

MATTHEW HENRY AND THE PURITAN DISCIPLINE OF FAMILY PRAYER¹

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What the liturgy of the hours was for monks of the Middle Ages, the discipline of family prayer was for the Puritans. The typical Puritan home of seventeenth-century England may not have looked much like the splendid cloisters of Cluny, but there was something in common. The daily life of both Catholic monk and Puritan family man was ordered by a rhythm of prayer and praise. With Cistercian solemnity, the Puritan household would gather around the dinner table, father, mother, children, a maiden aunt, perhaps servants or an apprentice. A metrical psalm was sung. Then the head of the house would open up a great leather bound family Bible and read a chapter. This finished, the father would lead in prayer. The Puritans, whether on the Connecticut frontier or in the heart of London, whether they were Cambridge scholars or Shropshire cotters, gave great importance to maintaining a daily discipline of family prayer.

Let us try to get a picture of this discipline of morning and evening prayer so carefully cultivated by the Puritans. The writings of Matthew Henry are particularly full in regard to this subject. In 1694, Henry published a small psalter, *Family Hymns*, aimed at providing psalmody for morning and evening prayer.² His essay, *A Church in the House*, appeared in 1704.³ In 1712, he preached a series of sermons on the duties of daily prayer, *Directions for Beginning, Spending and Closing Each Day with God*, which was published shortly thereafter.⁴ His much beloved classic, *A Method of Prayer*, also appeared in 1712.⁵ To gain precision let us focus on these works of Matthew Henry, but to gain perspective we will also want to draw on some of the other Puritan writers.⁶

There are several reasons for focusing on Matthew Henry. His works give us a clear illustration of the sort of liturgical disciplines taught by the *Directory for Worship* of the Westminster Assembly.⁷ Henry came at the end of the Puritan period, being born in 1662, two months after his father, the Reverend Philip Henry, had been ejected from his church by the Act of Uniformity.⁸ Theologically observed, he was a moderate Puritan, being pastor of a Presbyterian congregation in Chester from 1687 to 1712. His Non-Conformity was combined with both maturity and charity. We also choose Henry to study because his work has endured. Even today he is regarded as one of the masters of Biblical exposition; his massive single-volume commentary on the whole of Scripture is to be found on the book shelves of Evangelical Protestants the world about. His works have survived not only because of the quality of their scholarship, but because of a sort of poetic insight. In Matthew Henry we have an exegete who was an artist as well. His scholarship has the dimension of reverence. He was a minister of the Word and a man of prayer.

Sources of Daily Family Prayer

It will help our understanding of the way the Puritans maintained the duty of daily prayer quite considerably if we turn for a moment to consider the sources of their practice. They considered daily family prayer to be of divine institution. It was both taught in Scripture by specific precept and given example by the people of God.⁹

This appeal to Scripture was not primarily on controversial or apologetic grounds. Nor was it because of some sort of narrow Biblical legalism, as is so often charged. From the *Westminster Confession of Faith* it is abundantly clear that the Puritans did not think that every liturgical question could be decided by Scripture.¹⁰ Worship "according to God's word" meant far more than a sort of Biblical positivism.¹¹ It was far more a sense that all true worship must be in obedience to God. Christians are to serve God in worship and serving implies obedience. It is the worship which is at the bidding of our master which is well pleasing and acceptable in his sight.¹² It is a sense that worship, in the end, is not a human work but a divine act of blessing. It is a redemptive work of God, whereby the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the Church and the people of God produce the fruit of praise and prayer.

The Puritans first of all found the example of daily prayer in the Psalms. Matthew Henry, in urging the importance of daily morning and evening prayer, first appeals to Psalm 5:3:

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,
O Lord:
In the morning I will direct my prayer
unto thee and look up.

Then preaching on the duty of evening prayer he used Psalm 4:8 as his text:

I will both lay me down in peace
and sleep;
For thou Lord, only makest me dwell
in safety.

The two-fold practice of Psalm 92, the seven-fold practice of Psalm 119:164, and the three-fold practice of Psalm 55:17 were all quoted. They even regarded Psalm 145:2 as sufficient to set the example: "Every day I will bless thee and praise thy name for ever and ever."¹³ From these texts it was clear that the psalms give us abundant evidence that the people of God had, from earliest times, a discipline of daily prayer.

Matthew Henry, in a way quite typical of seventeenth-century Calvinists, bases Christian daily worship on the command of the law of Moses to offer up daily sacrifices (Exodus 30:7). He admits that this is indeed a command of the old covenant, but shows that it has its spiritual counterpart under the new covenant. He shows that in Ezekiel's vision of the restored Temple, daily sacrifices are to take place as part of the purified worship of the age to come.¹⁴ For the Puritans, it should be remembered, Ezekiel's vision of the worship of the restored Temple spoke of Christian worship. Henry goes on to point out that Christians as the priests of the New Covenant fulfill the type given in the old law when they perform the spiritual sacrifices of daily morning and evening prayer.

If the Puritans considered Baptism to be the circumcision of the New Testament, the Eucharist to be the Christian Passover, and the Lord's Day to be the Christian Sabbath, so then they considered morning and evening prayer to be the Christian daily sacrifice. They may not have been willing to call the Lord's Supper a sacrifice, but they were willing to call daily prayer a sacrifice.

A Biblical root which particularly illuminates the Puritan practice is the commandment in Deuteronomy 6 to remember continuously the commandments of the law. They are to be remembered and taught "...in your house...when you lie down and when you rise up..." This commandment is even today recited in the Jewish liturgy as part of the *Shema*.¹⁵ The interesting thing about the passage is that, on one hand, it teaches that there is to be a morning and evening remembering of the law as part of the worship of every Israelite, and on the other hand, that this service of worship is to be in the home.¹⁶ That the reading of Scripture was a major element in daily prayer was as natural to the ancient Jew as it was to the seventeenth-century Calvinist. For the Puritans as well as for the psalmist it was a delight "to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night," for in so doing they offered up the spiritual sacrifice, as incense, both morning and evening.

John Preston, in his devotional classic, *The Saints Daily Exercise*, takes his Scriptural warrant from the Pauline admonition, "Pray without ceasing." He explains that this means that the Christian is to pray regularly.¹⁷ The Apostle himself indicates that he maintained the duty of praying continuously and that what he meant by this was that he prayed regularly night and day. He quoted the Apostle Paul: "...I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (II Timothy 1:3. KJV).¹⁸

The Puritans learned from the Acts of the Apostles that the first Christians had a discipline of daily corporate prayer much like the Jews of the first century. All the usual passages were cited. In the very first chapter they discovered the disciples holding prayer together in the Upper Room. In Acts 2:42 the daily prayers are mentioned as a regular part of the life of the first Christian community. They pointed to the prayer meetings in private homes mentioned in Acts 4:23-31, and Acts 12. They understood that Cornelius held daily family prayers and they argued that when the Apostle Paul taught from house to house there must have been daily prayers as well.¹⁹

Another Biblical root which was of particular interest to the Puritans was the "house churches" (Romans 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). These references they understood to indicate that Christians in New Testament times maintained a discipline of family prayer.²⁰ The liturgical function of these house churches was very different from that of the Sunday services. While the Sunday service aimed at gathering together the whole Church of a given city for the celebration of the Eucharist, the house churches gathered together every day small groups of Christians from the immediate neighborhood to pray together in small, intimate groups.²¹

There were a number of patristic passages which the Puritans quoted to indicate that daily family prayer was practiced by the early Church. Henry quoted Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom to show that prayers were said daily at meal times.²² He quoted Tertullian to show that husbands and wives sang psalms together in family worship. He repeated the story of Socrates Scholasticus that the Emperor Theodosius maintained family worship with his two sisters. Here Henry is quite specific in claiming that it was the ancient practice of family prayer from which the monastic daily office originated.²³

Another important source which throws light on the Puritan practice is Covenant theology. They argued that the family was a divinely established community and that it therefore had its spiritual function as well as its biological and social functions. If the family had a true corporate unity, if it was truly a creation of God, then it had a responsibility to

worship God.²⁴ Covenant theology had heavily underlined the sacred unity of the family. It was on this covenant unity of the family that the Puritans based their doctrine of infant baptism. Every Christian family was a sort of Church in miniature, a micro-church, as it were. Richard Baxter could even say, "a Christian family is a church."²⁵ Wherever infant baptism was taught, the duty of family prayer was taught. Matthew Henry is very specific in teaching that the vows which parents took at the baptism of their children laid upon them the obligation to maintain daily family prayers.²⁶ When Puritan parents presented their children for baptism they promised to "teach the child to read the word of God,...that they pray with and for the child; that they act an example of piety and godliness before him, and endeavor by all the means of God's appointment to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."²⁷

Let us turn our attention now to each of the three major parts of the service: psalmody, Scripture lesson, and prayer.²⁸

Psalmody²⁹

Matthew Henry gives us a very clear picture of what he would have included in the psalmody of family prayers. In 1694 he published his *Family Hymns Gathered Mostly our of the Translations of David's Psalms*. It was a little volume, small and inexpensive enough that each member of the family could have his own copy.³⁰ Henry intended it to help those charged with the responsibility of "finding out such psalms or passages in the psalms, as are most proper for family use."³¹ This little Psalter contained ninety-five selections. It was Matthew Henry's selection of the passages of the Psalter most appropriate for use in family prayer.³²

Since the publication of the metrical psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins there had been numerous attempts by individuals to do a better job of putting the psalms into English meter.³³ Even John Milton, the great Puritan poet, had put his hand to the work.³⁴ Henry mentions in his preface six authors from whom he had drawn psalm versions: the psalms of Patrick, Barton, King, Smith, Ford, and, of course, he drew some from Sternhold and Hopkins.³⁵

When we look at the contents of Henry's family Psalter we find that almost half the selections are designated for either morning or evening prayer on work days or the Lord's Day. For weekday morning prayer, we first find a number of selections which praise God as the Creator of the new day.

We find two versions of Psalm 19, which is certainly one of the perennial favorites for morning prayer, in Reformed Psalters.³⁶ We also find a selection of verses from Psalm 74 which accentuate this same theme:

The shining day, and shady night,
Peculiarly are thine;
Thou has, O Lord, prepared the light,
and caused the sun to shine.

The earth, with all its ends and coasts,
 Thy mighty hand did frame,
 Both summer's heat and winter's frost,
 By thine appointment came.³⁷

God's providential care and guidance is a theme which occurs even more frequently. A version of Psalm 101 is selected which presents the psalm as a prayer for God's guidance and protection:

Mercy and judgment in my song
 United, Lord, shall be;
 And since from thee they both do flow,
 I'll sing of both to thee.
 I'll wisely walk in perfect ways;
 When wilt thou come to me,
 To dwell and rule, Lord, in my house,
 And bless my family.³⁸

Delight in the devout way of life is the theme of Psalm 112, one of the most beautiful of the wisdom psalms:

Praise ye the Lord, for blest are those
 That fear the Lord aright,
 That greatly love his sacred laws
 And do them with delight.

Much the same theme is continued with Psalm 25:5-22. As it is arranged, it is a prayer that God will lead his people in the way of truth.

Lord, lead me in thy truth,
 And teach me in they way;
 For thou my God and saviour art,
 On thee I wait all day.

The interesting thing about these morning psalms, when taken as a whole, is how consistently they emphasize the moral concern that God direct the paths of his people. This is not surprising. The Puritans never tired of quoting the words of the Apostle Paul that psalms were to be sung to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom (Col. 3:17). Like the wisdom writers before them, the praise of God and moral admonition were very closely related themes. The Puritans praised God that the following-out of the teaching of the Christian life lead to a very good life and a very real joy.³⁹ To press a current idiom into service, the Puritans believed that "the godly is beautiful."

When we look at the psalms which Matthew Henry has chosen to be sung at evening prayer, we find first a number of traditional evening psalms. Psalm 4 is versified in such a way that it becomes a hymn of gratefulness to God at the end of the day:

O God that art my righteousness,
 Hear when I call to thee,

For in the day of my distress
Thou hast enlarged me...

Offer to God the sacrifice
Of love and righteousness,
And then put all your trust in him
For succour in distress...

In peace therefore will I lie down
To take my rest and sleep,
For thou only wilt me, O Lord,
Alone in safety keep.

His version of Psalm 91 omits a number of verses but the shortened version gives nicely the sense of a prayer for protection during the night. There is also an abbreviated version of Psalm 141 which is particularly appropriate to Matthew Henry's oft repeated thought that evening prayer is the Christian fulfillment of the evening offering of the Temple:

To thee, O Lord, I call and cry,
Make haste and come to me;
Give ear unto my humble voice,
Now when I cry to thee.

O let my prayer be now set out
As incense in thine eyes;
And the up-lifting of my hands
As the evening sacrifice.

Psalm 8 is chosen because it meditates on the glory of God's creation of the evening heavens.⁴⁰ Psalm 139 has been chosen as a song of God's providential care during the night:

In vain I seek to lie concealed
In the darkness of the night,
For midnight darkness shines to thee
As clear as noon day light.

One should note that Henry has not hesitated to delete the imprecatory verses from this psalm. Without these verses the psalm is a fine hymn to the providence of God in general, and this was a favorite theme of the Puritans. What is striking about Henry's selection of evening psalms is the preponderance he gives to psalms of thanksgiving. Psalms 65, 68, 103, 116, and 138 are all used by Henry. The theme of presenting the votive thanksgiving offering is prominent:

O God, praise waiteth still
For thee in Sion hill;
The vow will be performed to thee,
and readily fulfill.
O thou whose titles are,
The God that hearest prayer,

The God to whom all flesh will come,
To thee do we repair.

The version of Psalm 68 which has been selected is a general thanksgiving for the gift of salvation:

Blessed be God that doth us load
with daily favours thus;
Even that God that hath bestowed
Salvation upon us.

Psalm 116 is given in a particularly fine version:

God, that so gracious a regard
To my request did give,
Shall have my best and choicest love
And service while I live...
What shall I render, Lord, for all
The kindness thou hast shown?
Praise I'll offer and with thanks
Will all thy favours own.
Truly I am thy servant, Lord,
Thy servant I will be,
Born in thy house, and from thy bonds
By thy good hand set free.

What seems to be at work here is that in the morning we have psalms asking God's guidance through the day. In the evening we have psalms which give thanks for the guidance which has been received during the day.⁴¹

In addition to the psalms specifically selected for weekday morning or evening prayer, there is a large portion of psalms selected for family prayer on the Lord's Day.

Family prayers on the Lord's Day were very special. They were never to take the place of the Church service, but since the Puritans dedicated the whole of the Lord's Day to the "public and private exercises of God's worship," family prayers on the Lord's Day were an important part of keeping the Lord's Day holy.⁴² The festive nature of the Christian Sabbath was clearly apparent in the psalmody. The most obvious psalm for the day was Psalm 118. All the Reformed psalters make it the psalm *par excellence* for Sunday. Next we find Psalm 84, and another setting of Psalm 68. Psalm 92, which in the second Temple was the proper psalm for the Sabbath, is given, as well as Psalms 95, 96, and 98. The psalms for Sunday evening include 105, 110, 113, 135, 136, 146, 147, and 148. As a brief look at these psalms will immediately make clear, the great anthems of praise are almost all kept for the Lord's Day. Because that day was the Christian day of feasting and rejoicing, the crown jewels of the Treasury of David were saved for that day, and then brought out with special delight.

Matthew Henry also includes metrical versions of the New Testament canticles, the *Magnificat*, *Benedictus*, *Gloris*, *Nunc dimittis*, and several of the hymns from the Book of Revelation.⁴³

Another section of the Psalter is devoted to prayers in times of special need or special joy. Psalms 127 and 128 may be sung when a new child is born into the family. Portions of Psalms 6, 25, 41, and 55 may be sung when there is illness in the family. For recovery from illness the canticle of Hezekiah is given. Psalms 39 and 91 are suggested when there has been a death in the family or in the family of a neighbor. While these psalms were often added to the psalmody of the usual daily prayer services, they were more particularly intended for special days of feasting or fasting. These family feasts and fasts were a feature of the Puritan devotional life. Any family joy could be the occasion of a family feast; a birth or an anniversary. The minister and other family friends might be invited to participate. In such a case family prayers would be quite festive. Conversely, a severe illness or impending tragedy might call for a family fast.⁴⁴

Several things should be noticed about Matthew Henry's use of psalmody. First, one observes that in a number of cases old traditions are maintained. Many of the morning and evening psalms which for centuries had been used for morning or evening are still used in the same way. Another thing to be noticed is that the psalms are not chosen in a *lectio continua*. Not all the psalms in the Psalter are used, and besides that, Henry carefully selects the portions of each psalm which he finds most appropriate. This is a heavily edited Psalter. Again one notices that much less use is made of the seven penitential psalms than one might expect. There seems to be no regular place in daily prayer for the psalms of lamentation. The doxological use of psalmody and the didactic use of psalmody are in high relief.

Finally, we notice no trace of their being used according to the seasons of the Christian year. The Lord's Day has a very rich psalmody as has already been noted, but there are no psalms for Lent or Advent.

Scripture Reading

It is in his essay, *A Church in the House*, that Matthew Henry turns to the subject of Scripture reading at morning and evening prayer.⁴⁵

If the Puritans considered Deuteronomy six as one of the sources of their practice of daily worship, then it was important to read a portion of Scripture morning and evening. There we find that the Scriptures were read, or at least recited, daily so that the faithful would remember them, so that the word of God would be between their eyes, bount to their hands and written in their hearts. There was more than this. As Henry puts it, the reading of Scripture adds greater solemnity to the occasion.⁴⁶ The reading and hearing of Scripture prepares us for prayer.⁴⁷ It calls our thoughts to God, and to his promises. As we hear of God's mighty acts of salvation we find the faith to pray.⁴⁸

Normally a chapter would have been read.⁴⁹ In some circles a chapter of the New Testament would be read in the morning and a chapter of the Old Testament in the evening. In other circles the evening lesson would pick up where the morning lesson left off. In principle, the Bible was read through in a *lectio continua*, although in practice it was often a very loose *lectio continua*. At family prayers one concentrated on the most edifying portions

of Scripture.⁵⁰ As one read through the Bible, the more tedious portions of Numbers and Leviticus were omitted. Henry and Baxter both advise that when there are children in the family one could well concentrate on the historical books.⁵¹ Presumably the more difficult passages of the prophets might be passed over until the family circle reached a greater maturity.

During the week the simple reading of the Scriptures was considered sufficient, but on the Lord's Day considerable time was taken to discuss the meaning of the Scriptures.⁵² The passage that had been preached on in Church might be read again and the sermon discussed. Discussing the Sunday sermon was an important devotional discipline among the Puritans.⁵³ On the Lord's Day a considerable amount of time was taken in catechising children and servants.⁵⁴ Sunday School had not yet been invented and the Puritan parent still felt that the main weight of catechetical instruction was firmly on his own shoulders.⁵⁵ A good part of the Sabbath leisure was therefore devoted to memorizing both the Shorter and Larger Catechisms and to explaining them.⁵⁶

The reading of devotional literature was another significant activity of the Lord's Day.⁵⁷ The Puritans did not so much have in mind a solitary, individual reading of devotional books, but rather reading these books aloud before the whole family circle. Richard Baxter gives us a very thorough list of his suggestions for *lectio divina*. It is a good bibliography of Puritan devotional writings. Of particular interest is the attention Baxter gives to hagiography and martyrology. Studying the lives of the saints has always been an important devotional practice and the Puritans were quite well aware of its importance.⁵⁸

In family prayer, either on the Lord's Day or weekdays, the Scripture passage that was read was not to be preached. That was the ministry of the minister.⁵⁹ One can well imagine that in the informality of the family circle children might ask questions about a passage or the father might find it expedient to explain something.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, such discussion was kept at a minimum during the week, for it was the reading itself which was to have prominence. In the *Westminster Directory* it is the reading of Scripture which is advised.⁶¹ Nothing is said about commentary on the reading.

The Prayer

At the center of the Puritan family prayer service was a great comprehensive prayer which, moving from adoration to doxology, included all the aspects of Christian prayer, and these in all their fullness. As Matthew Henry presents it, the prayer is made up of five parts: praise, confession, petition, thanksgiving, and intercession. Essentially, this is the same general prayer outlined by the Westminster Assembly's *Directory for Worship*.⁶²

Many of the Puritan divines gave an exposition of what should be included in a full and comprehensive prayer. One of these, Matthew Henry's *Method of Prayer*, was designed to be of assistance to heads of families who had the responsibility of leading family prayers. Henry's *Method of Prayer* gathers together under each of these five headings a richly colored patchwork quilt of Biblical passages which elaborate the particular aspect of prayer under consideration.⁶³

Henry's purpose is to teach the language of prayer. He is aware, as any language teacher well knows, that a language is learned by imitation, not by translation. He presents to

us a treasury of Biblical metaphores, similes, and other figures of speech by means of which we may speak the language of prayer. For him the Biblical figures and types are not literary decoration which merely overlay the meaning. He delights in using the whole cultic language of both Temple and Tabernacle. He, as the psalmist before him, thinks of prayer as the rising incense of the evening sacrifice. He speaks of prayer being like Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Bethel, like Esther entering into the presence of the Emperor Ahasuarus, or the Queen of Sheba into the garden of Solomon's delights.⁶⁴ The language of prayer was above all to be learned from the psalms. In the psalms one hears the prayers of the people of God. One learns to pray by following their example. The language of prayer was to be learned from the parables and again in the letters of the Apostles. Finally, the Christian here on earth learns to pray from hearing the heavenly worship of the New Jerusalem caught by the prophetic ear of John as on the Island of Patmos he worshipped on the Lord's Day. Matthew Henry has carefully sifted through the whole of Scripture to find every devout thought on prayer and every illuminating example of the practice of prayer, that the Christian might learn the language of prayer.

The prayer was begun with an admonition to prayer such as Lamentations 3:41, or Psalm 25:1:

Let us lift up our ears and hands
to God in heaven.
Unto thee, O Lord, do we
lift up our souls.

The sixteenth-century Reformers had taken great delight in these short admonitions to prayer which they found all through Scripture, and evidently the seventeenth-century Puritans found the same delight. Henry remarks that with such admonitions to prayer we engage ourselves to approach God.⁶⁵

The first part of a comprehensive prayer should be praise. "We must solemnly address ourselves to that infinitely great and glorious Being with whom we have to do, as those who are possessed with a full belief of his presence and a holy awe and reverence of his majesty."⁶⁶ Henry chooses particularly for morning prayer several psalm passages such as Psalm 63:

Oh God, though art our God,
Early will we seek thee.
Thou art our God, and we will praise thee,
Our fathers' God, and we will exalt thee.

Here the psalm has not merely been quoted, but paraphrased and adapted to the situation of family prayers. He does the same thing with Psalms 19 and 104. Henry moves us on to participate in the heavenly worship: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come."⁶⁷ Praise, as Henry understood it, was an expression of our awe and wonderment before the majesty of God.

Another aspect of praise was acknowledging God's titles and attributes.⁶⁸ Henry tells us that in praise we must acknowledge that God is eternal, immutable, perfect in knowledge, inscrutable in wisdom.⁶⁹ To use Henry's phrase in praise we are "to own God." That, in the

language of his day, meant that we are to acknowledge that we belong to God and that we accept him as our God.⁷⁰ Henry goes on to say that in praise “we must give honour to the three persons in the Godhead, distinctly; to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that great and sacred name into which we were baptized, and in which we assemble for religious worship, in communion with the universal Church.”⁷¹ Henry proceeds to say that it is part of our praise to dedicate ourselves to seeking nothing but to do God’s will and to live to his glory.⁷² Likewise it is part of our praise to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit in our prayers and to profess our complete dependence on the mediation of Christ.⁷³ Under each of these prayer themes a wealth of Biblical phrases has been amassed to illustrate what sorts of things should be said in prayers of praise.

Confession of sin and prayers of repentance come next. Phrases are gathered from the great lamentations of Job and Jeremiah. We are reminded of Isaiah’s vision in the Temple and how, after seeing the Lord high and lifted up, the prophet fell on his face and cried, “Woe is me!”⁷⁴ We are given the confession of the Prodigal Son.⁷⁵ Remembering the ministry of John the Baptist, we are to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; nevertheless, this we are to do with the assurance that we live not under law but under grace.⁷⁶ Henry’s prayers of confession do not really live up to what our age has been taught to expect from the Puritan.⁷⁷ One does not find his dwelling on sin pathological or morose. One finds that his dwelling on sin is well balanced by his dwelling on God’s mercy. The seventeenth century was, after all, the age of *chiaroscuro*. It was Rembrandt’s resonant browns and blacks which made his golds and whites so brilliant. If they could be so realistic about the blackness of sin, it was because they were dazzled by the radiance of God’s grace.

Petition and supplication make up the third part of the prayer.⁷⁸ “Having opened the wounds of sin, both the guilt of it and the power of it, and its remainders in us; we must next seek — unto God — for the remedy, for healing and help, for from him alone it is to be expected and he will for this to be enquired of by us.”⁷⁹ At the heart of all our needs and sorrows is human sin, both the sin of our fallen nature and our actual sins, both the sins of others and our own sins. Our basic supplication is “deliver us from evil.”⁸⁰ It is in the context of this basic petition for God’s mercy that all our other petitions are brought forth. It is on the basis of the new relationship of faith in Christ and the mercy we have received in Christ that all our other petitions are brought forth. It is somewhat in the same way that in many of the Eastern liturgies all the petitions and intercessions of the Church are reduced to *Kyrie eleison*.

Henry gives us a very thorough list of examples of petition. He reminds us of the Publican in Luke 8, who stood afar off and would not so much as lift his eyes, praying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” He tailors Psalm 51 into his prayer:

O wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,
 And cleanse us from our sin,
 For we acknowledge our transgressions,
 And our sin is ever before us.
 O purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean.
 Wash us and we shall be whiter than snow;
 Hide thy face from our sins
 and blot out our iniquities.

In petition we are to plead with God as the importunate neighbor in the Gospel parable beats on the door late at night.⁸¹ Our pleading is to be by reminding God of his promises proclaimed by Christ and the Apostles.⁸² The reason that we pray at all is that we have by faith believed the promises of God's grace and forgiveness. Therefore we now claim these promises. We ask because we know that God wants to give us what we ask. Henry reminds us of the words of the Apostle Paul: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God."⁸³ It is with the full confidence of the covenant of grace that we both lament our sins and make supplication for God's mercy.

The Puritans gave great importance to the doctrine of God's providence. They understood providence to be the way God guided and governed "all his creatures and all their actions" to use the words of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*.⁸⁴ It is interesting to see how their doctrine of providence fits together with the way they prayed.⁸⁵ They prayed for the merciful working-out of God's providence concerning them, yet they knew they could count on God's care and goodness toward them in every detail of the working out of his will. Being sure of their election in Christ, they had nothing to fear from the future.

Their belief in Divine providence was quite different from a belief in determinism or blind fatalism which was indifferent to the needs of its victims. Concerning every detail of life they prayed for the Divine mercy they had already been promised in Christ.⁸⁶ It was because of their strong doctrine of providence that they prayed about the most particular details of their experience. In the morning the Puritans asked for God's guidance through the day, laying before him all the problems and perplexities they faced. In the evening they asked God's protection through the night. Sometimes we are amused at the particularity with which they asked for the common mercies and graces of life, but all these involved the working out of God's mercy, and God's mercy was unfolded to them in every event of life.

The prayer comes to a climax in thanksgiving. The heart of Christian prayer is Eucharistic. This the Puritans understood very well. Henry outlines Christian thanksgiving under three headings. First, he would have us give thanks to God for his works of Creation. He gives us the language of Psalm 104, that great creation hymn. He gives us numerous phrases from Psalms 145-150.⁸⁷ Second, he would have us give thanks "for the many instances of goodness in his providence relating to our bodies, and the life that now is; and this with reference to all the creatures, and the world of mankind in general."⁸⁸ Here Henry teaches us to give thanks for all kinds of particular mercies; recovery from illness, success in business, comfort and plenty in our homes, peace in our families.⁸⁹ Third, then, he moves on to thanksgiving for God's work of redemption in Christ.⁹⁰ Here he gives us the language of the Apostle Paul's prayers of thanksgiving, particularly the great thanksgiving prayer at the beginning of Ephesians. He remembers our Lord's incarnation in the words of Galatians 4: "We bless thee, that when the fullness of time was come, thou didst send forth thy Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."⁹¹ We are to give thanks for Jesus, "For his holy life, his excellent doctrine and glorious miracles he wrought..."⁹² Then we are to give thanks for his sacrifice upon the cross. Here Henry makes much use of the imagery of the Letter to the Hebrews.⁹³ This is continued as we remember before God the Resurrection and Ascension.⁹⁴ Now the imagery of the Book of Revelation begins to prevail as we are taught to dwell on the glory of the risen and ascended Christ at the right hand of the Father.⁹⁵ Thanksgiving goes on to remember the sending of the Holy Spirit, "to supply the want of Christ's bodily presence, to carry on his undertaking, and prepare

things for his second coming.”⁹⁶ In this context he teaches us to thank God for the gift of the Scriptures, the sacraments, and particularly for the gift of the ministry. We are to thank God for the establishment of the Church and for its preservation until this day. We are to give thanks “for martyrs and confessors, the lights of the Church, and for the good examples of those who are gone before us into heaven.”⁹⁷

Fully conscious of the redemptive work of Christ and of our participation in the benefit of that redemptive work, fully conscious of our redemption and sanctification, we now are to carry out the priestly service of intercession for others.⁹⁸ The words of the enthronement psalms are used to pray for the conversion of all nations, “O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.” Likewise we are taught to pray the servant songs of Isaiah which envision a salvation for all nations.⁹⁹ The New Testament admonitions to intercessory prayer are gone over one by one. We are to pray for all men, for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, for the conversion of the Jews, for the preservation of the Eastern churches “that are groaning under the yoke of Mahometan tyranny,”¹⁰⁰ for the churches wherever dispersed. Prayer is made for the needs of the Church under a variety of categories. After that, we are to pray, “for our own land, and nation, the happy islands of Great Britain and Ireland.”¹⁰¹ The civil magistrates are remembered as well as the ministers of the Gospel. Finally, special mention is made of those suffering under any kind of want or affliction.¹⁰²

The prayer is brought to a close by committing all these requests to God in the name of the Saviour. This is done with a trinitarian ascription of praise, or Doxology.¹⁰³ Finally, the whole family recites the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁰⁴

This comprehensive prayer of the Puritans is one of the distinctive features of later Puritan worship.¹⁰⁵ It could be gone through briefly or at great length. It was not necessary to dwell on all the categories and the sub-categories with the same thoroughness each time the prayer was said. With the use of the Scriptural passages and expressions which Henry and other authors give, there was an infinite variety of expression and yet at the same time a consistent and meaningful form.

In many respects one gets the impression that from the standpoint of liturgical form the prayer is completely unique. One does not quickly find a parallel to this prayer in the history of Christian liturgy. In some ways it is reminiscent of the Jewish *Tefilla*, or as it is usually called, the Prayer of Eighteen Benedictions. The *Tefilla* is also a comprehensive prayer said daily at morning, noon, and night. In practice the Puritan prayer probably took as long to say as the *Tefilla*. In other ways it is reminiscent of the Eastern Eucharistic prayers. They too are very comprehensive prayers.

The prayer as a liturgical form evolved among the Puritans out of a thorough study of the great wealth of Biblical prayers and Biblical admonitions to prayer. Certainly the roots go back to the penetrating insight of John Preston and William Perkins. This form is particularly influenced by the various Biblical words for prayer. Praise, confession, petition, thanksgiving, and intercession all have distinct meanings in the Biblical languages. All this wealth of variety of different kinds of prayer is systematized and put in a theological progression. The prayer is a good illustration of what the Puritans really meant by reforming worship “according to Scripture.” The Puritan theologians were not really the Biblical positivists they are made out to be. It did not take an Oxford doctorate in liturgics for a

Puritan divine to discover no "comprehensive prayer" in Holy Writ. That was not what the Puritan meant by "according to Scripture." As a more perceptive Puritan minister would have understood it, the comprehensive prayer was "according to Scripture" because it was produced by a deep study of the prayers of Scripture and the teachings of Scripture about prayer and an attempt to pray according to these examples and teachings.

Something needs to be said about the length of this prayer. Those of us who were brought up on these prayers have to admit that they often have put us to sleep. One could easily ask if several shorter prayers might not have been more effective. One of the things which the Puritans objected to in the *Book of Common Prayer* was the little snippets of prayer here and there. The Puritans did not like the collects. To rush in and out of these little prayers almost invited a sort of perfunctory saying of prayers. The Puritans felt that one needed more time to move into prayer. All their prayers were long, far longer than the prayers of the Prayer Book. They spoke at great length of the importance of being in the proper attitude for prayer. The psalms and prayers helped bring them into this attitude. Among modern Christians, five minutes a day may be an acceptable ideal. For the Puritans, serious prayer involved considerably more time. It is amazing to us, perhaps, but there were many seventeenth-century Puritans who were quite willing to devote a half-hour to a full hour to both morning and evening prayer.

By way of conclusion one might say this. There is something beautiful about the utter seriousness with which the Puritans approached prayer. For those of our day who want very much to learn how to pray the Puritans have much to teach. They had deep insights into the nature of prayer. Their insights are most helpful however, when they are put in the context of the whole history of Christian spirituality. The Puritans confirm many of the best features of monastic prayer, such as the strong use of psalmody and the importance of Christians praying in the fellowship of a community. The Puritan practice of family shows us that a serious discipline of prayer can be maintained by people who are not engaged in the traditional religious vocations. When we compare the Puritan discipline of prayer to the practice of the Church of the Patristic Age or even to the worship of Solomon's Temple, we discover that the daily service of prayer is a continuing practice of the liturgy of the people of God. The Christian Church of our century might do well to find in the Puritan discipline of family prayer a witness to the catholicity of the daily office.

NOTES

¹First presented to a Presbyterian General Assembly Committee on Prayer in 1979.

²Matthew Henry, *Family Hymns, Gathered mostly out of the Translations of David's Psalms* (London, 1694). It is reprinted in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry, V.D.M.* (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1830), pp. 704-734. Hereinafter, *Works of Henry*.

³Matthew Henry, *A Church in the house, Works of Henry*, pp. 585 f.

⁴Matthew Henry, *Directions for Beginning, Spending and Closing Each Day with God*. The text used in this study was published as *The Quest for Communion with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). This publisher gives as the source of his text: *Works of Puritan Divines — Matthew Henry, 1712*. See also *Works of Henry*, pp. 428 f.

⁵Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions proper to be used under each Head* (Preface dated Chester, 1712), *Works of Henry*, pp. 629-703. For the next century and one half the work went through more than thirty editions in England, Scotland and America. It obviously had a tremendous influence on the way Anglo-Saxons prayed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁶The Puritans produced an amazing wealth of devotional literature. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* (5 vols.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965-1975), I, 407 f, reports that more than eighty manuals of devotion were published in the reign of Elizabeth I, and that the majority were produced by those of Puritan leaning. See his excellent survey of the seventeenth century, *Worship and Theology in England II*, 68-132. Also Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London: The Epworth Press, 1957).

Among the more important works to throw light on our subject are:

Richard Baxter (1615-1691), *A Christian Directory, Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. by William Orme (23 vols; London: James Duncan, 1830), III, IV, and V. Hereinafter, *Directory*.

Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), *The Works of the Late Rev. Stephen Charnock, B.D. in 9 volumes, with a prefatory dedication and memoir by Edward Parsons* (London: Printed for Baynes, Paternoster Row, etc., 1815). Hereinafter, *Works*.

Dr. Thomas Manton (1620-1677), *A Practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.* (22 vols; London: James Nisbet & Co., 21 Berners St., 1870-75), I, 3-256. Hereinafter, *Lord's Prayer*.

William Perkins (1558-1602), *Exposition of The Lord's Prayer* (London: Printed by John Lagatt, 1626). Hereinafter, *Lord's Prayer*. Also by Perkins, *A Discourse Concerning the gift of Prayer...*(London: Printed by T.M. for Samuell Gellibrand, 1655). Hereinafter, *Gift of Prayer*.

John Preston (1587-1628), *The Saints Daily Exercise, a treatise concerning the whole duty of Prayer* (London: Printed by W.I., 1629). Hereinafter, *Saints Daily Exercise*.

Isaac Watts, *A Guide to Prayer*, in *The Works of the Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts, D.D.* containing, besides his Sermons, and Essays on Miscellaneous Subjects, several additional pieces, selected from his Manuscripts, by the Rev. Dr. Jennings and the Rev. Dr. Doddridge, in 1753; To which are prefixed Memoirs of the Life of the Author, compiled by the Rev. George Burder (6 vols; London: J. Barfield, 1810), III, 56-57, 135-36. Hereinafter, *Guide to Prayer*.

⁷Several chapters of the *Westminster Directory* came into question, namely chapter III, on Public Prayer, chapter V, on Baptism, and the final chapter, XV, on Family Prayer. This final chapter actually is not the work of the Westminster Assembly of 1646, but rather seems to have been joined to the Westminster Directory shortly after. The 1652 edition gives a chapter on secret and family worship which contains fourteen sections. The final form of the *Westminster Directory* has radically abridged this original document so that currently chapter XV contains only five sections. See *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of the United States Of America*: , 1955), pp. . *The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechism, First agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines*

at Westminster, and now approved by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, to be a part of Uniformity in Religion between the Kirks of Christ in the three Kingdoms, Together with the solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms. First printed at Edinburgh, and now reprinted at London for the Company of Stationers, 1652.

⁸On the biographical materials for Matthew Henry, cf. *Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry*, by J.B. Williams (1828, revised 1865). This is currently available in a single volume together with Matthew Henry's biography of his father, *An Account of the Life and Death of Philip Henry*, under the title, *The Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974).

⁹Manton, *Lord's Prayer, Works I*, 8.

¹⁰According to the Westminster Confession, I, 6, those things which are necessary to God's glory are clearly revealed in Scripture. Beside these there were certain things not specifically directed by Scripture which were to be ordered according to the more general rules of Christian faith and life. They could even be decided by "the light of nature and Christian prudence." There was, furthermore, that which was really indifferent, *adiaphora*.

¹¹John Preston, *Saints Daily Exercise*, pp. 15-18 puts the case for the divine institution of daily prayer in such a way that not even our age could accuse him of Biblical positivism.

¹²Cf. Thomas Manton, "The Life of Faith in Prayer," *Works*, XV, 147 f.

¹³The writers that have been studied for this paper do not seem to get particularly involved in the question of exactly how many times a day daily prayer should be held. Why the Puritans settled on twice instead of thrice is not clear. The Old Testament itself exhibits a certain confusion in the matter as does the history of the Jewish liturgy. The law prescribes only morning and evening sacrifices, and yet Daniel prayed three times a day.

¹⁴Henry, *Directions for Beginning, Spending and Closing Each Day with God, Works of Henry*, p. 27.

¹⁵Interestingly enough, it is recited at morning and evening prayer, but not at mid-day prayer. This shows that the Jews themselves understood the *shema* to contain the teaching to recite it morning and evening.

¹⁶The *shema* is the Scripture lesson of the Jewish Daily Prayer Service. This is particularly clear when we realize that it formerly included the reciting of the Decalogue. The Puritans were quite familiar with the synagogue liturgy. Baxter, *Works*, II, xxiii, 290-91.

¹⁷Preston, *Saints Daily Exercise*, pp. 15-18.

¹⁸II Timothy 1:3. Preston was a good enough Greek scholar to know that the Greek text could well be read in this way. Both the Geneva Bible and the Vulgate give the same reading. The RSV translates this same text quite differently. Contemporary Biblical studies would indicate that Preston had a sharp insight into what the New Testament writers means by the continual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. Cf. Anton Arens, *Die Psalmen im Gottesdienst des Alten Bundes (Trier: Paulinus Verlag, Trier, 1968)*, pp. 111-144.

¹⁹Acts 20:20. Cf. Thomas Manton, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 12.

²⁰Cf. Henry's essay *A Church in the House*. This work takes the form of a sermon on the text of I Cor. 16:19, by explaining that some see this to mean that because the Church had no public meetings and therefore met in houses. Henry disagrees with this, claiming that the house churches were such because family worship was conducted in these houses. p. 217.

²¹Cf. Baxter's comment on Acts 12:12, *Works*, IV, 71 f.

²²Henry, *Family Hymns, Works of Henry*, pp. 704 f.

²³Henry Bullinger, well known in England because of the translation of his *Decades*, gives us much the same picture. From Bullinger the Puritans could learn several things: 1) The apostles continued to observe the Jewish hours of prayer. 2) He distinguished between the private hours of prayer held by the religious, e.g. terce, sext, none, and the nocturnes, on the one hand, and the morning, noon and evening prayer of cathedral churches, on the other. Bullinger learns considerably about the history of the daily office from Jerome, Eusebius, and a number of medieval authors. *Decades*, V, v, 198-201. On Bullinger's use of medieval sources, cf. H. O. Old, "Henry Bullinger and the Scholastic works on Baptism," Ulrich Gäbler und Erland Herkenrath, ed., *Heinrich Bullinger, 1504-1575, Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400 Todestag* (2 vols; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1975), I, 191-207.

²⁴Baxter argues that the family owes worship to God. *Works*, IV, 52 f.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 75. "The families of Christians should be little churches." Cf. Henry, *A Church in the House*, p. 219.

²⁶Henry, *A Church in the House*, p. 227.

²⁷*Westminster Directory for Worship*, VII, 2.

²⁸On the liturgical ordering of family prayers see the author's study, "The Reformed Daily Office: A Puritan Perspective," *Reformed Liturgy and Music*, XII, 4 (1978), 9-18. Hereinafter "Reformed Daily Office."

²⁹Substantial portions of the following section on Psalmody are found in the author's preliminary study, "Reformed Daily Office."

³⁰Henry, *Family Hymns, Works of Henry*, p. 705.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²There are several rather unique features of this Psalter which this paper will not treat because they are not typical of Puritan psalmody. The most significant of these unique features is that Henry often splices two or more psalms together. Sometimes he does this in a rather pleasing way. Another unique feature is that he often concludes a psalm with a stanza paraphrasing a New Testament text. For example, he concludes a metrical version of Psalm 110 with a paraphrase of Revelation 5:12, and 9:13. Psalm 95 he concludes with a passage from Hebrews 4:1. A thorough study of this interesting feature of Henry's work may be more properly left to the hymnologists.

³³While Sternhold began publishing metrical psalms as early as 1548, it was not until 1562 that *The Whole Booke of Psalms Collected into English Metre by T. Starnold, I. Hopkins and others* was published by John Daye. Hymnologists of recent years, more schooled by Shakespeare than by David, have tended to overlook the tremendous popularity of Sternhold and Hopkins. In a century and one half, it went through over one hundred editions. It was not great poetry, but then, good liturgical texts rarely are. While poets and musicians may have deplored the "Genevan jigs," the common people loved them. Their singing was popularly regarded as the most sacred part of the service. It is hard to understand why the so-called "High Church" Anglicans were so opposed to metrical psalmody. Cf. H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, I, 386-391; II, 268-281.

³⁴However negatively the *literati* may have felt about the metrical psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, they were spurred to try their own hand at rendering psalms into English meter. Among those

who produced English metrical psalms were George Herbert, John Donne, Richard Crashaw, and Bishop Hall. While they are indeed quite literary, none of them has become liturgically popular.

³⁵The six versions from which Henry made his selection are sometimes a bit surprising. He does, naturally, use a number of the Sternhold and Hopkins versions, and he reminds his readers that much of the criticism of the "Old Version" is to be discounted. Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins, *The Whole Booke of Psalms collected into English Metre* (London: John Daye, 1562).

It is surprising that he draws on neither the *Scottish Psalter* of 1650, nor the *Bay Psalter* produced by Richard Mather and the first generation of Yankees. It is also surprising that the version of Rous, supported as it was by the Westminster Assembly, is not used, while its "High Church" rival, produced by William Barton in 1644 is used. William Barton, *The Book of Psalms in Metre* (London: M. Simons, 1644). Two other psalters which were very well known were the *Whole Book of Psalms*, by Thomas Ravenscroft (1621) and George Sandy's *Psalter* of 1636. Neither of these is used by Henry.

Four versions he uses are less well known. John Patrick, *The Psalms of David in Metre* (London: For A. and I. Churchill, L. Meredith, 1694). An earlier form of Patrick's work appeared in 1679 under the title, *A Century of Select Psalms*.

Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, *The Psalms of David* (London, 1651).

Miles Smith, *Psalms of King David paraphrased, and turned into English verse, according to the common metre, as they are usually sung in parish-churches* (London: 1668).

Simon Ford, *A New Version of the Psalms of David* (London: J.H. for Brabazon Aylmer, 1688).

Tate and Brady's *A New Version of the Psalms of David. Fitted to tunes used in Churches* would not appear until 1696, although the third edition of *Family Hymns* made use of "the psalms done by Mr. Tate." Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David imitated in the Language of the New Testament* would not appear until 1720.

³⁶Henry, *Family Hymns, Works of Henry*, pp. 706, 709.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 707.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 708.

³⁹Charnock, *Works*, IX, 41-62.

⁴⁰Thomas Manton considered Psalm 8 to teach us that we should meditate on the wonders of God's glory by regarding the beauty of the evening heavens. *Lord's Prayer*, p. 64.

⁴¹Isaac Watts distinguishes the prayer of evening and morning: "Then we petition for divine counsel in all the affairs of the day, and the presence of God with us through all the cares, businesses, dangers and duties...In the evening we give thanks to God for all the mercies of the day, for which we offered our petitions in the morning." *A Guide to Prayer*, p. 56.

⁴²*Cr. Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question #60.

⁴³One would like to imagine that the family prayer services regularly concluded with the singing of one of the Gospel canticles, but the fact seems to be that they never were too popular among the Puritans in spite of the fact that such an eminent Puritan hymnologist as Richard Baxter made a strong appeal for their use. Versions of the New Testament canticles were found in many of the psalters generally in use among the Puritans. Was there any particular reason for this? Was this because the singing of Canticles was thought to be papist? If that were the reason, the Puritan psalters would hardly have included them. More than anything else, it was probably because there was no really good metrical version available.

⁴⁴*Cf.* the interesting documentation gathered in regard to family feasts and fasts by Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, II, 245-251. In pp. 126 f he tells of a Presbyterian divine in 1690, who recorded attending an average of 40 family fasts and 15 family feasts each year. *Cf.* also II, 245-251 for family worship on public fast days. *Cf.* the Directory for Worship, XIV, "Fasts and

thanksgivings may be observed by individual Christians; or families, in private; by particular congregations..." as well as by the whole church.

⁴⁵Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 225.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷Watts, *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 129. Perkins, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 329. Perkins says, "The means whereby men may stir up their dull and heavy hearts, and so prepare themselves to prayer, are three. The first is to read diligently the word of God, concerning those matters about which they are to pray: and what then? This will be a means not only to direct him, but also to quicken the heart more fervently to deliver his prayer."

⁴⁸Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 225.

⁴⁹A chapter was considered a normal Scripture reading. Baxter, *Works*, III, 249. Cf. also *The Westminster Directory*, III, 3.

⁵⁰Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 225.

⁵¹Baxter, *Works*, IV, 249. Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 225.

⁵²Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 226. The Puritan left wing would have encouraged "godly conferences" or discussion of the Scripture and admonitions to apply the passage of Scripture which had been read. For example the 1652 edition of the *Directory for Worship* presents this point of view. In later editions of the Directory this statement was removed. Cf. H.O. Old, "The Reformed Daily Office," pp. 10-11.

⁵³Baxter, *Works*, IV, 250.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 240. Cf. also *The Westminster Directory*, XV, 5.

⁵⁵Henry, *Church in the House*, p. 227.

⁵⁶*The Westminster Directory* is quite insistent on the place of catechetical instructions in family worship. "Every proper opportunity ought to be embraced for such instruction. But we are of the opinion, that the Sabbath evening, after public worship, should be sacredly preserved for this purpose." XV, 5.

⁵⁷Baxter, *Works*, IV, 266-270. Henry, though much less explicitly, *Church in the House*, pp. 226-27.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 272-73.

⁶¹*The Westminster Directory for Worship*, XV, 3.

⁶²*The Westminster Directory*, in fact, gives six headings: adoration, thanksgiving, supplication, pleading, and intercession. V, 2.

⁶³Isaac Watts, writing a few years after Henry, says: "It would tend also to improve the gift of prayer, if such persons as have time and capacity would set down all these parts of prayer as

common places, and all the observable passages that occur in reading the Holy Scriptures...should be written down and registered under these heads...Bishop Wilkins, in his Treatise on Prayer, has given us such collections of Scripture, and Mr. Henry, in a late book, has furnished us with a great many more..." *Guide to Prayer*, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁴Since the days of Calvin's controversy with Castellio the Biblical scholars of the Reformed faith had been very clear in teaching that the Song of Songs spoke of Christ's love for the Church, and it was very natural that the Puritans should find the Song of Solomon to teach Christians the language of prayer.

⁶⁵Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 632.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Watts, *Guide to Prayer*, p. 15, divides praise into invocation and adoration. He says, "the first part of prayer is invocation, or calling upon God." It includes: 1) a making mention of one or more of the names or titles of God; 2) a declaration of our desire to worship him; 3) a desire for his assistance or acceptance." pp. 15-16. On what the early Puritans meant by invocation, see further, William Perkins, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 328. Another slightly different approach is found in John Wilkins' *The Gift of Prayer*, pp. 41-61.

⁶⁹Henry, *Method of Prayer*, pp. 633-34.

⁷⁰Watts makes a special point of prayer being a vow. He reminds us that in both baptism and the Lord's Supper, the making of vows is an important element. *Guide to Prayer*, p. 31. *Works*, III, 121.

⁷¹Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 635.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 637.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 638.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 641.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 644-45.

⁷⁷Bishop Wilken's seven chapters on prayers of confession are more what the popular imagination has come to expect of a Puritan divine. What the saintly bishop has provided, however, is a guide to the examination of conscience in regard to individual sin and the sin of the community. *The Gift of Prayer*, pp. 61-106.

On prayers of confession see: Bishop Wilkins, *The Gift of Prayer*, pp. 61-106. Thomas Manton, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 175-181. John Preston, *The Saint's Daily Exercise*, pp. 126-137. William Perkins, *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 341-42. Isaac Watts, *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 113-115.

⁷⁸On prayers of petition see: John Preston, *The Saint's Daily Exercise*, pp. 47-70. William Perkins, *Lord's Prayer*, pp. 339-341. Thomas Manton's *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 49-166. Bishop Wilkins, *The Gift of Prayer*, pp. 106-189. Isaac Watts, *Guide to Prayer, Works* III, 115-117.

⁷⁹Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 645.

⁸⁰Watts, *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 115 f.

⁸¹Isaac Watts develops this theme with particular insight. He says, that pleading in prayer “is part of that importunity in prayer which Scripture so much recommends.” *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 117. A bit further on he says, “as he condescends to talk to us after the manner of men, so he admits us to talk with him in the same manner too.” p. 118. *The Westminster Directory for Worship*, V, 2, makes pleading a special heading.

⁸²Isaac Watts gives seven grounds for pleading with God: 1) The greatness of our need. 2) The perfection of his nature. 3) The nature of our relationship to him. 4) The promises of the covenant. 5) The honour of God. 6) The proof of God’s goodness to us already received. 7) the name and mediation of Jesus. This is one of the most brilliant passages on prayer. *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 117-119. For a similar passage on pleading in prayer, see Bishop Wilkins, *The Gift of Prayer*, pp. 25-31.

⁸³Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 647.

⁸⁴*The Shorter Catechism*, Q. #11.

⁸⁵Preston, *The Saint's Daily Exercise*, pp. 38 f.

⁸⁶It is characteristic of the practice of prayer among the Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that they considered it important to ask God for the simplest and most common necessities of life. Cf. William Perkins’ comment on “give us this day our daily bread.” *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 34-44. Cf. Preston, *The Saint's Daily Exercise*, *passim*. This tendency is already discerned in Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xx, 44. It is important to see this tendency over against the strong emphasis on the doxological use of psalmody on the one hand, and the full elaboration of intercessions for the larger concerns of the Kingdom, on the other. All three aspects are essential to a well balanced diet of prayer.

⁸⁷Henry, *Method of Prayer*, pp. 656-57.

⁸⁸*Ibid.* p. 657.

⁸⁹*Ibid.* p. 658-59.

⁹⁰Isaac Watts likewise puts a strong emphasis on thanksgiving. *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 121-23. Drawing a strong distinction between blessing and thanksgiving, he goes on to say that we should not only thank God but bless God or delight in him. pp. 124-25. Cf. John Preston, *The Saint's Daily Exercise*, pp. 137-140.

⁹¹Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 660.

⁹²*Ibid.* p. 661.

⁹³*Ibid.* p. 661-62.

⁹⁴*Ibid.* p. 662-63.

⁹⁵*Ibid.* p. 663.

⁹⁶*Ibid.* p. 663.

⁹⁷*Ibid.* p. 664.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* p. 667. Cf. William Perkins, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 337, which outlines the intercessions as follows: “1) That God’s Church may flourish. 2) For Christian Kings and Princes. 3) Ministers. 4) That

the Lord would hasten the second coming of Christ." Perkins outlines these intercessions in the course of his exposition of "thy kingdom come."

⁹⁹*Ibid.* p. 667.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹*Ibid.* p. 669.

¹⁰²*Ibid.* p. 673.

¹⁰³*Ibid.* p. 683.

¹⁰⁴After the comprehensive prayer, led by the father of the family, the whole family said the Lord's Prayer together. This, at least, was the procedure which Matthew Henry recommended. Some of the Puritans were of the opinion that the Lord's Prayer was not supposed to be a set form to be repeated, but rather a pattern of prayer that was supposed to guide the prayers of Christians. Opposition to the use of the Lord's Prayer as a liturgical form originated among the Separatists at first. At the Westminster Assembly both Presbyterians and Congregationalists were in favor of its regular use in public worship.

Among those who discouraged the unison repetition of the Lord's Prayer were John Robinson, the pastor of the Separatist congregation which eventually settled at Plymouth in New England; John Owen, who more than anyone else fanned opposition to any kind of fixed liturgical prayer among mainline Puritans; and finally, Isaac Watts, who is quite representative of later non-conforming Puritans. For a more detailed discussion of the subject, see Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, (Westminster, England: Dacre Press, 1948), pp. 98-101. For the particularly well stated position of Isaac Watts, cf. *Guide to Prayer, Works*, III, 125-28. Cf. Baxter, *Works*, IV, 289.

Long paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer were often written to show how the Lord's Prayer was to be used as a pattern. These long paraphrases were not something new. Johann Ulrich Surgant, in his *Manuale curatorum* of 1502, had done the same thing. We find another such paraphrase in the *Genevan Psalter* of 1542. Henry provides us with two paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer in *A Method of Prayer*. One is a short version for children, "in the words of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism." *Method of Prayer*, p. 690. The other is a very much longer "A Paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer, in Scripture expressions." *Method of Prayer*, p. 684.

Nevertheless, Henry is quite explicit about the value of using the Lord's Prayer as a form of prayer. Among those who encouraged the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form of prayer. Among those who encouraged the use of the Lord's Prayer as a form to be regularly repeated were Henry, *Method of Prayer*, p. 684, Baxter, *Works*, IV, 289f, and Manton, *Lord's Prayer*, p. 39 f.

¹⁰⁵We shall not go into the origin of this prayer at any length, nevertheless a few remarks should be made. We do not find it in the Genevan daily prayer service, the Scottish Book of common Order, or in any of the Puritan prayer books. According to Horton Davies, it had its origins among the Independents rather than the Presbyterians. Puritans of Presbyterian leaning were inclined toward set liturgical formularies even though they always wanted to maintain a place for the minister, provided he had the gifts and abilities, to add prayers of his own composition. It was the Independents, led by John Owen, who were most vigorous in their opposition to any kind of prayer formulary.

Again it was the Independents who wanted to collect all the elements of prayer into one comprehensive prayer. The more moderate Puritans, following Geneva, thought in terms of several prayers in the service. There was an Invocation, which was a prayer of praise and adoration at the beginning of the service. Then there was a prayer of Confession and supplication before the sermon and a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession after the sermon. At the Westminster Assembly the Independents prevailed on the Presbyterians and made the compromise of having one comprehensive prayer but allowing that "It seems very proper to begin the public worship of the sanctuary by a short prayer." *Directory for Worship*, V, 1. The compromise also allowed for another prayer after the sermon, "to have relation to the subject that has been treated." *Directory for Worship*, V, 3. It was quite clear, nevertheless, that the service should contain one "full and comprehensive prayer." *Directory for Worship*, V, 2. With the Savoy liturgy, the Presbyterian proposal for the revision of the

Book of Common Prayer, the comprehensive prayer again disappeared. It was only after many of the Puritans were forced into Non-conformity that the comprehensive prayer became characteristic of both Presbyterians and Congregational churches. Whatever else may be said about the roots of the comprehensive prayer, either in the service for the Lord's Day or in the daily prayer service, it is clear that it is one of the features of Puritan worship which departs considerably from the usage of Geneva and other continental Reformed Churches.