

A PEOPLE'S SERVICE BOOK

THE WORSHIPBOOK: Services and Hymns (the Westminster Press, Philadelphia) 688 pp. Pew Edition \$4.00; Pulpit Edition \$8.00.

The main Presbyterian denominations in the United States have taken a major step forward by renewing the best Reformed tradition of the congregation's corporate worship, in their recently published volume of services and hymns, entitled *The Worshipbook*. This publication replaces both in name and in character the long current *Common Order* Presbyterian practice. It is an endeavour to put into the hands of the people in the pews the essential structures and forms of public worship, bound up with the hymnal of the three participating churches: the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

One could wish that the hymn-book itself had undergone more radical revision and its items had been arranged in a liturgical rather than an alphabetical order, but at the same time, the very familiarity of this hymn-book now being handled by congregations in the same volume as the liturgical material, may usefully contribute to making this truly a people's service-book. It is certainly a most significant publication as marking the emergence of a more relevant and lively liturgical practice in the Reformed tradition.

The compilers accept the Calvin/Knox view that public worship is essentially sacramental in its structure, and on the Lord's Day should normally culminate in the Lord's Supper. For the Sunday Services basic outlines of the 'Service for the Lord's Day' are provided, and there is a rich variety of material to use within such a framework.

Useful forms of Litany are included, likely to encourage some purely devotional occasions in the life of congregations really making use of the service-book. Impressive and imaginative material for the Christian Year, including a Lectionary, is also provided. Along with the Collects for the greater festivals are given Calls to Worship, Responsive Readings, Prayer of Confession, and Prayer of Thanksgiving.

The language of the prayers throughout the service-book is in the 'you' and not the 'Thou/Thee' mode. Apart from this characteristic, it is a dignified contemporary English of the RSV nature.

A courageous innovation is in presenting the material for funerals under the heading, 'Witness to the Resurrection'.

The opening rubric of an 'Order for an Agape', found here among other forms of service, reads as follows: 'The Agape, or "Love feast",

is a fellowship meal that should not be confused with the Lord's Supper. The Agape recalls meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry, and is an expression of the fellowship that Christians enjoy when they meet as "the household of God". The Agape may be held at table, and be conducted by members of the congregation, or by the minister assisted by members of the congregation. Families may bring dishes of food to the table for all to share.' (Incidentally all the rubrics in *The Worshipbook* are in fact printed in red.)

There are two pages of 'Prayers for Use at Home', and a valuable longer section of 'Other Prayers for Christian Worship'. Many intriguing human needs and situations are covered by these special prayers, e.g. 'For Criminals and Racketeers', 'For Scientists', 'For Entertainers', 'For Jewish Friends of the Church', 'For a Moderator', and 'When There Is Tragedy'. This thoughtful petition is made 'For Worship in the Church': 'Holy God: you call us to worship, and by your Spirit prompt prayers and praise. Keep us from saying words or singing hymns with ritual disinterest. Fill us with such wonder that we may worship you, grateful for the mystery of your unfailing love for us, in Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.'

The Worshipbook is an adventurous liturgical advance which other Presbyterian churches should study with thoughtful interest. Firmly rooted in the Common Order tradition of Geneva and John Knox, *The Worshipbook* boldly affirms in its Preface: '*The Worshipbook* is a Presbyterian book. It is faithful to that tradition. *The Worshipbook* is an ecumenical book. It attempts to adopt, both in services and hymns, the best that fellow Christians in other Churches and traditions offer. Presbyterians value freedom and variety in worship, but they emphasise equally the virtue of orderliness.'

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