

What Baptists Stand For

IT must be a great satisfaction to all Baptists, not to mention the author and the publishers, that a second edition of Mr. Henry Cook's book, *What Baptists Stand For*,¹ is required. This edition is substantially the same as the first, apart from some omissions and a little restatement.

The new edition is most welcome as a further illustration of the continuous and progressive exposition of the Baptist faith by leading Baptists. Mr. Cook deals with four principal themes: Scripture, The Church, Baptism, Liberty. The book is to be warmly commended, and the comments which follow, even when they are critical, are meant to be compliments and complements to an already serviceable book.

Would that it had been one page longer! It is no other than the first page of the book which is really missing. Such a page would then have been devoted to the first thing for which Baptists stand. That first thing is: The Priority of Worship. Of course when it did not come on the first page, it was a comfort to me to think that a consideration of our Baptist ideals of worship would appear in Mr. Cook's second section on the Church, but it did not come. On that first but missing page, it would have been so good to read some such token statement as: "Baptists in fellowship with all Christians of all generations and of all lands stand for the priority of Christian worship."

Of course one page would not have been enough, for there is a great need among us that the distinctive evangelical values of Baptist ideas of worship should be set forth. Mr. Cook frequently employs the phrase "fellowship with Christ," and this is a fundamental description of the Christocentric character of the believers' life, but it is to be supplemented by the thought of the worship of God as fundamental and prior. New Testament precept, Baptist practice and a theology of evangelism all point to the priority of worship.

Mr. Cook's first section has a heart-warming title: "The Supremacy of Scripture," but there is an ambiguity in the treatment which should be cleared up. The author often refers to Scripture, but the context shows that he generally means the New Testament. In fact Mr. Cook rarely mentions the Old Testament, though his treatment of the New Testament is adequate to his purpose. It is a pity that he makes no attempt to discuss the Baptist attitude to the Old Testament, for this is really the crux of the problem of Scripture for Baptists. We Baptists need to

¹ Carey Kingsgate Press, 8s. 6d.

ponder the fact that it was Jesus who raised the Old Testament to the level of Christian scripture.

The next section on "The Nature of the Church" is a sound and stimulating statement of our Baptist belief, which will greatly help and illustrate Baptist apologetic. My appreciation of this section is however tempered by the fact that the second great omission of the book occurs here. Mr. Cook rightly refers to Jesus and Jeremiah's new covenant, emphasises the part that covenant plays in the thinking of Baptist fathers who took their churchmanship seriously, and even quotes a covenant statement from Robert Browne. All this was most promising, but then came the disappointment, for in his exposition of our churchmanship Mr. Cook fails to relate the covenant idea to our church life. Covenant, old and new, holds the Bible together, and covenant, for Moses and Jeremiah, for Jesus and the Apostles, holds the people of God together. For our Baptist fathers, including William Carey, covenant was the cement of their spiritual enterprises. What holds the Bible together holds the Church together, and this is the gist of our Free Church position over against other claims that Episcopacy is the norm of the Church. Mr. Cook's omission reflects Baptist neglect of the idea of the covenanted community, and "gathered" is a poor substitute.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Cook quotes (p. 37) with apparent approval the dictum that "The Church is the Extension of the Incarnation." Such a phrase, based on a metaphor, theologically dubious as extending that metaphor away from the original intention of the metaphor, and religiously objectionable as infringing the uniqueness of the Incarnation, is a phrase that is not welcome in a book of Baptist belief.

Within this same section of his book Mr. Cook expounds the "Priesthood of all Believers" as the priesthood of each believer, which is of course perfectly correct. We Baptists believe in the priesthood of each believer. Our author, however, makes no effort to deal with the accusation levelled against us that Free Churchmen have not understood this doctrine, because the priesthood of each believer is only the minimum meaning of the doctrine. The priesthood of all believers, we are told, means the priesthood of the corporate body of believers acting together, acting corporately in covenant towards God, to each other and to mankind. Here is a fruitful field for further investigation, because the relevant Biblical passages undoubtedly point to the corporate and individual aspects of the priesthood of all believers.

Mr. Cook regretfully comes to the conclusion that Baptists will have to abandon the word "ordinance" in favour of the imported "sacraments," on the ground that "ordinance" does not do justice

to what is involved in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A little study will show that "ordinance" represents several Hebrew and Greek words of rich diversity of meaning. These words point to the divine Author of the ordinances, to the divine grace given in the ordinances, and are used to describe the elements of worship, especially remembrance (in the Biblical and not modern meaning of that word), and refer to the Passover which is closely related to the Lord's Supper. In short, "ordinance" does everything that "sacrament" does and more. Perhaps those who favour the word imported from pagan thought will tell us what it is that "sacrament" does in the Church that "ordinance" does not do in the Bible?

In his third section devoted to Baptism, Mr. Cook places us all in his debt with his clear and forthright exposition. It is also very satisfactory that he begins to strengthen the weak point of Baptist theology of Baptism. It will be apparent to all how Baptist apologetic has failed to relate Jesus' Baptism to ours. Indeed a leading Baptist once told me that Jesus' Baptism was of course "a delayed adolescent experience!" Few would take such a view, but there is also little sign in the published expositions that Baptists think of Baptism as a "re-presentation of Christ's own Baptism and its application to each convert" (Lampe). Mr. Cook makes an effort to see His Baptism and ours as one whole, and the development of this approach will bring rich reward to our point of view. Jesus asked for His Baptism: so must we.

In a review in this journal of the first edition of this book, Dr. Payne addressed pertinent questions to our author, and in particular asked him to justify the view that it was our Lord's intention to found ordinances. We should all agree today that that was our Lord's intention, and this represents another fruitful line for Baptist exegesis. The late revered Principal Wheeler Robinson coined the phrase "Prophetic Symbolism" to describe those symbolic actions whereby the prophets of the Old Testament dramatically illustrated their message and their mission. Prophetic symbolism would be inadequate to describe what our Lord did in His Baptism and at the Last Supper, but "Dominical Symbolism" would be adequate as showing the continuity with the prophets and yet preserving the uniqueness of our Lord's actions. The Dominical symbols of His Baptism and His Supper would then be the means of a new line of Baptist exposition, whereby His Baptism was related to ours, just the Last Supper is related to our observance of the Lord's Supper.

In view of all this it is a matter of regret that Mr. Cook did not decide to devote a separate section to the Lord's Supper, and this really is the third omission of his book. The present sections

naturally suggest to a non-Baptist that Baptists attach more importance to Baptism than to the Lord's Supper, and this is not true. It is also a wise precaution for Baptists to be seen to devote as much attention and thought to the one ordinance as to the other, for if the Messiah sought a part in Baptism, we too are granted a share at Messiah's Table. Besides Baptists have something distinctive to say to the Christian Church concerning *both* ordinances.

Mr. Cook is at his best in the fourth section: "The Principle of Liberty." He writes eloquently and with persuasiveness. He shows also a far greater readiness to accept the Anabaptists as our forerunners than is usually the case. Such a discussion as Mr. Cook's, of course, leaves the way open for the consideration of the application of the idea of liberty to conceptions like planned economies and Trade Unions.

There is also a fourth great omission in the book. There really should be a section devoted to the zeal of the Baptists in missionary enterprise and their great achievements in that field. Various paragraphs through the book are not adequate, and our missionary enterprise, like the covenant idea, is not even listed in the Index.

Despite the comments above, Mr. Cook has made an important contribution, and it is worthy of serious study and sincere commendation. Criticisms are justified precisely because the book is intended to be an exposition of our position, and as such a guide to non-Baptists concerning our faith and order. A third edition should take account of the above-mentioned serious omissions. The book is clearly and attractively written. Exegesis is sound and the exposition is practical and convincing. One cannot read the book without rejoicing in one's status as a Baptist and in our Baptist faith.

Lastly, reference must be made to the discussion concerning the Ministry, and Baptist ministers will be interested to see what Mr. Cook has to say about Dr. Dakin's definition of a Baptist Minister, as a person in pastoral charge of a Baptist church. Setting the Dakin and Cook views side by side and considering them in the light of the New Testament evidence, it is highly instructive to observe Dr. Dakin's emphasis upon what is really a priestly view of the Baptist ministry by reference to the local church, and to compare Mr. Cook's view on a prophetic view of the ministry as more widely embracing, as obtains in the New Testament. To leave Bristol College for a University Chair seemed to be something like leaving the Ministry, but experience shows that that is not so. The churches still call me to preach and to counsel, to conduct the ordinances, and thus they establish me in the ministry they claim from me.

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