

Editorial Notes.

THE celebrated Anglican clergyman who writes in the *Manchester Guardian* under the name of "Artifex" stated, after reading *The Lord's Supper: A Baptist Statement* (Carey Kingsgate Press, 2s. 6d.), that if there were no Parish Church near and if he were invited he would be prepared to take Communion at a Baptist church. He appeared to think, however, that the group which drew up the Statement were unduly hesitant in drawing out the sacramental significance of the rite. The Statement, which is mainly the work of a committee representative of the staffs of the eight Baptist Theological Colleges in the United Kingdom describes the practice and interpretation of the Lord's Supper in our denomination and deals with some practical issues. The group is to be congratulated upon its work.

On the whole it has been the habit of Baptists throughout their history to have concerned themselves with questions relating to the practice rather than to the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Since less than a third of this Statement is devoted to interpretation and more than two-thirds to practical matters many will doubtless feel that a more theological treatment was desirable. In the section on the order and conduct of the normal Baptist Communion Service the fact that many northern churches hold a separate afternoon Communion monthly is not mentioned. It might also be said that in this section it is the ideal rather than the actual which has been described. In practice is it the church or the church secretary who normally invites a particular layman to conduct Communion where there is no pastor? Is the form taken by the prayers of most ministers and deacons that of "confession, thanksgiving and consecration" before the distribution and "prayers for the Church Universal and for the communion of saints" following it? The importance of conforming to the ideal might have received greater emphasis, particularly in view of Inter-Communion discussions. The Statement rightly insists that, as the Lord's Supper is an act of the Church, occasional observances ought not to be arranged as thoughtlessly as they sometimes are. With the conclusion that broadcasting the service is to be rejected most Baptists will agree.

As the Statement makes clear, a variety of interpretation of the Lord's Supper—within the Reformed tradition—is to be found among Baptists. To what extent is one's theological interpretation of the sacraments determined by temperament? For some attendance at The Lord's Table is far more a richly sacramental

experience than Baptism, whereas there are those for whom Communion is simply a memorial rite commanded by Jesus and who feel the presence of the Lord in a much more real sense at Baptism than at the Table. But there are many questions which throng into one's mind as one reads this very useful little book, in the pages of which ministers and deacons particularly will find much that is helpful, and one would be glad to know that among them the Statement will be widely read and pondered.

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Congratulations to the Welsh Baptist Historical Society upon attaining its Jubilee! In the celebration issue of its *Trafodion* ("Transactions") the present secretary, Rev. Richard Edwards, looking back over the fifty years of the society's existence, claims it to be the oldest historical society of any religious denomination in Britain. (But the Congregational Historical Society claims to have been founded in 1899.) Formed at Porth on 16th July, 1901, with Principal William Edwards, of Cardiff, as President, the society began to publish its "Transactions," with Rev. Thomas Shankland as editor, in 1907. This continues to flourish today under the editorship of the distinguished historian, Dr. Thomas Richards. A generous donor made it possible for a prize to be awarded for historical essays of outstanding merit and, each year since 1905, a historical lecture has been delivered during the annual meetings of the Baptist Union of Wales. Additionally fortunate in having always enjoyed, as the secretary points out, the active support of the best men in the Welsh denomination, the society has thus been able to do much to stimulate among the Baptists of Wales a practical interest in their history. That it may long continue to prosper will be the wish of the members of the society's opposite number in England.

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Enviously watching a certain eminent divine depart for the Dorchester, with an anticipatory gleam in his eye, to be lunched by the British Broadcasting Corporation in celebration of the appearance of its new hymn-book, one could only conjecture whether the contents of the book would equal the quality of the luncheon. Since then, however, *The B.B.C. Hymn Book*,¹ beautifully produced, has come to hand. In some quarters it will probably be questioned whether the B.B.C. should have undertaken the publication of a volume of hymns. But it owes its existence to the numerous demands received by the Religious Broadcasting Department from listeners to studio services and has been in course of thorough preparation since 1937.

¹ Oxford University Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege. Music edition, 12s. 6d. Words edition, 6s.

There are 542 hymns all classified under definite headings, of which thirty-four are metrical psalms, fifteen are Biblical paraphrases and forty-five are choir settings. To make the book suitable for use in churches, hymns for Baptism, Communion, Marriage etc. have been included. (The conception of Baptism held by the world's largest Protestant communion has, however, been ignored.) The choice of hymns is ecumenical; there are even translations from Chinese and Swahili. A number of new ones make their appearance, three of which are, incidentally, by John Arlott, the popular sporting commentator. Anne Steele appears to be the only Baptist hymn-writer represented (unless Bunyan and Milton may be claimed), but Watts, Wesley, and Doddridge account for about fifty hymns between them. Many old familiar tunes are here—of the "good popular" type as distinct from the "bad popular"—and there are numerous new ones, some very good indeed. It was a bold action on the part of the editorial committee to include so many tunes composed by three of its own members. In several instances, however, but by no means in all, this action is justified. On the whole this is a very fine hymn-book, perhaps the best now existing in this country. In any case, in view of the influence of the radio on congregational hymn-singing its publication is an event of great importance. To listeners to studio services it will be a real boon and to the musical libraries of choirs, organists, choir-masters, ministers, and all who have a love of hymns, it will be a valuable addition. Its helpfulness as an aid to private devotion should not be overlooked. Naturally this will not be a substitute for denominational hymnals, but its influence is bound to be—and deservedly—wide and far-reaching.

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In 1897 the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (U.S.A.) published a missionary biography. Southern Baptists now look back on this event as the beginning of The Broadman Press, a great publishing enterprise which today occupies a position of commanding importance and influence in the religious publishing world of America. With Dr. William J. Fallis as Book Editor, the Press, whose headquarters are in a twelve-storey building at Nashville, Tennessee, employs a large staff and distributes its books through thirty-nine Baptist Book Stores operated by the Sunday School Board, and over two thousand other shops. Last year forty-eight titles were issued. In the illustrated brochure which describes the Press one noticed with interest that the Broadman publication held in the hands of a copy-writer in one of the pictures, is Dr. Townley Lord's *The Faith that Sings*.