

the House of Prayer, where they confess unto God their sins with groans and sorrow and tears of anguish: and lastly rise from their prayers and betake themselves to singing.'

In our Church we have two forms of public confession. One is used in the daily services; and the other just before the Communion. The first may be divided into five parts. 1. An humble acknowledgment that we have departed from God's ways and that our nature is evil. 2. Sins of omission and commission are deplored. 3. A cry for mercy. 4. A plea for pardon and restoration for Christ's sake. 5. A prayer to lead a better life. It is "general" because there is no man living who is not bound to make confession of his sins, and "general" because it speaks of the *general* failings of human life. Particular sins should be the subject of men's private confession to God. The public confession is so framed that all may make and join in it. Kneeling being the attitude of humility, all should go on their knees, except when prevented by age or bodily infirmity. Notice the following points in the language. We address God as "Almighty" because of his power, and *merciful* because of his love—the former reminds us of our danger, the latter of our hopes. Our wandering from God is compared to the straying of lost sheep. This like all other expressions in this confession is taken wholly from Scripture. God is called a Shepherd. David says "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Isaiah says "all we like sheep have gone astray," and our

Saviour compares sinners to lost sheep. Every call to God's House is the call of the Shepherd to the straying sheep.

"The devices and desires of our own hearts" are not safe to follow, for they lead us into sin. We "leave undone" many things, and it is as much sin to neglect to do right as to do wrong. No one can number the things he does, which he *ought not to do*. There are sins of thought, of feeling and of action. There is truly "no health in us." In view of what we are, we may well call ourselves *miserable offenders*. The better we know ourselves, the more truly can we say so. God might justly punish us, but we call upon Him to "spare all those who confess their faults," to *restore* those who are *penitent*, to take us back to His favour. Our Saviour taught us God's willingness to receive the penitent by the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son. Besides this we have many precious promises to this effect. True repentance consists not only in confessing but in forsaking sin, and so we ask His help to enable us to lead a better life. A "godly" life making making Christ the model. A "righteous" life towards our fellow men in all honesty and charity. A "sober" life as towards ourselves, governing our bodies and souls. Such a life will be to God's glory.

You will see that this is the model of what a true confession should be. We may not always find the full depth of its meaning. We may not always realize our own sinfulness, but the Church has put before us a model after which we should seek to mould our own feel-