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**BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## EDITORIAL

IT was high time that we had a new manual for ministers. "A Minister's Manual" compiled by Dr. M. E. Aubrey served the denomination well enough in past decades but has now outlived its usefulness as influences of liturgical revival have become more and more felt within the denomination. So now we have a replacement. It is "Orders and Prayers for Church Worship" compiled by Ernest A. Payne and Stephen F. Winward.\* Such a partnership in compilation should ensure that the worthwhile emphases and understanding of worship by Baptists—both past and present (and some may say on studying the manual, future, also!) have their proper place.

The new manual contains the usual material of sentences and prayers for public worship set out, however, according to the various elements within the pattern of worship—adoration, confession, intercession—and also according to the on-going events of the Christian calendar from Advent to All Saints. There is also a Lectionary covering Old and New Testament lessons for morning and evening services for two years. Service orders for all the Ordinances of the Church are provided, as also is a useful section on the Ministry of Visitation, as the worship is transferred from

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the sanctuary to the home. All this is to be expected and—as the compilers have presented it—to be welcomed. No doubt liturgical experts will be able to fault some of the compilation and we will leave them to do so. Rather would we make one or two comments on the new manual from the point of view of the minister whose responsibility it is to lead his Baptist congregation in worship Sunday by Sunday.

We have noted already the helpful ordering of material for public worship. This is made much more useful by the Introduction which sets out the principles and pattern of Christian Worship and then goes on to relate these to the contents of the book. The first part of the Introduction should provide ministers with useful material either for sermons on worship or perhaps, better still, material for teaching and discussion or worship on other occasions in the church's life. Our congregations are reputed often to be exceedingly reluctant to change the habits of the past—especially in forms of worship; possibly a greater part of this reluctance is due to the failure on the part of ministers to show adequate and convincing reasons for change. On page xii of the Introduction we read: "Full Christian Worship is not only scriptural and sacramental; it is also pentecostal." Set that sentence before our Baptist people and few would comprehend it, whilst many would be exceedingly suspicious of it. Analyse and explain its meaning as do the compilers of the manual and people will more readily come to see that the normal pattern of our worship needs reconsideration—to say the least! Not necessarily in a complete reordering of events so as to be totally unrecognisable—as a few think and many fear—but rather, in the first instance, in the clearer allocation of particular meaning and purpose to the events within the order. To take but one obvious example, to give clear content of adoration and confession to the "first" or "short" prayer and to make the often rambling "second" or "long" prayer a specific act of intercession. Similarly, after discussion on the Introduction people will more easily accept the idea of worship as a dialogue in which the congregation—and not just the minister—shares in the conversation and communion with God.

Just as important, however, is the understanding of the right use of the Ordinances of the Church, notably the services of dedication and the two sacraments. Discerning readers will notice significant changes within the orders as set out in the new manual. It is obviously at this point that the theology of the Church and its sacraments impinges upon the liturgy. The service of dedication, as set out, begins with a very welcome statement as to the meaning of the service. It is not being cynical to say that ministers, parents and congregations are all too often vague at this point. The

manual clearly states that the elements of thanksgiving, commitment of parents and church and the blessing of the child belong together in the service. Opportunity is provided within the order for the congregation to stand to signify its acceptance of a share in the responsibility for training the child in the way of the Lord. This act is significant in that thereby the service is made not simply a service for the family before God—but for the family within the participating congregation of the Church before God.

Probably the most significant order within the book is that of the baptism of believers, together with an order for the laying on of hands with prayer upon those who have been baptised, followed by the rubric: "The Minister shall then proceed with the administration of the Lord's Supper." This is in line with the growing practice in Baptist churches of linking baptism firmly with church membership, through the service of baptism being followed immediately by reception into church membership at the Lord's Table. Baptism is thus made, not solely, an individual's response to God's activity in the Gospel, but also an act whereby the individual is made a member of Christ's community—the Church. The suggested return to the old General Baptist practice of laying on of hands after baptism (still followed amongst some European Baptists) is to be welcomed. For not only has it scriptural authority but it also offers a clear distinction between reception into church membership of the newly baptised and the offering of the right hand of fellowship to those who enter a church by transfer. Whilst welcoming this comprehensive order, we have the feeling that the introduction of the laying on of hands is likely to be difficult in many churches—both because of practical difficulties which Baptists are often adept at finding to prevent change, and also for fear of the misinterpretation of the act. In connection with this point, we cannot help regretting that the compilers did not feel able to expand slightly their section in the Introduction on the Ordinances of the Church so as to say a little more about the full service of baptism and reception into church membership.

In conclusion, we welcome an order for the Lord's Supper which assumes that the actual celebration is an integral part of a total service with preaching and that from the very beginning the service is recognisable as one of Holy Communion. Let us hope that this manual will hasten on the present move towards the disappearance of the "tacked on" Communion Service.

Altogether this manual is to be warmly welcomed. Ministers will do well, however, to use some parts of it with discretion, at first, bearing in mind that changes are best wrought, not with shattering suddenness, but as a result of preliminary explanation and education in practice.