

THE GUIDELINE

Psalms 31:3

THE BAPTIST CHURCH MANUAL

In this short article, it shall be my purpose to show some of the contrasts and contradictions between the Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual and the doctrine of Christ. We shall refer to it simply as the Manual. All quotations will be from the Manual wherein it is used.

Edward T. Hiscox was born in 1814 and died in 1901. The foreword in his book tells of it being a “favorite among countless thousands of Baptists in the United States.” The fact that a church would have to have a manual to go by instead of the scriptures is appalling. God’s word, the Bible, is complete and furnishes man completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If the Bible, and the Bible alone, cannot lead us, we might as well stop our religious activities. The Manual suggests one needs something in addition to the word of God to go by in matters related to the church.

This is precisely the claim that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, better known as Mormons, makes for themselves. They come to your door and say, “We believe the Bible, but we have this book of Mormon.” We say to them, “Come in and let’s just study the Bible.” The reply is normally, “No, thanks.”

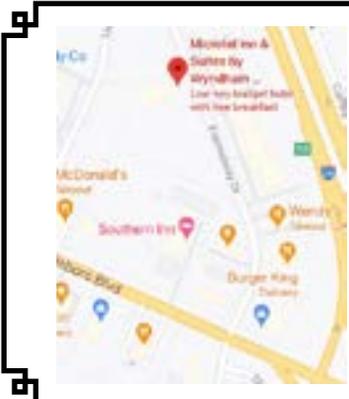
In the chapter, “The Nature Of The Church,” the Manual shows the process through which people are to go in starting a new church. It points out that careful thought and much mature deliberation should be made consulting “wise and experienced sources, including the association or convention with which the proposed church will likely affiliate.” We read nowhere in the scriptures of the Lord’s church ever belonging to a convention or getting permission from a convention to function in any community in the world.

Next, the Baptist church is to “draft a proposed constituting act and church covenant bylaws may also be drafted at this time, together with articles of faith, if desired.” The Bible is as silent as the tomb on such a constitution or articles of faith. Romans 10:17 says, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and the hearing by the word of God.*” God’s word produces faith enough to save through obedience. This must not be enough for the Hiscox folks. On page 27 of the same chapter in question: “Resolved, that guided as we believe by the Holy Spirit, and relying on the blessing of God, we do here and now by this act constitute ourselves a church of Jesus Christ to perform his service and to be governed by his will” It was the will of Jesus Christ to build His church. He said: “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Mat. 16:18). No church that Jesus built ever wore any other than his name. His church is not a denomination among many as the Manual suggests.

The new Baptist church being formed should then “petition the local Baptist association for recognition....” Again, the Bible is silent. This is the problem with the Manual all the way through, it is not inspired. In the chapter entitled “Church Membership,” the Manual says, “...the new birth begets Christian fellowship; but to secure church fellowship, that change must be confessed in baptism” (p. 35). On page 34, the Manual says: “baptism constitutes the ritual or ceremonial qualification.” According to the Manual, the new birth begets Christian fellowship and baptism is a ritual qualification. One can see the problem coming long before one gets there, for in the same chapter under the subheading “Modes of Admission” we quote Note 1: “By Baptism – A person may be admitted to the church on a profession of faith in Christ, by baptism. First he makes known his desire or baptism and union with the church, to the pastor or brethren.

If they, after proper investigation, become satisfied of his readiness for that step, the church considers the question of his reception; and then, if satisfied, votes that he be received as a member, on being baptized.” Mind you this person is already saved on his profession of faith, but is voted on before he can be baptized and be affiliated with that particular congregation. The Lord’s church never ever voted on anyone before or after baptism. The baptized believers are added to the church (Acts 2:47). The Lord does the adding, not the congregation.

In the chapter on “The Christian Ministry,” (p. 55), “The pastor has the oversight and supervision of all the interests of the church, and of all departments of its work, both spiritual and temporal.” The Baptist Pastor (minister) is over the church. He is in charge of both the spiritual and temporal. He runs the show, in other words. The New Testament shows that elders rule the church (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28). In the chapter on “Christian Ordinances,” and in particular on the partaking of the Lord’s Supper, page 92, Note 7 says, “There is no scriptural rule as to the frequency with which, nor time or place at which it shall be observed.” This is a plain contradiction of Acts 20:7 where the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread. Again, the Manual is not true to the scriptures. Page 93 says that “preaching is not worship.” This plainly contradicts Acts 2:42. The same is true when the Manual deals with baptism. On page 83, the Manual says, “Baptism may not be essential to salvation, but it is essential to obedience.” All New Testament converts were told to be baptized before salvation could be obtained (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). The Manual then says: “Regeneration is by the Holy Spirit alone, and should precede baptism.” Again, we have the cart pulling the horse. Regeneration is attained after baptism [Titus 3:5jc]. Again, the Manual says: “Baptism, therefore, is an act of obedience, and as such brings the candidate into a more intimate and exclusive fellowship with his Lord; but it possesses no power in itself to remit sin, to change the heart, or to sanctify the spirit.” Acts 2:38 still says, “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one*



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of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins
 Now, which will we accept? Will we accept the Manual or the New Testament? It can not be the Manual and the New Testament for the Manual contradicts the New Testament on almost every page. Christianity is not dependent on the whims or doctrines of men. Thank God that such is true.†

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