this world that is filled with troubles, and reign with our Lord forever. The Christian life is filled with promise. One of these promises is that we will some day reign with our Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 19:28, Revelation 22:1-5). The second prayer on page 523 refers to the promise

of our Lord that those who seek will find, those who ask will receive, and to those who knock the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-11, Luke 11:9-13). The persons doing the asking in this instance are the parents, sponsors, and whole congregation of Christ's Church who are praying on the child's behalf.

There are a number of accounts in the New Testament of people going to our Lord to plead on behalf of someone who is ill. In these accounts we see our Lord healing the ill person because of the prayer of the one who prays. We are reminded of the Roman centurion who pleaded on behalf of an ill servant (Matthew 8:5-13), of the nobleman who prayed on behalf of his dying son (John 4:46-53), and of the friends of the young man with the palsy, whom they lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1-12). In each case Jesus heals the sick and dying in answer to the prayers of those who came to him in faith. It is a fact worth noticing that in the case of the young man with the palsy, we are told that Jesus, seeing the faith of the man's friends, forgave the man his sins.

The Holy Gospel

After the introductory prayers, the service proceeds with a reading from the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark. We are told the story of Jesus and the little children. We are given a good indication of the age of these children by the fact that they are not referred to simply as children, but as "little children". In Luke's Gospel the term used is "infants". Notice also that we are not told that the children came to Jesus but that they were "brought".

Why did the disciples try to put a stop to all of this? Were they trying to protect Jesus? There were times in our Lord's ministry when large crowds pressed upon him, but that does not seem to be the case here. Why did the disciples attempt to stop the children being brought to Jesus?

Our Lord was in the middle of a sermon in which he was teaching the proper manner of keeping the Law. Perhaps the disciples reasoned that since children were incapable of understanding the nature of our Lord's teaching, their being brought at this time was nothing but a disturbance. Remember that these were the same disciples who were earlier debating among themselves which of them was the greatest (Mark 9:33-37). The disciples were under the false impression that spiritual growth is entirely dependent upon a person's natural talents and abilities. They needed to

learn that in order to grow in Christ one must first become as a little child. This does not mean that we must become immature or less adult in our learning and behaviour. It means rather that we must learn to imitate children in their ability to receive the grace of God. Receiving is the one thing any child can do. So we must learn to allow nothing to come between ourselves and God.

Following the Gospel, the minister is directed to read a short address. This address is a commentary on the Gospel lesson in which our Lord not only says that little children are specially blessed, but also demonstrates his love for them by taking them into his arms, putting his hands upon them and blessing them. We are reminded in the address that our confidence in bringing children for Baptism lies in the promises of God as well as in the stated love which our Lord has for children. We are also reminded that if we fail to bring our children for Baptism, which is the means by which they may become members of our Lord's family, we are in fact keeping our children from Jesus and thus breaking his express command.

The whole congregation prays the prayer on page 525 in which we offer thanks to our heavenly Father for bringing us to faith. We thank God for the "knowledge of his grace". We thank him for the gift of faith and ask him to increase our knowledge of him and confirm our faith in him. We then pray for the child to be baptized that he may be made an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven and receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity. He is the member of the Trinity that dwells within us and enables us to grow in grace and become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. We can have no spiritual life without the Holy Spirit. We may receive the Holy Spirit at different times in our lives for different reasons. For instance, when a man is ordained a priest he receives the Holy Spirit "for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God" (page 655). When a person is baptized, the Holy Spirit indwells that person in order to bring about the miracle of "justification" by which that person is restored to a right relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings about the "regeneration" necessary to make us children of God and he begins the work of "sanctification" in which we begin to grow into the image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Promises

A sponsor is someone who makes a response on someone's behalf. We now move to the part of this service where the sponsors do just that. A vow is a solemn promise. In this case the vows being performed are made to God and cannot be changed. A vow made to God is a vow made for life.

The child is called upon (pages 525-526) to vow, through his sponsors, to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in Christ and to obediently keep his commandments. Because these vows are of such a solemn nature and are made to God, the priest *demands* a response from the sponsors. To demand something means that you are asking with legal and rightful authority. The priest is not merely asking the sponsors these questions on his own behalf, but on behalf of, and with the authority of, Christ and his Church.

The first vow is a vow of renunciation. To renounce something means that it no longer exercises any authority in your life. When a person becomes a member of a new country he must renounce and forsake all allegiance to any foreign powers. The sponsors renounce anything that may come between the Christian soul and God.

The sponsors renounce the devil and all his works. This is no vague renunciation of evil! Since different people have different standards, what might be considered "evil" to one person may not be so considered by another. By renouncing the devil and all his works, the sponsors are rejecting anything that is contrary to God's law as that law is revealed in the Bible.

Just as a child does not always understand why his parents will not allow him to engage in a certain activity, so we do not always understand why God does not sanction certain things that we might like to do. What we regard as harmless may not be so regarded by God. Our Lord has given us an objective moral standard by which he would have us live. It must be remembered that our God is a loving and wise Father who will not always allow us to do what seems good to us.

The sponsors renounce the vain pomp and glory of this world. The world can be so very enticing. Power and high esteem are what a lot of people crave and spend most of their lives pursuing as if their very existence needed to be justified by the praise of men. By renouncing the world, we are not implying that everything in creation is evil. We are

maintaining that our first and most important loyalty is to God. We are reminded that one cannot serve both God and the world.

The sponsors also renounce the flesh. St. Paul writes that the "flesh is against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Galatians 5:17). We must never allow our bodily desires to gain control over our will. Because our human nature is corrupt, our desires, if allowed to gain mastery, will exercise a tyranny over us and we will soon find ourselves without control. We, therefore, renounce all sinful desires of the flesh.

The next vow taken by the sponsors is a vow of belief. All Christians believe a definite body of doctrine. This teaching is summarized in our Creeds. It is true that the Christian faith is no mere mental assent to a list of teachings or a moral code. The Christian faith is faith in a Saviour. Yet this Saviour has given us a very definite teaching, and we cannot have faith in that Saviour without also believing his teaching.

Growing in our Saviour Christ means that we are led by the Holy Spirit who Jesus says will lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Growing as a Christian means that we grow in the Truth. St. Paul's prayer for the Christians in Colossae is that they will grow in the knowledge of God's will and in all wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9). This is the pattern for all Christians. In faith we seek the Spirit who will lead us to understanding. So the sponsor seeks Baptism into the faith on the child's behalf and promises to take care that the child may learn all of the things which pertain to his soul's health.

The priest leads the congregation in four short prayers. We pray that all sinful desires may die in the child and that he may grow in all spiritual grace. We pray that he will triumph against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We pray that the child will never wander away from the teaching and fellowship of Christ's Church.

We pray that the child will grow in Christ and come to possess all heavenly virtues, so that he may come to be everlastingly rewarded. We are asking in these prayers that the child may be "converted" in all the senses of that term. Conversion is turning toward God. Baptism is the initial turning. The child must continue to turn toward God until the day he shall see him in glory.

The Baptism

On pages 527-528, the priest bids the people to lift up their hearts

in solemn prayer. We are reminded (page 528) of how our Lord upon the Cross shed out of his side both water and blood (John 19:34). The New Testament treats this as a fact of great spiritual significance (1 John 5:6). Our being washed with the water of Baptism is an outward and visible sign of our being inwardly washed by the blood of Christ, which justifies and redeems us (Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:17).

We are reminded of our Lord's express command to go into all the world making disciples and baptizing them in the Name of the Holy Trinity. Since these are the direct and explicit words of our Lord, we are compelled to obey them. The Church has, therefore, over the centuries, always used the trinitarian formula taught to us by our Lord (Matthew 28:18-19). The priest then blesses the water since it is to be the outward and visible sign of the child's inward and spiritual washing. (See the Catechism, page 550.)

The priest, taking the child into his arms, directs the sponsors to name the child. It is at this point in the service that the child is given his Christian name. A person receives his family name on the day that he is born. He is known at the hospital as "Baby so and so", the last name depending upon the family name of his parents. A person receives his Christian name at the time of his new birth. Thus, a person's Christian name is always a reminder to the person that he belongs to Christ. Notice that the priest is not inquiring with the sponsors to find out the child's name. The priest is, rather, directing the sponsors to name the child since it is they, representing the Christian Church, who actually give the child his name (Catechism, page 544).

The priest then says the child's name and dips the child into the water or pours the water over the child while repeating the words which Jesus taught us. The child is then received into Christ's Church. When a child is privately baptized, it is still necessary to receive that child publicly as a member of the Church.

The priest signs the child with the sign of the Cross. The Cross is that which makes friends of God and man (Colossians 1:20). Our Lord's sacrificial death upon the Cross, once offered, was a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. Without the Cross, there would be no Baptism, no forgiveness of sins, no fellowship with God, and no Church. It is so very fitting that a child should be signed with the sign of the Cross just as he is being

received into his new spiritual family of the Church. It is only because of the Cross that we can have friendship with God and fellowship with one another. The child will have to fight manfully under the banner of the Cross in order to overcome all of those sins which would destroy friendship between God and man.

After praying the Lord's Prayer, the priest offers a prayer of thanksgiving in which is mentioned the different stages of our growth as Christians. We first thank God for the new birth of the child and pray that he may continue to serve our Saviour Christ in newness of life. We pray that the child will finally, with the whole Church, inherit everlasting life. We give God thanks for adopting the child and making him one of his own children (Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:4-7, Ephesians 1:5).

The Duties

The priest now reminds the parents and sponsors of the duties which they must perform in raising this Christian child. People who have the responsibility of raising a Christian child must remember that the child belongs to God. We all realize that child neglect is a terrible and wicked crime, which should not go unpunished. The effect that such neglect has upon a child is devastating.

There is such a thing as spiritual child neglect. The worst form of spiritual child neglect is the sin of not bringing a child to be baptized. If we do not teach a child what he needs to know for his soul's health, and do not take him to public worship, and do not teach him his prayers, and do not provide a home where the Christian faith is practised in loving obedience to the Saviour, then we are spiritually neglecting this child in a manner that is no less wicked and sinful than physical or emotional neglect.

The greatest motivating force upon a young child is the example of his parents. Most young children wish to be exactly like their parents. If the parents forsake their Christian commitment, then they are teaching their children to do likewise. The old slogan "don't do as I do, just as I say" will never really work with young children who for the most part are not happy merely obeying their parents, but want to be *like* them. If the parents insist upon the child going to church or to Sunday School, while they themselves stay at home, the children are being taught that the Christian faith is just so much hypocrisy. If these seem strong words,

then our Lord's words are even stronger when he says, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:5-6, also Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2).

The parents and godparents are directed to use all diligence to see that the child is raised in a Christian way. The child is to learn the Creed (normally the Apostles' Creed), the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. These summarize every aspect of a Christian's life. The Creed is a summary of everything that a Christian needs to know about how God has made himself known to us. The Ten Commandments summarize our moral duty toward God and man. The Lord's Prayer is the greatest prayer ever written. It teaches us how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is our greatest spiritual treasure. The parents and godparents are asked on page 530 if they will be faithful in fulfilling all of these duties. They respond, "I will, the Lord being my helper". The parents and godparents must always remember that the Lord is indeed their helper and that they will not be able to accomplish their promises without his help. They must learn to turn to him for strength, wisdom, and guidance, and always remember that our Lord loves the little children much more than even the most loving of earthly parents does. On page 531, the priest prays for the parents and child and then concludes the baptismal service.

The Baptism of Those of Riper Years

The rubrics on page 532 direct that when someone who is able to answer for himself is to be baptized, timely notice be given to the bishop, or to whosoever the bishop has appointed for that purpose. The reason for notifying the bishop (at least one week before) is to allow the bishop to inquire whether the candidate for Baptism has been properly instructed in the Christian faith. Because the person being baptized is making the promises himself, it is of crucial importance that he understand what he is promising and be fully aware of the consequences of his actions.

The second reason for contacting the bishop when baptizing those of "riper years" has to do with the relationship which Confirmation has to Baptism. It is expected that under normal circumstances anyone who is baptized will also be confirmed. When the candidate for Baptism is old enough to answer for himself, the service of Confirmation is to follow

immediately after the Baptism or as soon afterwards as possible. It should not be delayed.

When a person is baptized, he becomes a member of the Body of Christ. The same person is later confirmed as a member of that same Body. One is never simply baptized into a particular denomination of the Church. A person who is baptized is made a member of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. This is the one universal Church of Christ, founded by our Lord and governed by the Apostles and their successors. A bishop, who is a successor of the Apostles, confirms a person as a member of that One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. A person may be baptized in the Anglican Church of Canada, but the person is *not* "baptized or confirmed Anglican". The person is baptized and confirmed as a Christian who is a member of the Body of Christ, which is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. For this reason, a person can *never* be re-baptized. If a person has already been confirmed by a bishop, he can *never* be re-confirmed. To do so means that you are denying your original Baptism or Confirmation, which really amounts to a kind of blasphemy and sin against the Holy Spirit. To do this is to put your soul in jeopardy.

Since the person being baptized is making the promises himself, he does not need sponsors or godparents. He is to choose two witnesses, who will offer their prayers and support on the candidate's behalf.

The priest begins the service by asking the candidate whether or not he has already been baptized. The candidate is then asked if he desires to be baptized. The candidate gives a public response to these questions. The candidate also explains why he desires Baptism.

The Gospel reading for this service is from the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, which reminds us of the need we all have to be born again. The promises that the candidate makes are exactly the same as those a child makes through his sponsors. The short prayers, or supplications, that the priest prays are basically the same as the ones in the service of Baptism of children. The actual Baptism also follows word for word the service for the Baptism of children. An order for the Confirmation, to be taken by the bishop, follows the Baptism.

The Ministration of Private Baptism

When any child who has not been baptized is critically ill, the minister of the parish, or in his absence any lawful minister, should be called

upon to administer this service. If no minister can be found, and the child is in danger of death, any person present may administer the sacrament. The procedure is very simple. The child's chosen name is repeated and water is poured upon the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. After this, the Lord's Prayer is to be repeated. When the minister of the parish officiates, he is to begin with the Lord's Prayer, as well as any other prayers from the baptismal service which are appropriate. He finishes with the collect of thanksgiving on page 541, as well as other prayers for the sick which are suitable for the occasion.

Whenever we baptize a child or an adult, we do so with a complete trust in the unsearchable wisdom and mercy of God. We are always mindful of the words of the Apostle Paul:

> O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.
>
> *(Romans 11:33-36)*

Confirmation

Confirmation has a two-fold purpose in the Church. It is a means whereby, through prayer and the laying on of hands, a Christian may be "confirmed" (or given strength) by the power of the Holy Spirit. As well, it is the point at which an individual, having come to the years of discretion may "confirm" *personally* those promises that were made on his behalf at his Baptism. Thus, at Confirmation, a Christian receives grace from God and makes a commitment to him. Both of these sides must be recognized in order to fully appreciate Confirmation.

Confirmation, or the "laying on of hands with prayer upon those who are baptized and come to years of discretion" is rooted in the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. We must understand this doctrine in order to see why Confirmation plays such an important role in the life of a Christian.

We might summarize the Bible's teaching on salvation in three words: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Our "justification" occurs when we are accounted righteous before God because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in his life, death, and resurrection.

> We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own work or deservings.
>
> *(Article XI, Book of Common Prayer page 702)*

Our "sanctification" is our growth in the Spirit and the maturing of our Christian life. This lifelong process of sanctification, or "being made holy'' can begin only after we are justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ and his death for us. The goal of sanctification is to be made perfect in Jesus Christ, which is our glorification. The biblical teaching of salvation is this: being justified by Christ, we continue our sanctification throughout our life, until we meet God face to face in our glorification. Our "glorification" is what happens to us finally as we become perfect and take our place in heaven. In our glorification we become like Christ himself. This takes place after our physical death.

The phrase "salvation by grace" emphasizes the biblical doctrine that the only source of our justification, sanctification and glorification is the free gift of God: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Our salvation depends not

upon us, but upon God. Faith is a necessary element in the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, because faith is our response to God's offer of salvation to us. We must believe in Christ, accept his death for us, trust in him alone for salvation, and invite him to transform our lives by his Spirit. All this is our faithful response to God, but even this response — our faith itself — is nothing other than the grace of God working within us.

> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.
>
> *(Ephesians 2:8)*

It is within this framework that we can come to understand the relationship of Confirmation to Baptism and Holy Communion. Primarily, (although not exclusively), Baptism is concerned with justification, in that it is in Baptism that we become regenerate: born anew of water and the Holy Spirit. We receive remission of sin and are made inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, it is by no means assured that once set on this road, we "may evermore continue in the same". Although we have been justified fully, there remains the lifelong process of sanctification. This sanctification, whereby we grow in the Spirit in our Christian lives, is assisted in countless ways such as prayer, Bible reading, discipleship and so on. However, the reception of Holy Communion is the most important means of all.

While not absolutely necessary to the reception of Holy Communion, Confirmation is usually required before we come to receive that sacrament. The two-fold nature of Confirmation explains this. For, it is necessary that we have the Spirit of God within us before we receive Holy Communion. It is only by God's grace that we can be worthy recipients. Confirmation provides one means by which we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit enable us more easily to discern the presence of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Secondly, however, Confirmation provides the opportunity for those who have the grace of God working within them to commit themselves to God. This commitment is necessary of all those who would receive the Body and Blood of Christ. (It is, however, possible to make such a commitment apart from Confirmation.) Both the gifts received and the commitment made are only possible by the presence of God the Holy Spirit within the

Christian's soul.

In our present practice, Confirmation usually takes place in the parish church, the minister of the parish presenting the candidates before the bishop. This "presentation" has a formal character in itself. For, in the presentation the minister has to declare that he has fulfilled his solemn responsibility to instruct and prepare those souls in his care.

The Preface which follows the presentation of the candidates has several purposes. First of all, the bishop explains in more detail what is meant by the instruction that is expected. The candidates are to know the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and to have been taught the Catechism. These requirements are simply those that parents and godparents assented to at Baptism (see page 530). Thus, it is the duty of parents, godparents and parish clergy to ensure that all those who are baptized come to learn those basic things required for Confirmation.

The Preface goes on to declare that Confirmation "is very convenient to be observed", for three reasons. The first and necessary reason is that in performing the rite of Confirmation, we are being obedient to the express teaching and example of Holy Scripture. In Hebrews 6:1-2, the laying on of hands is accounted as one of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ". Thus, Confirmation has been part of the practice of the Church since apostolic times. Secondly, as we have discussed above, Confirmation provides the opportunity for those who have come to a certain maturity, to "acknowledge openly the vows made at their Baptism and dedicate their lives to the will of God". The remaining purpose for Confirmation, as we know, is that through this Order, the candidates may receive the strengthening grace of the Holy Ghost. Specifically, this gift is given to them so that they,

> may be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, manfully to fight under the banner of Christ crucified, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end.

Once again, this is a repetition of the words used in the baptismal service (see page 528).

The two lessons from Holy Scripture which follow, give the biblical context for the laying on of hands. The first lesson, from the eighth chapter of Acts, recounts how Peter and John went down to Samaria to confirm those whom Philip had baptized. Philip, being a deacon (see Acts

6:1-6) baptized, but did not have the authority to lay on hands. This belonged as yet, only to the Apostles. The bishops, as the successors of the Apostles have received this authority to confirm. The second lesson, from the nineteenth chapter of Acts tells of Paul's visit to Ephesus. There he administered Christian Baptism to those who, so far, had only received the baptism of John (the same baptism that our Lord received). Having been baptized, they are then able to receive the laying on of hands. In this case (though not in every case), those who received the laying on of hands immediately displayed spiritual gifts.

Following the lessons, the bishop proceeds to the "Renewal of Baptismal Vows". Essentially the same vows are made here as were made at the candidates' Baptisms. However, in this case, they are making the vows for themselves, whereas before they were made on their behalf. This is the point at which the individual makes a commitment to the Lord for himself. Yet, this commitment does not rest upon his own strength, but upon the supporting grace of God. This dependence is recognized in the final vow as the candidate answers, "I will, *the Lord being my helper*". It is so important that diligent instruction precede Confirmation, so that the candidates may know what it is that they are being asked to commit themselves to. They must know what the Christian faith is before they can declare that they believe it.

Following the renewal of vows, by which the bishop has received assurance that the candidates are prepared to receive this great gift, he proceeds with the actual Confirmation. Fittingly, this begins with the versicle, "Our help is in the Name of the Lord", for this is above all the message of Confirmation. As the bishop and congregation ask, "Lord, hear our prayer; And let our cry come unto thee", the bishop bids the congregation to pray.

The prayer which follows is an essential part of our service, inasmuch as it reflects the biblical teaching that the laying on of hands be accompanied by prayer. In it, the bishop asks the Lord to strengthen the candidates "with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace". These gifts, which are listed, are drawn from Isaiah 11:2. (Comparison might also be made to Revelation 1:4 and 4:5). To the six gifts listed in Isaiah is added the "spirit of true godliness". In short, these gifts are the benefits received by the candidate in Confirmation.

Following the prayer, the candidates kneel separately (or in pairs)

before the bishop who lays his hand upon each one's head individually. The prayer that is said while this is done is simple and direct. It touches upon all three aspects of Christian salvation, as listed above: justification, sanctification and glorification. The candidate is spoken of as God's servant as a recognition of his relation to the Lord as a result of his Baptism, wherein he received the benefits of justification. His sanctification is sought in the "daily increase" of the Holy Spirit. Finally, his glorification is spoken of: "until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom".

It is only fitting that following the laying on of hands, the Lord's Prayer is said. This perfect prayer brings before us the whole range of our relationship with God as well as our hope for the perfection of this relationship in his heavenly kingdom. The candidates, now confirmed, have received the Spirit of God, upon which they must rely if they are going to do the will of God.

The service concludes with prayers for the candidates that they may grow in the Spirit until they finally obtain everlasting life. In addition, we are reminded of our own sanctification as we pray that we too "may be preserved in body and soul". The final blessing has a special significance surely for those who have just received the Holy Spirit in this special way.

The concluding rubrics on page 561, suggest that the godparents of the candidates be present if possible. The suitability of this is obvious. Diligent godparents will surely be pleased to see their spiritual child accept the Christian life for himself. The second rubric explains that when Confirmation follows Holy Baptism directly, a shortened form of the service may be used. This is intended for those who have been baptized as adults. Since they have already made their vows for themselves in their Baptism, there is no need to repeat those vows at Confirmation. The final rubric declares the general rule that only those confirmed may receive Holy Communion. The reasons for this have been given above. Notwithstanding this rule, it is possible (if there is some compelling reason) for those who are ready and desirous to be confirmed, but have not yet received the laying on of hands, to receive Holy Communion.

The Solemnization of Matrimony

Our examination of the Prayer Book Order for the Solemnization of Matrimony begins with a look at the material preceding the rite itself. On page 562 the Book of Common Prayer provides a "Table of Kindred and Affinity" which indicates whom a man or woman cannot marry, such as a person related by blood (consanguinity) or by marriage (affinity). The rubrics which follow (page 563) inform the priest and "those intending Matrimony" the various responsibilities of all those involved. The pastor is solely responsible for the conduct of the service and must be satisfied that no impediments, (canonical or legal), exist which may prevent the matrimonial union. The publication of banns prior to the wedding is one of the methods traditionally used to determine if any impediments do exist to the proposed union. On the day of the marriage, the couple is directed "to come into the body of the Church with their friends and neighbours".

The service itself begins with the Exhortation, proclaiming the scriptural teaching of the Christian Church about the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. We are told that Matrimony is an honourable estate, instituted by God (Genesis 2:18,24; Matthew 9:5) and is a sign of the mystical union between Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5:22-23). Our Lord at the wedding feast at Cana bestowed honour upon the marital union by his presence and the first miracle he performed (John 2:1-11). We are told that the holy estate of Matrimony is commended in Holy Scripture as honourable among all men (Hebrews 13:4). The Exhortation now describes three purposes for which Matrimony was ordained.

The first declaration says that Matrimony was ordained for "the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman" (page 564). "Instituted in the time of man's innocency'' (that is, before the Fall), the union between man and woman has always been recognized in Holy Scripture as different from all other unions in nature. As the Book of Genesis tells us,

> For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother,
> and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
> *(Genesis 2:24)*

In the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony this union is "hallowed" or made holy. In the presence of witnesses, within the Church, the couple is pronounced man and wife by a priest and receives the Church's blessing.

The union becomes something much more than a natural bond and becomes a "type" or symbol of the eternal, blessed union which is between Christ and his Church.

The second purpose of Matrimony is the "procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord". This calls to mind God's injunction to Adam and Eve when he tells them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). The connection between marriage and family appears again and again through the rite. When a couple is past the age of having children, the marriage is still performed using this service but a prayer calling for the "blessing and heritage of children" is omitted (page 570).

The third purpose of Matrimony is "for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other in both prosperity and adversity". The word *mutual* is significant because one of the startling proclamations of Holy Scripture is the equality of men and women in the eyes of God. Women had been considered chattel in the ancient world, but now the Gospel has given new dignity to women. *Both* husband and wife are to provide help and comfort to each other, not only in good times, but also in times of adversity.

The opening Exhortation ends with a final declaration to the congregation, asking if anyone can show any *just* cause which might prevent the lawful union of this couple (sometimes called the "fourth reading of the banns"). The priest now makes a specific charge to the couple, inquiring if either is aware of a possible civil or canonical impediment; and if so, they must confess it (page 564). Failure to be coupled as God's Word permits means that God has not had a part in the marriage and it is illegal in the eyes of the Law. Possible impediments include kinship, one or both of the parties being under the legal age, and the existence of a previous marriage where the spouse is still living. Notice the rubric following the charge to the couple indicates the person who objects must "allege and declare" (prove and make clear), as well as provide financial guarantees to prevent the continuance of the ceremony.

One of the profound strengths of the Christian faith is the way in which it has drawn elements from a variety of cultural and historical backgrounds. These elements are cleansed of false or irrelevant aspects and incorporated into the body of the Church. In this way, many of the Church's symbols come from Hebrew, Greek, or Roman culture. We can

witness this phenomenon in the Christian rite of marriage. Many of the old Roman customs were maintained within the Church's service but their significance is understood in a new, Christian light. That which is useful and serves to illuminate the truth is retained, while that which is false or improper is rejected.

The betrothal begins in the Prayer Book after the charge to the couple, at which time they are each asked if they will "live together according to God's ordinance". Will they love, comfort, honour, and keep each other in all circumstances, excluding all others so long as they both shall live? Note the exclusive nature of this union. The couple are reminded of "God's ordinance", and thereby the nature of his faithful love which is extended to all men at all times, in all circumstances. Will they each pattern themselves on Christ's love and faithfulness? The response "I will" demonstrates their *mutual* consent and the willingness to live according to God's ordinance.

The priest now asks "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" This part of the betrothal is frequently changed or ignored today because of the connotation of a "bride-price". But the Church has redeemed this symbolic act by seeing in the question another reminder of the presence of God in this union, and the changed character of the relationship of the bride and groom with their own families. The father or friend (page 566) gives the hand of the bride to the priest, who, acting in the name of God, gives her to the man as God gave Eve to Adam.

Now the bride and groom join hands and pledge their troth (faith and fidelity) to each other, repeating again the vows of the betrothal. Their intention stated in both sets of vows is clear: to live together according to God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony, to love, comfort, honour and keep each other in all circumstances, to forsake all others as long as they both shall live, until death parts them.

The giving of a ring is a pre-Christian custom which was given a Christian meaning. The rings became symbols of the bonds of endless and eternal love. The ring is placed on the Prayer Book as an acknowledgement that all worldly goods belong to God. A blessing is said and the ring is placed by the man upon the hand of the woman. After the exchange of rings, symbolizing the total commitment of each to the other, the couple kneel before the priest.

A prayer originally related to the blessing of the ring must now be

said by the priest. Note the statements about God — He is eternal; Creator and Preserver of all mankind; Giver of all spiritual grace; the Author of everlasting life. The couple are again reminded of the foundation and source of the everlasting love they will have for each other. This is no simple contract to be easily broken, but rather a deliberate union of two people endowed with God's grace. God's blessing is sought for his servants and for their future life together.

Their right hands are solemnly joined together, sometimes with the priest wrapping his stole around them as a sign that the hand of God will hold them together and the words of Scripture are recalled: "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6) The solemn declaration is now made before all the witnesses, stating again that which has taken place. They have:

a) Consented together in holy wedlock;
b) Witnessed the same before God and those present;
c) Given and pledged their troth to each other;
d) Declared the same by giving and receiving of rings.

The first part of the service concludes with a solemn blessing. The word "solemn" is appropriate in that we must bear in mind the responsibility and challenge that comes with marriage. The Prayer Book service seeks to direct our attention to the serious nature of what we are doing. Following the blessing, the necessary legal documents may be signed.

As the rubric on page 571 makes clear, the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony ought to be seen in close connection with Holy Communion. It is most fitting that the couple receive the Sacrament during the ceremony. For this reason, an appropriate collect, Epistle, and Gospel are provided. It is primarily with this in mind that the clergy are directed to go to the Lord's Table, on page 568. If a couple does not receive Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, they are nevertheless bound to do so at "the first opportunity after their marriage".

Either Psalm 128 or 127 may be used, unless the couple are past childbearing years; in which case, Psalm 67 is used. The appropriate Psalm concluded, the man and woman kneel before the Lord's Table and the final prayers are said. As the newly married couple kneel before God, they begin their married life in prayer, using the prayer our Lord himself taught us to say — "Our Father". The prayers which follow the Lord's

Prayer call again for God's guidance in their life together and for a blessed home. A prayer for the heritage and gift of children, bringing them up in a Christian and virtuous life, is then offered for all those couples where the woman is not past childbearing.

A final collect recalls again the biblical image, so well developed by Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, that the state of Matrimony is an excellent mystery and is to be a reflection of the model of love seen in the relationship between Christ and his Church. The newly married couple are assured of God's mercy and grace to help them grow in their relationship as they love, honour, and cherish each other, being faithful and patient that they may come to the final hope of all Christians — to inherit the everlasting kingdom.

The final blessing, reminding us of the all-encompassing range of God's love both in heaven and earth, asks God to "pour upon (them) the riches of his grace", so that their love may be a "holy love unto (their) lives' end".

Thanksgiving After Childbirth

The Book of Common Prayer contains a service, beginning on page 573, called "The Thanksgiving after Childbirth" or, more commonly, "The Churching of Women". Although it has fallen into disuse in many places, this ceremony forms a valuable link in that devotional and liturgical chain which the Prayer Book provides throughout our lives. The Prayer Book seeks to provide a means whereby we can incorporate the whole of our lives within a Christian framework. Just as our days can find order through the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (and Compline), so our year can be viewed from a spiritual perspective also, thanks to the Calendar. In the same way, the Prayer Book intends that we might be able to relate the major events of our own lives directly to the practice of our faith. Thus, we are provided with services for the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony, Visitation of the Sick, Burial of the Dead, and so on. It is entirely appropriate then, that there be a service of thanksgiving after the birth of a child.

In continuing to encourage parents to publicly express their thanksgiving for the birth of a child, the Church remains faithful in proclaiming God's lordship over all of life. She seeks to provide her children with opportunities to turn to the Lord in all of their joys and griefs, as the One who in Christ reconciled all things to himself. In sin, man turned his back on God and began to lay unlawful claim to what belonged to him. It is the vocation of the Church, the Body of Christ, to be the means whereby all creation is restored to its Creator. All of our activities are contained in this restoration.

Our Prayer Book demonstrates this concern for the restoration to God of the whole person and of the whole community, material as well as spiritual, temporal as well as eternal. As it is expressed at the time of the Offertory in the Holy Communion, "All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:11,14). This is an important understanding which the Church needs to communicate. People must have assistance in connecting their lives "in the world" to their hopes as "inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven". Christianity is the most materialistic of religions — not because our hope is in this world, but because it is through this world and its people that we have opportunity to love and serve and thank God

for his mercy in Christ.

Considered in this way, there is really nothing "optional" about the Prayer Book rites. Like the other ceremonies, the Churching of Women should be understood as a unique opportunity for the exercising of our Christian vocation to lead lives of thanksgiving unto God. Through this service, we have a way of bringing the wonderful event of the birth of children into a particularly Christian perspective. The blessing of childbirth deserves a public response of thanks.

Although the service itself concerns primarily the woman (and even recognizes, in one of the two prayers, that there may be no husband), the rubrics remind us that the family unit is intended by God to include father as well as mother.

The opening statement made by the priest contains an invitation "to give hearty thanks". Parts of Psalm 116 are said next, by the woman and the priest together. This Psalm has been described as "one of the most deeply personal expressions of heartfelt thanksgiving to be found in the Psalter". Although childbearing is less dangerous nowadays in our society, our sense of thanksgiving must be deepened when we contemplate the sufferings of women in less privileged parts of the world.

The alternative Psalm permitted (Psalm 127) reminds us that children are the gift of God. This is a healthy reminder to a generation which too often looks upon pregnancy as an unwanted imposition and unborn children as expendable. The Psalm begins by stating that God is to be the true Head and Protector of our households.

The *Kyrie* and the Lord's Prayer which follow next remind us that we stand constantly in need of God's mercy and daily bread. As befits an occasion of thanksgiving, the Lord's Prayer includes the doxology. The responses which follow, from Psalms 86 and 61 complete the idea expressed in the prayers. The priest may then conclude the ceremony with a prayer for the parents and child, or if more appropriate, for parents in bereavement. It is suggested that Communion follow, at which the parents should receive the Sacrament. (However, it is permissible to end the service at this point with a blessing.) In the Holy Communion the highest praise and thanks may be given. Similarly, the "offering" suggested ought not to be seen as some sort of fee, but as an acknowledgement of God's grace.

It should be noted that this rite may be used whether or not the

child has survived birth. In another age, the riskiness of childbirth would certainly prompt a woman to give thanks if her own life were spared at least, even if her child's had not. Beyond this, St. Paul tells us that we are to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18) and that we are to thank God "always and for everything'' (Ephesians 5:20). It is our duty as Christians, belonging to the "royal priesthood" to offer the whole of life, joy and grief, to the One to whom we owe all thanks.

The Ministry to the Sick

The Rev'd John Henry Blunt in his 1883 work, *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, wrote concerning "The Ministry to the Sick":

> The duty of visiting the sick is especially enjoined on the Curate of souls in the New Testament: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him" [James v. 14,15]. The visitation of the Sick is not therefore in the minister of Christ a mere piece of civility or neighbourly kindness, but an act of religion. He comes in the name of Christ to pray with and for the sick man; if necessary to reconcile him to the Church by the blessing of Absolution, and to communicate to him the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood.

It is as a reflection of this scriptural duty that our present office for the Ministry to the Sick is conceived. By including forms for prayer, an expression of faith (the Creed), private Confession and Absolution, the administration of Holy Communion, and a rite for the laying on of hands and anointing of the sick, the Book of Common Prayer seeks to present the whole range of spiritual blessings which may be provided for the sick. The source for each of these various acts is Holy Scripture.

As has become evident through the various chapters in this book, the Book of Common Prayer is at all points thoroughly scriptural. But, the Scriptures are not presented in a haphazard fashion. Rather, they are ordered so as to provide a sanctified structure to our very lives. Our days may find a blessed order through the means of Morning and Evening Prayer (and Compline). The year is placed within a Christian context by the means of the lectionary and the Calendar. Finally, our lives can be ordered within a spiritual framework through the various rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Prayer Book. We have seen this principle at work in the services for Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, and the Thanksgiving After Childbirth. lt is only consistent then, that we should also find a formal rite for ministering to the sick. At all points of our lives the Church seeks to bring us closer to God by means of his own inspired remedies.

The Ministry to the Sick is actually composed of five separate ceremonies. There is a fair degree of latitude allowed in the administration of these various rites. In the previous Canadian Prayer Book there were only two major parts to the service. The initial prayers, the "Act of Faith and Prayer", and the provision for private confession were all within a single ceremony. The Communion of the Sick formed a separate service which followed immediately after. Our present Prayer Book added the forms for the "Laying on of Hands" and "Anointing of the Sick". These were part of the first 1549 Prayer Book but were removed in the 1552 revision and only returned when our Prayer Book was last revised in 1959/1962.

As has always been recognized, the formal service for the Ministry to the Sick is not appropriate to every visit that a clergyman makes to each sick person. Although parts of the service, or particular prayers, may well be used regularly, the full rite is intended to be used with more discretion. Nevertheless, if the full rite is used, there is much to be said in favour of the order in which it is presented. As the rubrics indicate, the service moves from those elements which are most commonly used to those mysteries which require greater preparation or more urgent need.

The service fittingly begins with a greeting from Holy Scripture. The minister is not on a social call but is concerned with a spiritual mission. These scriptural passages place the person's sufferings within the context of the love of God. The Comfortable Words may be substituted, for they achieve the same effect. Much of the service presumes that the sick person is well enough to join in the prayers or make the responses, but others may assist in this if he is too infirm. The service can be lengthened by the addition of other prayers, (from the Prayer Book or elsewhere). There is nothing which would rule out the use of extemporaneous prayer, which at times might be more appropriate than the prayers provided.

"An Act of Faith and Prayer" may follow. This further form of ministration centres around a recitation of the Creed (the act of faith). This has been a prominent part of the Anglican ministry to the sick over the centuries. Besides allowing the sick to express their faith in a clear way, the Creed provides them with a connection to the congregation to which they belong. Though they are unable to attend church, they can still participate in the confession of the faith which belongs to the whole Church. Combined with the beautiful prayers which follow, this act of faith helps to overcome the sense of isolation that often attends illness.

The service may conclude at this point, or one may go on to part III, "A Form of Confession and Absolution". There is nothing to prevent this part of the Ministry to the Sick, (or any of the other parts), from being used alone. The rubrics suggest that the sick person may make a "general confession of his sins". This may be accomplished by using one of the forms of Confession found in Morning or Evening Prayer or the Holy Communion service. If the situation requires it, the priest may say the Confession on behalf of the sick person, with him supplying the "Amen".

Page 581 provides a form of private confession of one's sins which can be particularly appropriate in times of sickness. With the possibility of death at hand, the judgement of God looms large in a believer's soul. Many a person lies extremely ill, troubled by something they did or said in the past, for which they still feel guilty. The form for private confession is perfectly suited to such a person. Indeed, if the priest detects that someone is thus "troubled with any weighty matter", he is obliged to encourage a confession. As the rubrics say, "he shall be *moved* to make special confession of his sins". The purpose of this act is not simply to help a person "get something off his chest". As a nineteenth century writer said:

> I believe that Absolution is not only a comfort, but is a means of grace to the soul; or rather is a comfort, because it is a means of grace to the soul; and that God, through man, pronounces forgiveness of sins upon all who truly repent and turn to him.

The residual benefit of this grace is most often, however, a sense of peace on the part of the forgiven person.

Although the rubrics do not demand that this rite be done in private, it is evidently assumed that no one else will be present. In the canons of the Church of England, stiff penalties were provided for any clergyman that would violate the confidence of the penitent individual. This ceremony may take place wherever necessity dictates, with a minimum of attendant ritual.

Following a prayer, the Absolution is given. However, this may be withheld if the priest knows that the confession was not made "humbly and heartily''. The actual form of the Absolution is clear and strong, ensuring that the sick person is made fully aware of the grace which he is receiving.

Since the practice of private confession is unfamiliar in many areas, it

is presumed that teaching will be provided to guard against prejudice and superstition. Not every person will want or need to receive this ministry. Yet there are some who would greatly benefit by it if they knew of it or understood it. In the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, the priest is cautioned:

> Such as shall be satisfied with a general confession (are) not to be offended with them that do use to their further satisfying the auricular and secret confession to the priest; nor those also which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the Church. But in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences, whereas he hath no warrant of God's word to the same.

The form for Confession and Absolution within the Ministry to the Sick has been made as simple and clear as possible.

The Communion service which follows is connected to all that has gone before. The form for Confession and Absolution provides an excellent preparation for the reception of Holy Communion. Once again, this part of the Ministry to the Sick may be performed by itself or in conjunction with the other parts. In ideal conditions the entire service provides a unified and complete ministry and should be used in full. However, depending on the health of the individual this may not always be possible.

The form which is given for Communion is to be used *only* when the person is unable to attend church. This is the only provision for celebrating Communion in a person's house. The service should be seen within the whole context of the Ministry to the Sick as the rubrics direct. The shortened form of the Communion service provided is designed with an eye to the conditions under which the Sacrament is likely to be administered.

While much of the Holy Communion service may be omitted, there are several elements which must remain intact. If the sick person is "very weak" the service may consist only of: the Confession, Absolution, Prayer of Consecration, form of administration of the Sacrament, Lord's Prayer, and blessing. This shortening of the service should not be done merely for convenience — to "save time". If there is a "case of extreme necessity", the priest may simply use the Prayer of Consecration, and the blessing

following the administration of the Sacrament. Once again, it is intended that such a form not become the common practice.

The rubrics declare that the priest shall first receive the Sacrament himself and then administer it to any others present, with the sick person receiving last. This provision helps guard against the risk of infection by making sure that no one receives after the sick person. It is also made clear that those who are unable, through no fault of their own, to receive the Sacrament, are to be comforted. They ought to be assured that if they "stedfastly believe" the redemption won by Christ upon the Cross and are moved to thanksgiving by that knowledge, they spiritually receive the benefit of the Sacrament.

The Ministry to the Sick concludes with "Forms for the Laying on of Hands and Anointing of the Sick". This ancient practice, given authority by Holy Scripture, was absent from the Prayer Book from 1552 until our present Canadian Book. As was suggested above, the movement in the form of our Prayer Book service is from those things which are most commonly done to those which require more preparation or exhibit a more pressing need. Thus, the laying on of hands and the anointing of the sick are only to be done when a person "earnestly desires" them.

Although this rite was, for several centuries, absent from the formal ministry of the Anglican Church, it is undergoing a revival currently. While this is certainly a good thing, we must be careful to avoid those tendencies which made the service unpalatable to the Reformers who removed it from the Prayer Book in 1552. The laying on of hands and the anointing of the sick do not promise miraculous cures. In fact, they are as much concerned with the spiritual health of the individual as with his physical condition. Nevertheless, both acts relate to the physical illness at hand. The prayers provided explain the purpose of the actions.

All the elements of the service taken together provide the full form of ministry described by St. James for healing, but like all our prayers, those connected with the Ministry to the Sick are subject to the will of God. It will not always be his will that we be physically healed. When the sick is not physically healed, it is not as if a rite "failed", or our prayers have gone unanswered; rather we have been given the opportunity to learn more of God's will for us. Spiritual healing is *always* given by God when we ask, regardless of physical healing. The Ministry to the Sick can be used with certainty to the great spiritual benefit of all those who suffer illness.

The Order for the Burial of the Dead

The Canadian Book of Common Prayer (1959/1962) contains an enriched Order for the Burial of the Dead which is a revision of that contained in the Prayer Book of 1662. The service is preceded by beautiful prayers to be used for the dying, which complete the Ministry to the Sick. Through an examination of the Anglican burial service, we shall come to a greater understanding of the ancient and beautiful customs of our Church. This, in turn, ought to open the door to a great source of spiritual comfort and strength. Rightly understood, the Prayer Book service will most surely banish the less desirable aspects of the "secularized" funeral arrangements which have become so common in many places.

The rubrics under the title of the service on page 591 contain important information which must be understood before examining the service itself. The first rubric declares that the pastor of the parish is responsible for the conduct of the burial service. Although the family may well wish another clergyman to be involved in the burial service, the rector of the parish should first be consulted. It remains his duty to assign to assistants what part they may take in the service. It also falls to the pastor of the parish to select the hymns and music to be used at the funeral (although he may well accept suggestions from the family upon occasion). In the same manner, it is the responsibility of the pastor to give instructions to the undertaker in regard to the conduct of the service.

The second rubric instructs that the church is the proper place for all that precedes the service at the grave. The only exception allowed is indicated by the phrase "unless there be special cause to the contrary". By this, the original authors of the Prayer Book intended those situations in which the departed had died from infectious diseases. It was not thought prudent to have the funeral within enclosed spaces in such circumstances. The exception is not therefore present in order to justify the current practice of conducting the funeral office from the funeral parlour. There is something very sad and deficient when the Order for the Burial of the Dead is used outside of the church. The parish church is the "house of God" and is a hallowed place of prayer and refreshment for our souls. In it, we are surrounded by the signs of our faith and are embraced by the air of beauty, dignity and sanctity. It is holy ground and is permeated by the spirit of faith and worship of the people of God. This distinct "char-

acter" (which goes far beyond what words can express) truly makes a deep impression upon the entire service and in turn upon the mourners assembled.

The third rubric instructs that the Burial Office which follows is not to be used in certain circumstances. In the first case, this service cannot be used for those who die unbaptized. This prohibition is not from a lack of charity on the part of the Church. Rather, it is simply the case that certain parts of the service are not appropriate in that situation. A more suitable form of service is suggested. This service is also not to be used for those who die while "excommunicate". Again, the service would not be appropriate in this situation. By excommunicate, we are intended to understand those who were formally placed under a Church sentence of excommunication. This discipline is rarely exercised (at least within the Anglican Church of Canada) any more. If a person has wilfully neglected Holy Communion, he or she is not to be considered as excommunicated. Finally, this service is not to be used in the case of those who take their own lives while in a sound state of mind. This raises many difficulties of course. It is hard to determine with any certainty which people have committed suicide "while in a sound state of mind". If it is determined that a person was not mentally responsible at the time of their death, then the Prayer Book service should be used as it is printed. However, even if the individual was known to be in a sound mental state at the time of his or her death, the Prayer Book service may still be used, provided the designated alterations are made. The Church, in Christ-like charity, reverently makes provision for those persons whose circumstances have made the normal burial service inappropriate.

The fourth rubric outlines the material to be used when the office is to be altered on account of the reasons mentioned above. The nature of the alternative form is evident. It focuses chiefly on the penitential theme of the service and expands upon it. This penitence is always seen within the context of God's mercy in Christ however. The Church seeks to be true to her Lord in those cases where the outward signs are lacking, while recognizing that "God alone knows the secrets of our hearts". We can rest assured in every circumstance that God is utterly fair, righteous, and merciful.

The fifth rubric instructs the priests and clerics to meet the body and precede it into the church (or toward the grave). The English custom was

for the priest to meet the family and friends, who carried the body of the departed, at the gate of the churchyard. From there, the priest led the entire procession into the church. This processional entrance was accompanied by the reading or singing of the sentences from Holy Scripture. The glorious words of Scripture are matched by the solemn dignity of the procession. The procession is not intended to be a dreary shuffling into place, but rather an act of praise and thanksgiving. Here we encounter one of the great glories of the Burial Office when it is used in the church as intended. We do not just enter the church — we come worshipping God.

The sentences that are used in the opening procession are themselves a clear distillation of the entire service. The character of these passages from Holy Scripture is that of rejoicing in the resurrection of Christ. To this rejoicing is added a holy hope in that union of the faithful which awaits those who put their trust in the Lord. The "positive" tone of these sentences is a result of a feature that is characteristic of the entire funeral rite. We are directed to focus our attention, not upon the sorrow surrounding the loss of a loved one, but upon the redemption won for us in Christ. Thus, the sentences speak of a victory that is already accomplished. What remains is our participation in the heavenly kingdom. It is to this that we are to direct our hope.

The intention of the Prayer Book is that all present would actively take part in the service in the same way as in any other service of worship in the Church. The entire congregation should stand, kneel and sit as appropriate. The mourners ought to participate in this way as well. In the rare cases where a mourner may be overcome with grief during the service, an exception certainly should be made. It is interesting to note that in actual experience such exceptions are seldom to be found amongst faithful members of the Church. Indeed, tremendous comfort often comes to the mourners when they take part in the service.

Once the procession is ended the second part of the Burial Office begins. At this point a Psalm is said or sung. "One or more" of the three Psalms provided may be used or another Psalm selected. As the primary hymns of our faith, the Psalms are especially appropriate for the most solemn occasions. The three Psalms provided in the Prayer Book are 90, 121 and 130. These are meant to be congregational acts of worship and it is desirable that the congregation be able to participate in them.

All of the Psalms provided speak of the need to come before God seeking mercy in the face of our weakness and human frailty. They lead us to trust in God, to praise him for his grace, to witness to his holiness, to declare the way of redemption and to rely upon him for "defence" and "keeping". These Psalms are meant to be the opening prayers of the Burial Office. We pray the Psalms, mindful of ourselves and of the one departed this life. While we are reminded in Psalm 90 that life here is fleeting, we are reassured in Psalm 121 that "the Lord shall preserve (us) from all evil". More than that, Psalm 130 goes on to tell us that this protection is not merely physical in nature, but that the Lord will redeem his people from all their sins.

We come next to the lesson from Holy Scripture. This is a powerful proclamation of the victory won over death by Christ. It echoes the opening sentences in its magnificent beginning, "Now is Christ risen from the dead..." No introduction is intended, or needed, for this lesson. The lesson is actually a homily on the resurrection of the body and the second coming of Christ. It reads like a sermon and takes the place of one in this service. What more eloquent words could be added? Any phrases that could be used would pale by comparison with the inspired words of St. Paul. Our funeral service is not intended to be a meditation upon the life of the departed but rather a reflection on the love of God in Christ. Therefore, eulogies are entirely out of place in this service.

The heart of the lesson is the teaching that the body as well as the soul will share in the redemption won for the faithful by the Lord. Those alive at Christ's second coming "shall be changed" and the dead will be raised up. All will receive a spiritual body — both the living and the dead. Our natural bodies will be changed. Although the exact nature of this spiritual body may not be clear to us, we can know that it involves something more than the soul. This challenges the vague notions which are so thoroughly popular in our own society. These ideas would suggest that only the soul is redeemed by God and brought to share in the victory of Christ. This, however, is not the view of Holy Scripture. The very point of our own Lord's bodily resurrection is that Christ has redeemed all of our nature — body and soul. The bodily remains of the faithful are accorded respect for this reason. The body is not to be ignored. While it is not the "spiritual body" which will be given later, it is nevertheless a sign of that new body. The Prayer Book takes this teaching of Scripture at face

value, reflecting it throughout the service. We need not fall back upon sentimental speeches about the departed living on (merely) in our hearts and memories. Rather, we are exhorted to live as faithful Christians, who believe in the resurrection of the dead. Thus, death does not lead to a diminution of our nature, as if we have lost something necessary. On the contrary, we come to see death as the means through which our nature is brought to its fullness by the grace of God.

In passing we might note that there are two alternative lessons provided for use if desired. Each passage from Scripture presents essentially the same teachings as the one described above. However, the resurrection of the body is given its fullest explanation in the passage from 1 Corinthians 15. Unless there is strong reason to the contrary, it ought not to be replaced. The alternative passages might well be used at a time of prayer with the family before the day of the burial.

Following the lesson a hymn or canticle may be sung, though in some cases this may not be desirable. However, the scriptural anthem, "I heard a voice..." is required to be used. There are many excellent hymns from our hymn books which serve to emphasize the truths contained in the lesson just read. The Easter section of hymnals is especially fruitful in this regard. The selection at any rate should be consistent with the tone of the service. The purpose of hymn singing within the church is, most importantly, to praise God. This should be born in mind when selecting music.

Just as singing something after the lesson is optional, so is the recitation of the Apostles' Creed. Normally however, both are very useful additions to the service. The Apostles' Creed serves as a reminder of our Baptism and the faith that we profess as Christians. This is the faith of the faithful departed as well. It is also a useful evangelical tool when recited by the body of the faithful.

Following the Creed are the formal prayers. These begin with the mutual salutation on page 598. It ought to be noticed that the form of the Lord's Prayer to be used contains the powerful and joyous doxology ("For thine is the kingdom..."). It is our custom to begin our prayers with that perfect pattern taught to us by our Lord. Once again it might be emphasized that the entire congregation, including the mourners, is intended to take part fully in the service, joining in the prayers.

Although many of the prayers which follow are optional, the first

prayer on page 599 must be used. This beautiful prayer expresses our sense of hope and faith. We commit our brother (or sister) to God's keeping. It is emphasized that the "perfect consummation" that we look forward to is one of "body and soul" in God's "eternal and everlasting glory". The other prayers speak of different elements of the Christian faith. We pray for the family and friends of the departed, that they may be comforted with the knowledge of God's love and providence. We pray also for the departed themselves, that "that the good work which thou didst begin in them may be perfected unto the day of Jesus Christ". Since not all the congregation will go to the grave it is appropriate to conclude the service in the church with one of the blessings provided or else the Grace.

The service then continues with the procession of the body to the grave. Upon arrival the priest or clerics say or sing the solemn prayer found at the bottom of page 601. This part of the service (commonly referred to as the committal) is a vital part of the burial service. It is under no circumstances to be omitted. It should not be said in the church or in advance of the actual burial. As the body (or the ashes) of the departed is committed to the ground, earth should be cast upon it. Although the rubrics do not specify it, it is to be assumed that the body will actually be lowered into the grave at this point. This last earthly act of charity towards the bodily remains of the departed is properly conducted in prayer and with reverence. For this reason, the committal prayers should actually be used during the committal. To do the committal at the back of the church makes no sense whatsoever and, in any case, is excluded by the rubrics.

Following the committal of the remains to the ground, the beautiful anthem used previously is repeated, with great purpose. The concluding prayer (which may be said in the church previously) sums up the hope and teaching of the entire service as we cast our trust upon the Lord and his mercy. The Grace or one of the blessings given above concludes the service. A form of prayer to be used when the burial is other than in consecrated ground is provided. This should be used in advance of the committal.

The Prayer Book provides a shorter service for use "At the Burial of a Child". This service is appropriate for one who has died without sin. The prayers do not ask for God's mercy, for we are assured of it in such a case. The lesson reminds us of our Saviour's love towards children and of their

innocence. The Psalm provided speaks of God's providence. The penitential tone of the Psalms in the Burial Office for adults is altogether absent.

The prayers which are given to be used are surely amongst the most beautiful in the entire Book of Common Prayer. The phrase "whose face the angels of the little ones do always behold in heaven", is drawn from the lesson. This reflects our belief in "guardian angels". Rather than praying that the child departed be received into the arms of God's love (as we do in the service for adults) we ask simply that our eyes be opened to know that which has already been done. Our tone is one of assurance.

Similarly, the service at the grave reminds us of our Saviour's saying, "let the little children come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven". The difference in tone between this service and the preceding one is obvious and not accidental. Our Church wishes to make abundantly clear to those who must suffer through the death of a child that God's salvation is certain. There can be no doubt of the promises of Christ in such a situation. Although the circumstances are dreadful, we can take heart in the knowledge that in the last day, together with the child, we may be united in Christ's eternal kingdom.

A Penitential Service

The Book of Common Prayer contains "A Penitential Service" which begins on page 611. It was designed for use on Ash Wednesday "and at other times". The rubrics go on to tell us that the office may be used "as a separate service, or with Morning or Evening Prayer, Litany or Holy Communion". Although this service is often overlooked, it is well worth examining. Through the course of this book, the argument has been made that the Book of Common Prayer is able to provide an orderly and balanced spiritual pattern for every person, at every stage of life or time of year. The Penitential Rite plays an important part in this spiritual structure.

The present "Penitential Service" replaces a longer and more severe rite which was introduced first in the Prayer Book of 1549 and which came to be known as the "Commination Service". Although it was directed to be used four times a year, in later times its use was restricted to Ash Wednesday. This service had replaced, in its turn, the very stern medieval "Form of the Greater Excommunication". Although the Commination service appears quite gloomy to contemporary eyes, it was less demanding than its predecessor.

While our present service is clearly most appropriate for use on Ash Wednesday, it may also be used at other times early in Lent, or in other seasons of the Church Year (provided the opening Exhortation is omitted in this latter case). It is one of the more solemn of the Church's offices, particularly when combined with the Litany. The purpose of the service is to provide a formal focus for those penitential devotions which are appropriate at certain seasons. While earlier rites of the Church contained more elaborate ceremony, such as the imposition of ashes, the Prayer Book service is characteristically simple. The service is essentially one of prayer, with most of it being said while kneeling.

The service begins with sentences from Scripture (reminiscent of Morning and Evening Prayer, and the Burial Office). These sentences serve the dual purpose of setting the tone of what is to follow and providing a scriptural explanation of the character of penitence. First, we are to be moved to repentance because of the approaching nearness of the Kingdom of Heaven. Though we know not "the hour nor the day", we know that we are always closer than we were yesterday to meeting our Lord and Maker. The second sentence reminds us of the mission of Christ, which

was to redeem the children of God. The final sentence reminds us that we shall find refreshment in Christ. This is true in a general way throughout our lives and more particularly as we enter into our Lenten disciplines. Through his grace, our burdens may be made light.

The rubrics direct that a "penitential hymn" follow the sentences. There are many suitable hymns of this nature found in the Lent section of the Hymnal. The Exhortation which follows the hymn is intended to be a form of instruction as much as one of encouragement. The purpose of Lent is explained as well as the justification for Lenten disciplines such as fasting. The earlier rites such as the "Commination Service" are recalled as well. Lent is to be considered an appropriate time for notorious sinners to be reconciled to the Church. In Lenten missions we see a way of reconciling those who have drifted away from the Church as well as rekindling the zeal of those who are more active. The Exhortation concludes by bidding us to follow a Lenten program of "self-examination and repentance... prayer, fasting, and self-denial... and reading and meditation upon God's holy Word".

Following the Exhortation, the lesson is read from Joel. This lesson reminds us of those two great and complementary truths of the Christian religion: we are sinners who must repent; and God hears our prayers and is ever merciful towards us. The lesson is expanded upon in the recitation of Psalm 51, which follows. This Psalm, which is to be said kneeling, has always had a place in the penitential rites of the Church. Once again, we are moved to admit our own sinfulness and unworthiness. Our salvation cannot be purchased through works ("thou delightest not in burnt offerings"). Instead, God calls us to turn to him in repentance ("a broken and contrite heart shalt thou not despise"). If we repent and turn to the Lord, then our works of charity and devotion can be used to God's glory.

The prayers which follow begin quite naturally with the *Kyrie* ("Lord, have mercy upon us...") and the Lord's Prayer. The versicles and responses which come next are drawn from Psalms 86, 20, 79 and 102 respectively. They strike a very solemn tone, emphasizing our dependence upon God's aid and defence. If the Penitential Service is being said by itself, the Collect of the Day follows next. The three prayers that are then said come directly from the Commination service, though they have even more ancient roots. In each prayer the balance is maintained between the need for repentance on our part and the love and mercy that God offers to those

who turn to him. This same beautiful relation is seen in the "Prayer of Humble Access" from the Communion service.

If the service is being used in conjunction with the Holy Communion, then it concludes here and the Eucharist begins. Otherwise, the priest is directed to read Matthew 5:1-20, "or some other portion of the Sermon on the Mount". This scriptural homily on moral behaviour provides the text for the following "instruction". Thus, the Penitential Service is intended to provide both an opportunity for repentance and practical instruction for future action.

The service may be concluded with the devotions provided "or other prayers from this book". The devotions provided are drawn from ancient sources and return us to the theme of solemn repentance. There is a plea for mercy said by the priest and people together followed by the admonition that used to accompany the imposition of ashes in the older services: "Remember, O man, that dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." We then pray again for God's forgiveness and ask for help that we may in turn forgive those who offend us.

The service concludes with the revered and beautiful anthem "O King all glorious amid thy saintly company..." The solemn and penitent tone of the service is once again joined to the theme of God's mercy. As the service began by reminding that the Kingdom of God is at hand, so it concludes, before the scriptural blessing, with a look forward to the Day of Judgement.

The Ordinal

The Book of Common Prayer contains, besides its various services of worship, two additional parts. According to the title page of our present Canadian Prayer Book the first of these is the Psalter. The other part, which begins on page 637, is entitled:

> The Form and Manner of Making Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons According to the Order of the Anglican Church of Canada.

This is otherwise known as the Ordinal. Comprising the rites of ordination for the three Holy Orders of the Church, it is one of the most important parts of the Prayer Book.

The first Ordinal in the English language was not offered for the Church's use until 1550. It was the work of twelve bishops and scholars, with Archbishop Thomas Cranmer doing much of the actual writing. This Ordinal was revised in the Prayer Books of 1552, 1559 and 1662. This last revision, with very minor alterations, is that which is contained in our Canadian Prayer Book. While ancient Ordinals (including continental and older English rites) were used as models, much of the Prayer Book service consists of original compositions. Generally, this was the result of the compilers' intention to fashion a form which was thoroughly biblical in character and content. As a result of this intention, the Ordinal produced (and that which has survived subsequent revisions) is relatively sparse in terms of external ceremony.

The Ordinal begins with a Preface that is said to have been composed by Cranmer himself. This introduction serves to declare the Church's confidence in the scriptural nature of its three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. Beyond this, it is asserted that,

> no man might presume to execute any of [the three Orders], except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same.

Authority to minister within Holy Orders can only be conferred by the Church; it cannot be taken upon oneself. In order to be ordained, deacons must be at least 23 years of age, priests must be 24 and bishops 30. Those who wish to be ordained must be examined by the bishop, or by some other competent authority in relation to their knowledge of "holy

Scripture... and the Latin tongue". (Expertise in Latin is seldom required nowadays.) If the candidate is found sufficiently learned, then he may be ordained, "in the Ember Seasons, or upon any Sunday or Holy-day".

The practice of holding ordinations upon Ember Days has been customary in the Church for centuries. The collect appointed in the Prayer Book for use on Ember Days reflects this association (see page 210).

THE ORDERING OF DEACONS

The Ordination of Deacons is intended to follow after Morning Prayer and to be used in conjunction with the Holy Communion. In recent times when ordinations very often take place in the evening, the practice is to have the service following Evening Prayer. Following a sermon "declaring the duty and office of such as come to be admitted deacons", the candidates are presented by the archdeacon, a custom that dates from the early centuries of the Church's history. Although this presentation may appear wooden and stiff, it is important that it not be regarded as a mere formality. It is of great importance that those who would offer themselves for ordination be examined and found fit. Echoing the query in the service for Holy Matrimony, the bishop then inquires if anyone present knows any "impediment or notable crime", which would disqualify the candidate(s) for Holy Orders. If there is any such crime alleged, the ordination must cease until the individual can be cleared of guilt.

The Litany is recited at this point in the service. This formal prayer is sadly neglected in many places nowadays. Its comprehensive and devout character is especially appropriate for times of special solemnity such as ordinations. The actual use of a litany at ordinations is a very ancient custom of the Church, dating back to at least the fifth century. More than simply praying for God's grace to be given to the ordained, the Litany calls the entire congregation, including the candidates, to be mindful of the fullness of our responsibilities as Christians.

Following this solemn prayer, the Communion service is commenced. The collect, Epistle and Gospel appointed to be used make clear that the basis for our understanding of Holy Orders is rooted in Scripture. The duties that are imposed upon deacons are those that are imposed by the Word of God. Thus, the vows taken are no light thing, but involve recognizing that the ordained are under the authority of God himself. The Epistle to Timothy, which is used in the service, exhorts those about to

be ordained to the highest standards of moral conduct. The Gospel, which is read somewhat later, emphasizes the themes of service and readiness. The deacons are reminded that they are called to obey the Lord, "whose service is perfect freedom". This calling is not simply a job, but a "vocation" which must be all-consuming. The deacons must be "like unto men that wait for the Lord", in constant service throughout their lives.

The examination and vows follow the reading of the Epistle or Lesson. This examination begins with the fundamental question, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost..." Following the direction of Scripture, the bishop goes on to test the spirit by which the candidate is moved (see 1 John 4:1). In other words, it is not sufficient for the candidate to simply claim to be called by God. It falls to the bishop to determine if this calling is genuine. If it is, then the candidate will have no difficulty in answering positively to the questions asked. lt is necessary for the candidate to recognize the "due order of this Church". As well, he must believe that the holy Scriptures contain "all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation", which salvation is "through faith in Jesus Christ".

The deacon has the duty to proclaim the Gospel and must therefore promise to read it to the church that he serves. The pastoral responsibilities of a deacon are recited by the bishop. The deacon is not only required to assent to these duties but to be prepared to fulfill them "gladly and willingly". At all times it must be kept in mind that those who are ordained are serving God. Every routine task, every duty performed on behalf of a parishioner ought to be regarded as part of this divine service. After all, our Lord tells us: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). Joined to these pastoral responsibilities are personal moral duties and the necessity of obedience to the "godly admonitions" of the Ordinary (the bishop) and "other chief ministers of the Church".

As in all ancient ordination rites of the Church, the actual laying on of hands is accompanied by suitable prayer. The ordination itself is declared in certain and sure terms:

> Take thou authority to execute the office of a Deacon in the Church of God committed unto thee; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

This is followed by the handing of the New Testament to the one or-

dained. This symbolizes the responsibility to preach the Gospel as well as reminding everyone that the authority for this ministry is found in Holy Scripture. Fittingly, one of the newly ordained then reads the liturgical Gospel.

THE ORDERING OF PRIESTS

The form for the "Ordering of Priests" is longer and, in many ways, more complex than the corresponding form for deacons. As is indicated in the opening rubrics, those to be ordained priest will normally have been deacons for at least one year. While this certainly ensures that the priest will have served some "pastoral apprenticeship" before he is ordained, there is another and deeper reason. The special function of deacons is service. The year spent as deacon should be seen as a period in which one has the opportunity to develop, through service, the humility required of a priest.

The service begins in much the same manner as the previous rite, with the presentation by the archdeacon and the invitation of objections from the congregation. The Litany is said or sung next followed by the beginning of the service of Holy Communion. It will be noticed that the Epistle and Gospel provided for this service are different from those provided for deacons. The appointed lessons, as explained above, provide a scriptural context for the ordination. The character of each order is made clear as well as the authority for it. Thus, in this service, we have an Epistle from Ephesians which lists the various types of ministries given by God. The Gospel specifies the functions of a priest by alluding to the relation between a shepherd and his sheep. As will be seen later, this image from Scripture provides the basis for our understanding of a priest's work.

The Scripture readings are followed by an Exhortation which is surely one of the most memorable and outstanding parts of our entire Ordinal. This solemn charge, delivered by the bishop, was written expressly for the Book of Common Prayer, as opposed to being adapted from any earlier rite. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Exhortation reflects a characteristically Anglican appreciation of Holy Scripture and an emphasis upon the great weight of pastoral responsibility connected with the priesthood. The theme of the shepherd and his sheep is recalled. Indeed, the charge is nothing more than a commentary and expansion upon the

Scripture readings. What is at the heart of the message is the love which must underlie a priest's work. This love and devotion is rooted in Christ and is directed both towards God and the priest's flock. It is sacrificial and absolute. All of the priest's life is to be governed by it. He is to bear real and personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. "Howbeit, ye cannot have a mind and will thereto of yourselves; for that will and ability is given of God alone." As a result of this understanding, the priest is to be devoted to the study of Scripture so that he might discern the will of God and the mind of Christ.

Following this magnificent (and awe-inspiring) charge, the priest is examined and then makes solemn vows. He must believe that he is called by Christ and specifically to the order of priesthood with "this Church". Beyond this, he must be persuaded that Holy Scripture contains *all* doctrine necessary for salvation and be prepared to teach nothing as being so necessary unless it comes from the Scripture. It is important to see that the ministry of the Church cannot be separated from Holy Scripture.

The vows that are made are also notable. The priest must vow "always" to minister the Word of God and the sacraments as they have been received by this Church. The priest therefore has no authority to interpret the Scriptures to his people after his own understanding. He must teach what the Church has always taught and no more. In fact, he must be prepared "to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word". In order to do this, the priest must be "diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures". This diligence will require "laying aside the study of the world and the flesh". So complete is the dedication required for this sacred vocation that the priest must also "frame and fashion [his]... family, according to the doctrine of Christ". The entire family is to be an example to the congregation. Therefore, the priesthood is not merely a job, but a lifelong vocation which encompasses the whole of the individual's existence. He is to live, as well as to preach, the way of Christ. The love that he is to have towards his people is linked to the obedience that he should have to the authority of the Church.

The vows are followed by two prayers, which precede and follow the *Veni Creator*. The first prayer is for the grace of God to strengthen the will that has made the vows. The ancient hymn "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire..." has found a place in ordinations for about a thousand years. It is said to have been composed much earlier, in the 4th century by

St. Ambrose. It is followed in turn by a beautiful prayer, modelled upon similar forms found in many ancient Ordinals. It forms the preface to the actual ordination and is a form of high thanksgiving.

The rubric which follows commands the bishops and the assembled priests to "lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receives the Order of Priesthood". The "laying on of hands" comes directly to us from Holy Scripture, that being the way in which St. Paul conveyed apostolic authority to Timothy. Thus, ordination has included, from the earliest days of the Church, the necessary laying on of hands by a bishop. This solemn ceremony is accompanied by suitable words:

> Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands.

The form "Receive the Holy Ghost..." is recognized as the words of our Saviour when he gave the Apostles power to forgive sins (John 20:21). Respecting this divine gift, the authority to forgive and retain sins is similarly passed along to the priest in ordination. Again, the actual words of our Lord are used. The priest is charged to be "a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments". The act of ordination is sealed by the invocation of the Holy Trinity.

Following the laying on of hands, the priest is given the Bible by the bishop. He is still kneeling for this ceremony. The Bible contains the authority for his entire ministry — both Word and sacrament. As was mentioned above, the Scriptures are to be his guide, both for pastoral ministry and personal conduct. The Bible, as the Word of God, is our final authority. Its presentation to the priest at this point serves to underscore its importance in his vocation.

The rest of the service of Holy Communion follows the actual ordination. The prayers which conclude the Communion service are set out on pages 655-656. They remind the priest(s) of the centrality of God's Holy Word. As well, it is repeated that the words and deeds of a priest must be similarly holy in character.

THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS

Ordinations are directed (in the rubrics) to take place after Morning Prayer. The same holds true for the consecration of bishops. This was intended to remind us of the "third hour" in which the Holy Spirit

descended upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). In the early Church, Sunday was held to be a particularly appropriate day on which to consecrate bishops, as it was on the first day of the week that our Lord appeared to his Apostles and through his breath gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20). Normally, the consecration of a bishop or archbishop would take place in the cathedral in which he is to serve.

The duty of consecrating a bishop usually falls to his archbishop, although another bishop may take his place if necessary. However, it is intended (as the service reveals) that there be at least three bishops present for any episcopal consecration. One of the bishops, usually the archbishop, is designated the consecrator, while the other two bishops are given the responsibilities of reading the Epistle and Gospel. In actuality, all three bishops (and any others present) take part in the laying on of hands.

The service begins straightaway with the collect, Epistle and Gospel. As in the case of the ordination services for deacons and priests, the proper readings are specially chosen for the service, rather than simply being those of the Sunday upon which the ordination falls. In this case, the Epistle and Gospel, (as well as the Lesson from Acts, which may replace the Epistle) are wonderful teaching tools. The Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy makes clear the character that a bishop must possess. After all, as the successor of the Apostles, the bishop must serve as an example to the entire flock, as well as a witness to "them which are without". The Lesson from the Acts of the Apostles contains St. Paul's moving last speech to the elders of Ephesus. The Apostle's words serve as a living example to those who are to be bishops. Finally, the Holy Gospel comes from John 21. Our Lord's final charge to St. Peter serves to explain the basic duty of a bishop: "Feed my sheep". If the bishop truly loves the Lord, this duty will become his all-consuming vocation. Alternatively, the Gospel can be drawn from John 20 or Matthew 28.

Following the collect, Epistle and Gospel, the service continues with the Nicene Creed and the sermon. The elected bishop is directed to be presented "vested in his rochet". This is the distinctive vestment of a bishop, somewhat resembling an alb, except that it is shorter in length. It will be noted that the archbishop is addressed "Most reverend Father in God..." This is to be compared to the simpler form of address used in the other two ordination services. Following the presentation, the bish-

op-elect is required to make his oath of obedience. At the consecration of an archbishop this oath is naturally omitted. The first part of the service is concluded with the Litany. The bidding to prayer, given by the archbishop on page 661, places the action within a scriptural context. As is the case with the other two ordination services, an appropriate petition is placed in the Litany, with specific reference to the relevant order.

The service moves next to "the examination". Quite rightly, this examination is prefaced with a prayer for the candidate. It is important that the flock have confidence in their bishop and thus the archbishop introduces the examination, "to the end that the congregation present may have a trial". The first question, following the pattern of the ordination services for deacons and priests, asks if the candidate believes himself to be "truly called to this ministration". The next three questions inquire as to the candidate's relation to Holy Scripture. He must be persuaded of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture and be determined not to exceed its authority in matters relating to eternal salvation. Beyond this, the candidate must promise to be a student of the Bible, using it "to teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine" and also to oppose doubters. Finally, and most strongly, the bishop-elect must be ready to oppose any teaching that is contrary to God's Word. The questions concerning Scripture are followed by practical and moral inquiries. The candidate must live a Christian life, having particular concern for the "poor and needy people".

Following the examination, the service moves into the consecration itself. As was the custom in many ancient liturgies, the bishop is vested in his "episcopal habit" and kneels for the singing of the beautiful hymn *Veni Creator*. This is followed by a long prayer which prefaces the laying on of hands. This prayer sums up the duties of a bishop and asks God for the grace that he might perform the same.

The laying on of hands is carried out by the archbishop and the other bishops present, as the bishop-elect kneels before them. Once again, the words used are those of Holy Scripture, "Receive the Holy Ghost..." Here they are doubly appropriate, since the bishops are the successors of the Apostles, to whom Christ first gave that precious gift. The particular work of a bishop, as given in the consecration is to "stir up the grace of God..." Both in their sacramental ministry (through confirmations and ordinations), and in their teaching and example, bishops have the duty of assisting the work of the Holy Ghost. This sacred task is to be carried out

in a spirit of "power, and love, and soberness."

The bishop is then presented with a Bible. This is a most significant act, since it underlines the importance of Holy Scripture in the work of a bishop. The authority that he exercises is not his own, but rather that of the Word of God. The Scriptures are to be his guide and inspiration. They are not some sort of paper idol. Instead, they are the only record that we have of God speaking to us. They are truly the Word of God. To follow the Bible is to follow God. To act or teach contrary to Scripture is to oppose the Lord. Once again, the image that is recalled is that of the shepherd and his sheep.

The bishop is personally responsible before God for his people. This sense of responsibility and obedience is recalled finally in the prayer that is given to be said near the end of the Communion service. We pray that the bishop may set forth Christ both in word and deed. This vocation will be his course to fulfill.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion

William E. Leidt, in his book *Anglican Mosaic*, a preparation for the Anglican Congress held in Toronto in 1963, wrote concerning the Anglican Church's role in the worldwide ecumenical movement: "It is a great pity when some Anglicans talk depreciatingly of certain things they possess, as though of necessity they had to be devalued in order to placate others who may not possess them". As Anglicans, one of our possessions of great value, which is constantly either devalued or simply ignored today, is our Articles of Religion. This "devaluation" of the Articles is often done in an ecumenical spirit, in order to tone down the differences between our church and others, and promote greater unity in the Church at large. However, considering the prominence of the Thirty-Nine Articles in the history of the Church of England, and the Anglican Communion, it would seem essential that they be included in any and all deliberations concerning who we are as Anglicans, and our relation to the world-wide Church.

In order to understand the contents and importance of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (pages 698-714) we shall divide our consideration of the subject into four parts: 1) What are the Articles? 2) Why were they formulated? 3) What authority do they have? and 4) What do they say?

1) What are the Thirty-Nine Articles?

According to the writers of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, the Thirty-Nine Articles are:

> The set of doctrinal formulae finally accepted by the C of E [Church of England] in its attempt to define its dogmatic position in relation to the controversies of the 16th century... The Thirty Nine Articles are not a statement of Christian doctrine in the form of a creed, nor the exposition of a creed already accepted. They are, rather, short summaries of dogmatic tenets, each article dealing with some point raised in current controversies and laying down in general terms the Anglican view. Though not ostensibly vague, they avoid unduly narrow definition.

They do not have the place of the three Creeds (the Nicene, Apostles', and Athanasian) but do help define our relation to the Church Catholic — the rest of the Christian world.

2) Why were they formulated?

As was stated above, the Thirty-Nine Articles were formulated to help settle the controversies of the 16th century by "laying down" in general terms the Anglican view. They arose out of a need for positive statements showing the Church of England's position with regard to the theological disputes of the Reformation and King Henry VIII's breach with Rome in 1534. The aim of the Articles was to give to the Church and state "in things essential clarity, and in things non-essential liberty''. They were agreed upon "for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion" (John Knox, *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, page 53). They were also meant as doctrinal standards for interpreting the Prayer Book, as Archbishop Parker explained in his letter to Queen Elizabeth in 1566, asking her to give assent to the bill that would require all clergy to "subscribe" (or formally assent) to the 1563 version of the Articles. There were various versions of the Articles, beginning with the Ten Articles of 1536, until 1571 when the Thirty-Nine Articles, as we now have them, were subscribed to by the Upper House of Convocation. They have remained unaltered down to today.

They were designed to be a sharp, two edged sword used to define the Anglican position at the time of the Reformation against the errors of both Rome and the extreme Protestant bodies. It has been argued that, as they were designed to define a position in relation to 16th century controversies, the Articles have outlived their usefulness. However, the opposite is true. As Protestant and Catholic differences continue to divide Christendom today, perhaps the time has come for the Articles and the Anglican position to be reconsidered as a possible middle ground to unite the Western Church. Had the questions of the Reformation been answered satisfactorily, Protestants and Catholics may have reunited at that time. The fact that the division remains within the Church shows that the questions addressed in the Articles are still very much alive.

The Articles continue, in their way, to perform the job which they were originally formulated to do: to unify the Church in essential matters, to allow flexibility in non-essential matters and to avoid diversities of opinions. "They lay down as much as was thought necessary... to secure catholic faith and ordered life in the reformed Church of England, but beyond that minimum they do not seek to go" (J.I. Packer, *The Articles of the Church of England*, page 31)

3) What Authority Do They Have?

The Solemn Declaration of 1893 (the founding document of the Anglican Church of Canada) states:

> ...We declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world... And we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in The Book of Common Prayer... and in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion; and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity.
>
> *(Book of Common Prayer, page viii)*

In 1911, when the work of revision for a new Canadian Prayer Book (1918) was completed, it was declared that "no change, in either text or rubric, shall be introduced which will involve or imply a change of doctrine or principles" (Armitage, *The Story of the Canadian Revision of the Prayer Book*, page 33). Individual Anglican churches in various countries may have the right to revise their Prayer Books but such revisions must always be done within a certain set of doctrinal formulations. As part of the Catholic Church, for example, our Prayer Books must be within the theological framework laid down by the Creeds. As part of the Anglican Communion, our Prayer Books must reflect and be regulated by the domestic creed of the Anglican Communion, the Thirty-Nine Articles. Thus, the Articles remain the theological and moral cornerstone of our Anglican Church of Canada.

4) What do they say?

In 1604 (with Canon V) the Articles became the authorized doctrinal standard for the Church of England. They were the terms of communion for the laity (who were not allowed to speak against them), and the confession of faith for the clergy, who must subscribe to them. Historically, then, what the Articles had to say was of the greatest importance to clergyman and layman alike. If we break the Articles down into six simple major classifications we can see their truly doctrinal nature. They were meant to explain the Anglican view of man's proper relation to God, the Church, and to other men in the world.

Articles I - V	1.	The Holy Trinity
Articles VI - VIII	2.	The Rule of Faith
Articles IX - XVIII	3.	Doctrine
Articles XIX - XXXIV	4.	The Church, its sacraments and ministers
Articles XXXV - XXXVII	5.	Regulations affecting the C of E in particular
Articles XXXVIII - XXXIX	6.	Civil rights and duties

While it is not true that the Articles are ambiguous, it is true that they are "studiedly minimal in their requirements". They leave many secondary questions open because they are meant to be a means of unity in essentials. Thus the possibility of disunity in non-essentials must exist, and that is what the flexibility of the Anglican Church arises from. We are to be united in essential doctrines but free to express these doctrines with some degree of liberality within the Prayer Book tradition.

The result of the Articles' having laid down only a minimum for the faith was that different interpretations of the Articles immediately arose. These different schools of interpretation still exist today. However, we shall try, as much as it in us lies, to give a simple description of what each Article is about, without siding with any one. It is hoped that readers of this paper will read through all of the Articles of Religion (pages 698-714) before reading this summary.

I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity: What we mean by the Trinity.

II. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man: How God became Man and united men to himself.

III. Of the going down of Christ into Hell: That Christ showed himself to the dead as well as to those who were alive when he was on earth.

IV. Of the Resurrection of Christ: That Christ's rising from the dead was a physical reality and he took his risen body into heaven until he shall return to judge us all.

V. Of the Holy Ghost: That he is equal to the Father and the Son and proceeds (comes from) them equally as the eternal love that binds them.

VI. Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation: That God's revelation of himself in the Bible is all the knowledge that we need to be saved. That the Old and New Testaments are our authority for all doctrine while

the Apocrypha are helpful in applying this doctrine to our lives.

VII. Of the Old Testament: That the Old Testament was the necessary forerunner of the New and prepared for the coming of Christ. The moral standards (but not the ceremonial rites) of the Old Testament still stand for all Christians.

VIII. Of the Three Creeds: That the Nicene, the Apostles', and Athanasian Creeds are to be believed because they can be proved from the Bible.

IX. Of Original or Birth-sin: That every person is infected by sin from birth, and cannot by nature fulfill God's commandments or inherit his promises. But for those that confess their sinfulness and are baptized into the salvation offered us by Jesus Christ, there is no condemnation for this sin.

X. Of Free Will: Because we are all infected by sin from birth, the only freedom we have is the freedom to sin, unless the grace of God goes before us. On our own, without Christ, we are able only to fall even further from God.

XI. Of the Justification of Man: We are not, and cannot be, made right in the eyes of God, except through faith in Jesus Christ who *was* right before God.

XII. Of Good Works: We cannot win our way into heaven by doing good works but we can show our thankfulness to God for the gift of Christ, who freely puts away our sins and clears an entrance for us into the Father's presence.

Xlll. Of Works before Justification: Good works done before Baptism and without faith in Christ do not please God because they ignore Jesus Christ, his complete goodness and love.

XIV. Of Works of Supererogation: As we are commanded to love God with all of our hearts and souls and minds and strength, it is not possible that we should do "more" than our Christian duty. We always do less than we should do and therefore always need forgiveness.

XV. Of Christ alone without Sin: Only Christ was sinless by nature. All other men are only made sinless by adoption, that is, through Baptism and being accepted into God's household by faith in his natural Son. We become God's adopted sons through Baptism, but still must fight against our natural selves.

XVI. Of Sin after Baptism: We still sin after we are baptized but we

need only confess our sins and desire not to sin again, to be forgiven and restored to a state of grace with God.

XVII. Of Predestination and Election: We are all created and called by God to inherit eternal life, and God gave us the means to answer this call by sending his Son Jesus Christ. Those who through grace obey the calling inherit eternal life. It is a most comforting thing for those who answer God's call to know that he is at work guarding and guiding them every step along the way through this life.

XVlll. Of obtaining eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ: It is not enough to simply have your own beliefs, for by nature our own beliefs can only lead us into error and away from God. God has revealed to us the way to be with him and that Way is Jesus Christ.

XIX. Of the Church: That the visible Church exists where the Word of God is truly preached and the sacraments administered as Christ ordained them to be. All particular churches are susceptible to errors because churches, like people, can be unfaithful to Christ's commands.

XX. Of the Authority of the Church: The Church is the defender and proclaimer of the faith but has no authority to proclaim or change anything in the faith contrary to the Bible. The Church cannot proclaim anything as dogma (necessary to salvation) against the witness of Scripture.

XXI. Of the Authority of General Councils: General Councils cannot simply call themselves into existence but must be called by the rightful authorities. Because councils are made up of people liable to sin, they are able to make mistakes, and so cannot pass anything that cannot be clearly backed up by Scripture.

XXII. Of Purgatory: That the Roman doctrine of purgatory along with other aspects of the Roman cult of the saints, is not founded upon Scripture and so cannot be taught.

XXlll. Of Ministering in the Congregation: That those taking the office of public ministers of the Church must be properly called and sent by those who have authority in the Church.

XXIV. Of speaking in the Congregation in such a tongue as the people understandeth: The people should understand the language of worship.

XXV. Of the Sacraments: The sacraments are not only tokens but effectual signs of God's grace to us. God works invisibly through the sacraments, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Those five commonly

called sacraments do not have the same character as Christ's Sacraments, because the Lord gave us no ceremony for their administration, unlike Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. The sacraments should be used as they were intended to be used: improper use of the sacraments can do us great harm.

XXVI. Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament: The effectiveness of the sacraments to nurture our faith is not dependent upon how good or bad our minister is. So long as the sacraments are rightfully administered and we receive them in faith, they are still effective means of grace. Immoral or heretical ministers, however, can and should be dealt with by the proper Church authorities.

XXVII. Of Baptism: That through Baptism we are marked as Christians, grafted into Christ's Church, born again of the Spirit, confirmed in faith, and sealed as adopted sons of God. The Baptism of children is in accord with Christ's institution of the Sacrament.

XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper: That Christ is really present in the Holy Communion in a way appropriate to a "sacrament". According to the Catechism (page 550) a sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace..." Thus, under the outward sign of bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ are present. This presence does not remove the necessity of worthy and faithful reception, however.

XXIX. Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper: Those who receive Holy Communion without faith do not receive any of its benefits but only heap upon themselves condemnation because they do not respect the sanctity of the Sacrament.

XXX. Of both kinds: That the Church must administer the Holy Communion in both kinds (bread and wine) as our Lord did at the Last Supper.

XXXI. Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross: That Christ's offering and sacrifice upon the Cross was all that was needed to win the salvation of the whole world. Our sacrifice can only be one of praise and thanksgiving to God for the saving sacrifice of his Son. We cannot buy God's favour through the saying of Masses.

XXXII. Of the Marriage of Priests: Just as the majority of the Apostles were married, so can bishops, priests, and deacons of the Church marry if they judge themselves called to marriage by God.

XXXIII. Of excommunicate Persons, how they are to be avoided: That anyone

who is officially excommunicated (cut off) from the unity of the Church is not to receive any of the privileges of a Christian until he be openly reconciled and received back into the Church by proper authority.

XXXIV. Of the Traditions of the Church: As customs and people differ around the world, so do traditions in the Church differ, and they can be changed. But anyone who willingly, and through his own private judgement, changes and breaks the traditions and ceremonies of the Church that do not go against the Bible, and proper authority, ought to be stopped, as he can do damage to the order of the Church and the faith of weaker Christians. National churches have the right to change any ceremony or rite that is made up by men, so long as it is to the building up of the Church.

XXXV. Of the Homilies: That a book of sermons called *The Book of Homilies* contains excellent teaching, necessary for the times, and should be read in the churches at the time of the sermon.

XXXVI. Of the Consecration of Bishops and Ministers: That all those ordained under the New Ordinal of Edward VI are properly ordained in the Church. (This was, and is, designed to quiet the complaints of those who claim that Anglican clergy are not properly ordained.)

XXXVII. Of the Civil Magistrates: That the state has its proper realm in earthly things and the Church has its proper realm in spiritual things. So long as the state keeps to its realm it should be given the respect and obedience as is given to all godly rulers in holy Scriptures according to God's own ordinances. Likewise should the Church keep to the spiritual realm.

XXXVIII. Of Christian men's Goods, which are not common: As God gives freely to us, so ought we to give freely to others according to our ability. No other person has a right to the gifts God has given us, as we have no right to another's possession.

XXXIX. Of a Christian man's Oath: We should not swear indiscriminately but, as Christians, we may be called upon to bear witness under oath, so that truth and justice may be furthered. This is to remind us that being a disciple of Christ affects every facet of our lives, including our relation to the law of the land.

In summary then, the Articles of Religion are a kind of domestic creed (the house-rules) of the Anglican Church. They lay down the minimum of what we believe as Anglicans, and set us squarely between our Roman

Catholic and Protestant neighbours in the Western Church. It is our Articles (together with our Prayer Book) that define what we are and what we believe as a Church in distinction from other Christian Churches. We possess this inheritance as Anglicans. We must be sure to use it, to our age's and our souls' benefit, "and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity".

The Creed of Saint Athanasius

The Creed of Saint Athanasius is so important, beautiful, and interesting that it is a shame it is seldom used in public worship any more, or in private study and prayer. In order to appreciate the place of this ancient statement of faith, it is necessary that we come to understand its purpose and place within the Church. It may help, first of all, to consider all creeds or summaries of the faith, as fences. They define the boundaries of the Christian faith to give the Christian family a clear idea of what they believe. This purpose for creeds is expressed in the Creed of Saint Athanasius in verses 1-2, and 41-42 where it warns Christians of the danger that lies outside the ground of the historic faith. The rubric on page 698 rightly points out that we should be careful to heed God's warnings as well as his promises. But this Creed is also a most wonderful fence to lean upon in order to gaze into and contemplate the wondrous mystery of the eternal God as he has been revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Creed works by moving back and forth between what we are compelled to believe and what we must not. No attempt is made to explain how these things can be; we are simply to rest firmly upon the fact that this is the faith presented in Scripture. Although no created being will ever fully understand God who made us, yet here we are privileged to glimpse his very nature.

Probably the best way to understand what the Creed is about is to consider its history. Scholars conclude that it originated somewhere in southern France, near Lérins, and that it was likely written in the late 300's or early 400's. It soon became popular all over Europe and continued so down through the Middle Ages. It was popular partly because it was sung as a canticle rather than said in place of other creeds. That is why it has "Glory be..." at the end. In the former editions of the Prayer Book it was required to be used at least a dozen times a year, but in the 1962 Canadian BCP it is completely optional and seldom used. It was almost certainly not written by Saint Athanasius.

While no one knows who wrote the creed commonly named in Athanasius' honour, it continues the work he began. Athanasius was a great bishop and a holy man who spent his life almost single-handedly defending the teaching that Jesus our Lord, as the Son of God, is equal to his Father, and yet in his human life he is both fully human and truly God.

This teaching, which we take for granted, was contradicted by a party led by a scholar of Alexandria named Arius, who taught that the Son of God was a created being, less than God and not eternal. (Jehovah's Witnesses are modern-day proponents of this teaching.) The Nicene Creed which is used every Sunday at the Eucharist is the summary of the correct teaching as it was defended by Athanasius at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

Others, such as Apollinarius, who was at one time a good friend of St. Athanasius, began to teach that the Son of God took the place of a human spirit in Jesus, and therefore he was not fully human. That teaching is refuted in verse 32 of the Creed of St. Athanasius. Again, others followed Macedonius in teaching that the Holy Spirit was created and not equal to God. Their ideas are repudiated by verses 4 and 5.

Other teachings have arisen down through the years of the Church's history, and like these heresies above, are still put forward by sects and cults which stalk the uninformed members of the Church. For one example, some teach that there is no eternal distinction between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In ancient times they were called Modalists or Sabellians after one of their leaders; in the present time they are represented by the United Pentecostal sect. Their ideas are confronted by verses four and five. Some modern teachers, even within the Church, argue that in Jesus the unity of God's nature and man's nature (the hypostatic union) is held in his human personhood, but against them this Creed holds the universal teaching of the Church which says that the human nature was taken up into the divine Person and not the other way around (verse 35).

All of the false teachings mentioned above try to simplify our beliefs about God. They all try to make it more ordinary and easier to accept. But in the process they distort it and end up weakening some other part of the faith. For instance, the Sabellians, both ancient and modern, are concerned to defend our belief that there is only one God. In order to defend that principle they argue that the "threeness" indicated in the New Testament (such as Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14) must only be in the way God has revealed himself to us, first as Father, then as Son, then as Holy Spirit. It appears reasonable, although it does not fit the language of the New Testament. However, it also makes God appear to be removed from our situation: he does not come to us, he merely shows himself to us. The true teaching of the Church might be more difficult to understand, yet it assures us that he has truly shared himself with

us in sending his Son to take our nature, and we as human beings truly have a share in the life of God himself. God is one and yet he is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Unfortunately, these false teachings often result in divisions within the Church, causing untold damage to Christian communities, families and individuals.

We underestimate the danger of the sects among us, each teaching a variation of the faith and dividing Christians into competing camps. It is certainly not up to us to say what their eternal fate will be, and surely God will welcome all who come to him sincerely and humbly. But what about the many people who become caught up in these half-truths and end up bitter against their neighbours, and the others who become tired of the controversies and despair of ever knowing the truth? They end up, as Saint Paul said, making a shipwreck of their faith.

The Creed of Saint Athanasius ought perhaps to be restored to more common usage. It is clear and concise, and serves as a very good test of the false teachings that arrive at our front doors. And it is a strong and moving meditation upon the wonderful nature of the true God as revealed by Jesus Christ. This is the God of love in whom we trust for our eternal salvation. Using the Athanasian Creed will go a long way to helping people maintain a clear and firm faith in loving communion with the universal Church down through the ages, a faith which will sustain and strengthen us in this life and lead us to eternal joy in the presence of the self-giving God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

An Order for Compline

There are two evening offices found in the Book of Common Prayer. The first, Evening Prayer, is very solemn while the second, Compline, is more personal and individual. It is the prayer of the sinful soul which wants to make her peace with God.

The symbolism found in this office is very striking and beautiful. The reader is familiar with the symbols of light and sun, found in the Scriptures and the liturgy, which represent God, Christ, and the divine life. The opposing symbols of night and darkness are just as familiar and set the background for Compline. It was in this same setting, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, that our blessed Lord asked his disciples to watch and pray. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was in agony, and was tempted by the Prince of this world, Satan. Night, black and obscure, is his pall. But we are children of God and walk in the light of Christ Jesus and as such should not fear night and darkness. (1 John 1:5: "...God is light and in him is no darkness at all... if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.")

The reader must also be aware that Compline does not consider only the individual soul. Indeed, one will very quickly discover as one begins to pray this office that Compline includes our fellow men: "The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end", "O God, make speed to save us", "O Lord, make haste to help us". As we experience more of this life and world we begin to realize that Satan enjoys the use of the hours of darkness for the setting of his snares of temptation. (John 13:26: "So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly..." So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.") We pray this night prayer not only for our own protection, but also for the souls of our fellow men everywhere against the powers of darkness and death: "Keep us as the apple of an eye; Hide us under the shadow of thy wings".

Another image found throughout this night prayer is the image of sleep. Sleep is a symbol of death. (John 11:11: "Jesus said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep'.") As we take our rest from the day's labours we are reminded of death.

Compline is not only the completion of the daily labours but also the symbolic completion of life. We go to bed confident in the resurrection on the morrow. Compline, then, is not only a night prayer of life, it is also a plea for a happy death. "We will lay us down in peace and take our rest; for it is thou, Lord, only, that makest us dwell in safety." It is then in this setting of night, darkness, sleep, and death that Compline contains some of the most magnificent thoughts. With the abandonment of a child we pray the Creator of all things to watch over us like a faithful guardian angel: "We pray that... thou / Wouldst be our guard and keeper now".

The night prayer of Compline in the Book of Common Prayer consists of Psalms, a lesson, responses, a hymn, a canticle, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, a form of Confession, collects, and prayers. The office begins with a short and meaningful prayer: "The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end". The first part of the prayer is for a peaceful and restful sleep after the stresses of the day. The second part is for a perfect completion of our earthly life. In the future, on the Day of Judgement, may we be found with the sheep on the right hand of the Lamb of God, who sits on the throne of judgement. To repeat, then, an earlier statement; Compline is a night prayer of life and a plea for a happy death. The stage is ready for us to offer our prayers as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane.

After the opening prayer, the office continues with the familiar versicles and responses. These are also found in the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. After the versicles and responses one or more Psalms are said or sung. The Prayer Book appoints four proper Psalms for Compline. They are Psalms 4, 31, 91, and 134. Psalm 4 calms the soul after the stresses of the day. As we begin to calm ourselves down and pray the Psalms, we recognize the world for what it is and that, like its ruler, it deceives us. It offers us sinful joys, which are lies and vanities — all of which are as fragile as bubbles. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." For the righteous soul this cry for light and the light of God's own face has been heard and responded to by God in the Incarnation. Confident, then, in God's peace that dwells in our hearts, and in the hope of an eternal home in heaven we are reminded of how strong an anchor we have in the midst of the sea of life.

Psalm 31 is a fervent plea. It is like a great piece of music in which a theme is expressed again and again. Here in this lament we have a plea

in the time of crisis; it reaches a climax with another cry — this time of jubilation — then we return to another description or lamentation of the most painful abandonment and once again we take up the happy cry of jubilation. It is well to note that a lament is a cry of faith, even when the petitioner is full of trouble. There is much here to be learned about how to bear the Cross. Complain to God, not the hairdresser, the taxi driver, the dentist, the bartender, or the neighbour next door. Be frank with God. He desires his children to talk to him. Then when the complaint and cry for help have been uttered, do not hang up, but stay on the line and keep quiet for a while. "Be still and know that I am God." In silence faith will be restored. The circumstances may not be changed, but your attitude to them will be changed.

Psalm 91, in contrast to the first Psalm, which was calm and soothing, is active and positive. The soul is secure under God's wings. "Thou art my refuge and my stronghold." While the battle rages on all fronts outside, the soul is rooted in her trust of God. In the midst of darkness, night, death, pestilence, and the powers of evil, the soul is aware of God's divine presence and protection: "There shall no evil happen unto thee... For he shall give his angels charge over thee... They shall bear thee in their hands." This Psalm gives us a sense of security in God's hands (who knows us even to the number of hairs on our heads) and a sense of confidence that as children of God we shall be victorious over our enemies.

The last of the appointed Psalms is Psalm 134, a hymn of praise or a pilgrim song. We are the watchmen. "Ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord, even in the courts of the house of our God." This drives home that early theme of the night prayer being not only the individual's prayer, but also the prayer of the rest of our fellow men. We are keeping watch at the temple, forbidden to sleep. The world, our brothers and sisters, need our prayers this very night lest the enemy conquer. "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Peter 1:8).

The Scripture lessons follow the Psalms. In comparison to Morning and Evening Prayer, notice that the lessons chosen for Compline are brief and invariable. The first lesson (Jeremiah 14:9) is taken from a lament (Jeremiah 14:1-9). It describes Israel's hopeless plight. Surely the Lord, who has delivered the nation in times past, will in this present age act now. Verse nine is the nation's humble petition; the nation cries out to

the Lord for deliverance from the disaster that has overtaken them. In the night prayer we are reminded of the end of our earthly life, and we must account for the deeds we have done or have not done. Our cry is the same as that of the Hebrew children: "Leave us not, O Lord our God". Also we are reminded of that sense of security and confidence in the midst of our earthly affairs: "The Lord God is in the midst of us".

The next lesson (Matthew 11:28-30) is an invitation from Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The yoke Jesus promises, to his disciples, is a release from the burden of the Law. The lightness of Jesus' yoke comes from knowledge of him. As a carpenter, Jesus must have made many yokes, and made them smooth and easy to bear. As we complete and turn aside from labours and stresses of the day we too find rest and refreshment, but we also find confidence in him, who fulfills the promise of the Law, Prophets, and Psalms that "God will give rest". Not only the burden of daily life but also the burden of death is made easy and smooth to bear by accepting the yoke of Jesus Christ.

The third lesson (Hebrews 13:20-21) is a benediction. The focus is on what God has done. God raised up Jesus from the dead. He raised him in relation to the new and eternal covenant which is secured and ratified in his blood. Jesus' resurrection is decisive proof that man is reconciled to God and that God is now able to fulfill for his people all that is promised under the new covenant. In Compline this lesson too becomes a prayer. God may be counted upon to do for us as he did for his Son. As he raised up Israel under the leadership of Moses, so he will raise us up out of the grave into Paradise, like Jesus, the first born from the dead. As we take our rest, we are reminded that the God of peace equips us so that we can cooperate fully in doing his will. For Jesus, the Good Shepherd, not only supplies what is lacking, but also mends what is damaged in his disciples.

The Respond follows the brief lesson. It too recalls for us the end of our earthly life when we must account for our deeds. In the confident hope of our redemption we are able to say, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit". After the Respond a hymn may be sung. The author of the hymn that is recommended is unknown to us, but we do know that it comes from the sixth or seventh century. It is of Latin composition, hence its Latin title: *Te lucis ante terminum*. In 1852 this hymn was translated into English by the Revd. John Mason Neale. If one is familiar with any of the Anglican hymn books, one quickly recognizes that name. Besides

his translations, he also wrote hymns such as "O happy band of pilgrims" and "Good King Wenceslas".

Then follows a very poignant versicle and response, in which the care that the Lord has for us is again stressed. We are to be protected under his wings. The Canticle, *Nunc Dimittis*, with its anthem, is either said or sung. The anthem provided is very rich. Intertwined are the images of sleeping and waking. The body sleeps and wakes as does the human soul. "Preserve us, O Lord, waking (in the morning), and guard us sleeping (at night), that awake we may watch with Christ (in life, walk in the light and be seen doing the deeds of Christ), and asleep we may rest in peace (in death, by a happy death)". Another reference to death occurs, of course, in the song of the aged Simeon. Simeon holds in his hands the Christ. His waiting and longing have now been fulfilled and, having seen the expected Redeemer, he asks to be dismissed from his lifelong service to his God. We too are in a similar position today: we have held the mystical Saviour in our hands, our bodies, our hearts, and those moments in our daily life when we responded to our neighbour. Now, we can be dismissed from our service, night has come after the labours of the day. We are hired labourers and we must be prepared to be dismissed every day by the owner of the vineyard.

The Apostles' Creed is said after the Canticle. We say the Creed at all the Prayer Book offices because it is our statement of what we believe. We say the Creed standing to express our decision to hold fast the true faith. A slight bow is customarily made at the mention of Jesus' name as a symbol of adoration of our Lord and Saviour.

Then follow the *Preces*, which is the Latin word for prayers. The *Preces* include the ancient litany ("Lord have mercy..."), and the Lord's Prayer, and the following versicles and responses. Intertwined in the versicles and responses are the words "bless" and "praise". We ask for God's blessing and we give him praise in this night prayer. Compline draws to a close by reminding us of the theme of the night prayer's blessings of a restful sleep and a happy death. Indeed, we can lay us down in peace and take our rest because of our confidence in God's protection (guard) and presence (blessing).

After the versicles and responses, the Confession is said. Before completing the day we must "first be reconciled to our brother" (Matthew 5:24). How can we have a restful night and a happy end if we knowingly

have not made reconciliation with our brothers and sisters? So before completing the day and retiring to bed for rest and sleep, we must acknowledge all our sins (in thought, word, deed, and omission) to our Father and Creator. We look into the mirror to see ourselves as we really are. For it is only in confession that the soul's Creator can heal the soul in such wise that it becomes what he intends it to be. And we also know, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

A series of versicles and responses introduces the collects of Compline. These collects sum up all the themes of the night prayer. The first collect comes from the early centuries of the Church. The prayer talks of visitation — God is invited to dwell with us. He provides us his peace, protection, and blessing. God dwelt with the Hebrew children in the wilderness, and today, through his Son Jesus, he visits us and lives with us. The second collect, "Lighten our darkness", also appears in Evening Prayer. Its origin is traditionally ascribed to St. Osmund (died 1099), but it was actually compiled later by Richard Poore (1237). In this prayer we ask God, who is the true light, to lighten our darkness. We also ask God to defend us from all perils and dangers. Like the little chicks, we come running to God for shelter and defence from the perils and dangers of the night. The third collect is from the Hours of the Passion, a series of collects on the Passion of Christ collected from old sources. It talks of death; the grave is our bed at the end of this life, but because Jesus has slept there it is a bed of hope. It reminds us of the real reason for Christ's Passion — our sins. We pray that in the day of the general resurrection our souls may live with him in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19ff) while our bodies lie in the dust. The fourth collect talks again about God being the true light who illuminates the darkness of this night and asks that he might protect us from the snares or deeds (temptations) of Satan. The last collect expresses vividly the night theme for us in prayer. It is a prayer for divine protection this night. We have completed the labours and stresses of the day and now we pray that "we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may repose upon thy eternal changelessness". A magnificent and beautiful description of the world and her Creator. With that the night prayer moves toward the quiet of the night. A few versicles and responses follow and it ends with the blessing of the heavenly Father.

Within the family setting most of us can remember with fondness our childhood. There in the midst of those early gatherings was a ritual and liturgy performed by our parents. They also had their hours of vigil in darkness and their many agonizing tears in their Gethsemane which only a parent can understand. We may have long forgotten those vigils and tears, but still recall the bedtime ritual: praying on our knees by the bedside, being tucked into bed, and lastly being kissed goodnight by our parents. Compline is a form of this old ritual. The night prayer brings to a close daily labours, stresses and crises. God, our Father, now performs this night time ritual begun by our parents. The Father sends us to our rest with his peace, and his blessing is his goodnight kiss.