

PRAISE AND PRAYER

The first thing that a Martian coming into a service in any one of our churches would notice is that, whatever kind of tradition we follow, music and singing plays a large part in the proceedings. There is a great wealth of Christian music of all traditions going back over many centuries on which we can draw. So it is worth recalling that, for early Baptists, congregational singing of any sort and the use of musical instruments was regarded as anathema to the proper conduct of public worship. In 1678 Grantham stated that the singing of set words in public worship 'opens a gap for forms of prayer', set prayers being regarded as the invention of the Devil, and that to 'permit singing by art of pleasant tunes and you will bring music and even instruments back again into public worship and then farewell to all solemnity'. By 1684, however, many General Baptist fellowships had accepted congregational singing of psalms, but they were still being urged by others to justify both the matter and the manner. Particular Baptists, on the whole, were more relaxed but still far from unanimous on the question. Benjamin Keach was among the first to introduce the regular singing of hymns in an English congregation, at first on special occasions, then more regularly; but it took even Keach twenty years to do this, and then some of his congregation resigned!

In the eighteenth century, due partly to the influence of the singing Methodists, hymn-singing became much more regular, though among General Baptists resistance sprang up again in the mid-1780s. By the end of the century, however, it was accepted as the norm and many fellowships were producing their own books - some of which were then adopted by other congregations. In the main, the hymns were for special occasions, to supplement the use of the psalms which formed the regular source of singing material.

In the nineteenth century there was a proliferation of different hymn books, normally reflecting different theological emphases or designed for specific circumstances. Thus in 1814 Gadsby's *Selection of Hymns* was published, a Calvinistic collection, while in the 1830s the General Baptists adopted an individual book as their own, originally published in 1793 by John Deacon. In 1880 *A School Hymnal* was published for use with children, while in 1882 J. Haddon, jun., brought out a *Youth Companion* to his *Psalms and Hymns*, published in 1858. Most of these books were the work of compilation of one person, or occasionally a congregation. In 1879 *The Baptist Hymnal* was published, edited by a committee of ten - surely the first direct ancestor of our present books. In 1900 *The Baptist Church Hymnal* appeared, followed in 1933 by *The Revised Church Hymnal* and by *The Baptist Hymn Book* in 1962. Each of these was produced at the initiative of the Psalms and Hymns Trust. And so we arrive at 1992 and the production of *Baptist Praise and Worship*. That it is heir to a rich tradition of both worship resources and controversy is obvious; that it will take its place in both traditions is also clear.

There is one significant difference between this book and its predecessors: its

publication is linked with that of *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*, a resource book of prayer material and service shapes for different occasions. As part of the Free Church tradition, Baptists have not historically made as much use of such resources as they have of hymn books. If the use of set hymns was regarded with suspicion, then the use of written prayers and liturgical responses was regarded with utter horror! Such books have existed, however, and have been used, notably M. E. Aubrey's *A Minister's Manual* (1927), D. Tait Patterson's *The Call to Worship* (1930), which provides responsive readings and chants for all sorts of occasions and seasons, and *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship*, edited by E. A. Payne and S. Winward. These books contain material to be used in regular Sunday worship, as well as orders of worship for the various 'occasional' services. In 1980 *Praise God* was published, edited by Alec Gilmore, Edward Smalley and Michael Walker, designed as a modern supplement to Payne and Winward. The new book, while using many of the same basic ideas as *Praise God*, is obviously intended as a replacement for the invaluable but now dated Payne and Winward volume. *Patterns and Prayers* suggests prayers and readings for services throughout the year, including One World Week and Church Anniversary, and orders and resources for the various occasional services. There is a helpful introduction on the nature of the organization of worship, and explanations of why the services have been set out as they have, with suggestions for their use.

With our history of denominational antipathy towards anything that could be interpreted as the use of set prayers and a formal liturgy, the first question that must be asked of such a book is whether it is necessary. The need for a new hymn book is clear, if only because of the explosion of new music over the past thirty years. The most common trend in our churches is towards more informal and participatory worship - is this then the time to produce a book of formal services? I believe it is important that we have a basic structure within which worship can be expressed and the actions of the Spirit be experienced, while still having the freedom to put together a service that reflects the place and needs of our congregation. It is certainly true that, valuable though it is, Payne and Winward now needs to be 'translated' for most occasions, and *Praise God*, rich in resource though it has proved to be, has been found thin in some significant areas.

Since there is a need both for a new hymn book and for a new book of service resources, and since these are part of the continuing exploration of worship within our denomination, the question remains whether these are the two books that ought to have been produced. The answer is, I believe, on the whole, yes. Since the publication of their predecessors, much has changed, both in our society and in the way we worship, and such changes must be properly reflected if our worship is to be true and not just the formal echoing of phrases and forms long emptied of meaning.

The basic changes come into four categories - the effect of the ecumenical movement, the rise of charismatic renewal, the changes in attitude to liturgy, and

the general differences in society.

The development of ecumenical relationships, with the consequent enrichment as we discover one another's traditions, is reflected in both *Praise and Worship* and *Patterns and Prayers*. I believe the latter is especially successful, with its use of prayers from different traditions and modelled on the usages of other traditions, and challenging in the preparation of worship. As a whole, Baptists have sometimes found it hard to take other traditions on board, and a book like this should aid in a widening of horizons. I am particularly glad to see the inclusion of prayers of repentance and absolution. The hymn book also shows an ecumenical spread of materials, including hymns from many generations. But, largely because of this, I have one major criticism, and here I echo the sentiments of Neville Clark's review of the *Baptist Hymn Book* in the *Baptist Quarterly* in 1962: why do we still have a denominational hymn book? Within a few months we and the United Reformed Church have produced new hymn books: that there is much common ground is clear to see. Having had to choose between the two books, I have to record that, on balance, I prefer *Baptist Praise and Worship*. But I should also like to record a plea that next time the technical difficulties should be overcome and, instead of two books with a large percentage of common material, we find a way forward together.

The rise of the charismatic renewal has had a profound effect on our worship services. With its emphasis on less formal and structured forms of worship, and a rise in a particular style of music and language in worship, its influence is impossible to avoid. With the publication of the various song books, such as *Mission Praise* and the *Songs of Fellowship* books, congregations have had access to a much wider range of material, although physical limitations (it is hard to come with more than two books at a time!) has meant that the actual use of material has sometimes become more limited, since many of these books do not carry a full range of worship resources. In praise of the new book, it represents a wide range of styles and music. By drawing on the resources of previous books, it has kept for us some of the great expressions of our faith, both in words and music, as well as incorporating much that is good from the newer traditions. It is good to see that, alongside Graham Kendrick and Dave Bilbrough, music from the traditions represented by the communities of Iona and Taizé is included. Such a breadth of resource should mean that people from all parts of our churches ought to find much of what they seek here. Of course, it will also mean that there everybody will find something they do not like, and there are certainly some words and some music here that I cannot ever see myself using. But that is as it should be, for the book is a resource to be drawn on, not a prescription to be followed slavishly. We do have a wide range of emphases within our fellowships and it is salutary for all of us to be reminded of those parts we should otherwise ignore.

Patterns and Prayers has also tried to reflect the differences that have emerged in styles of worship. Of course, the rise of informality is particularly hard to represent in a book of patterns and I am not convinced that the book succeeds. By

providing units that are interchangeable, the committee have clearly attempted to leave room for informality and fluidity. Unfortunately, it leads to an untidy format which can become confusing in use. But as a resource book (which was the aim of the committee) rather than a book with the answers, these practical difficulties should be surmountable.

The main change in the attitude to the actual liturgy is the rise in the prominence of the Communion Service. Instead of a separate service for a select few, or something tacked on at the end as if it were an afterthought, the Lord's Supper is now an integral part of the whole diet of Christian worship. It is good to see this represented in both books. *Patterns and Prayers* has outlines for three types of services and a wealth of resources. The hymn book has a rich selection of hymns and readings for Communion, again drawn from different traditions, and this will surely enrich our worship. *Patterns and Prayers* also reflects a concern for liturgy with its inclusion of the Joint Liturgical Group's new four-year lectionary, providing us with a systematic and helpful way of covering all the parts of our Christian message. To have the opportunity of using responsive prayers and readings will also be an enrichment, and it is good to have them in the hymn book and so easily available. However, although it is obviously appropriate to have the readings placed as they are, they are proving difficult to find - a fault in the index layout.

One of the biggest ways in which the changes in our society are reflected in our worship is in the type and style of the language used and this has been taken seriously in the hymns. Issues of sexist and racist language must now be taken seriously. While not necessarily advocating a use of 'God our Mother', it is important that language in prayers and hymns, wherever possible, should be inclusive. I know that some feel that this is unnecessary and, indeed, intrusive, but speaking from my own experience in leading worship I can only say that the use of inclusive language, if done sensitively and carefully, helps those for whom it is an issue, while not disturbing those who see no problem. It is disconcerting to find that a well-known hymn has changed its words, but I venture to predict that in ten years time people will have become as comfortable with the new as they currently are with the old. Our reading of Scripture is in today's language, our preaching is in today's language; it is good that our hymns and prayers should also be in today's language. This is an area where editors can never win, and I believe that on the whole the changes have been successful - I might have gone further, but others would not have gone so far, and so I am grateful for what we have.

Patterns and Prayers shows a sensitivity to society's changes not only in the actual words but also in the forms of the services, which take realistic account of the situations in which people find themselves - for example, the two services of thanksgiving for the birth of a child, and some of the prayers and statements offered in the wedding service.

Of course, there are some minor niggles in both books. For example, why should 'Lord of all hopefulness' find itself amongst the funeral hymns? Why is *Yesu*

rather than *Jesus* used in hymn 606? I appreciate it may be more authentic, but it is less accessible. Why does the hymn book, with such a broad base, have the word 'Baptist' in its title, making it a problem in an ecumenical setting, when *Patterns and Prayers*, more markedly Baptist, does not, especially when they are clearly designed to be used together. And, finally, given that there is such a wide and comprehensive range of services and prayers in *Patterns and Prayers*, why is there nothing for use at a death-bed, a situation I faced shortly after buying the book? Also missing are the actual readings, rather than just references, for occasional services, especially inconvenient for weddings and funerals.

But these are small problems. Overall, I believe that these books succeed in what they set out to do, which is to serve the denomination through the nineties and after. As resource books, to be used imaginatively and together with the other rich resources available to us, these books will serve us well.

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NEWS AND NOTES

We are pleased to record academic awards to members of the Society:

The Revd W. C. R. Hancock, until his recent retirement BU Secretary for Ministry, has been awarded a PhD from the University of London for his thesis on 'Non-conformity and Politics, 1893-1914, with special attention to the rise of the Labour Party'.

Dr C. D. T. James was recently elected to the Honorary Fellowship in the Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. Dr James was Chairman of the Department of the History of Medicine and King's College Hospital Medical School, and Supplementary Minister at Denmark Place Baptist Church, Camberwell. He is now acting archivist at Westminster Chapel.

We welcome the appearance of two new journals:

Theological Themes, published by Northern Baptist College and edited by Martin Scott. The first issue, Spring 1992, was concerned with Creation, and the second, Autumn 1992, with Christology.

Anabaptism Today, edited by Stuart Murray and Nelson Kraybill, 205 South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DN. The first issue appeared in November 1992.