

**LANDMARKISM BEFORE
J.R. GRAVES**

*Documented Evidence of Landmark Baptist
Teachings in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries*

By Thomas Williamson

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The modern Landmark Baptist movement, as we know it today, began in 1851 in Cotton Grove, Tennessee, when John Robinson Graves offered these Cotton Grove Resolutions:

"1st. Can Baptists, consistently with their principles or the Scriptures, recognize those societies not organized according to the pattern of the Jerusalem Church, but possessing different governments, different officers, a different class of members, different ordinances, doctrines and practices, as churches of Christ?

"2nd. Ought they to be called gospel churches, or churches in a religious sense?

"3rd. Can we consistently recognize the ministers of such irregular and unscriptural bodies as gospel ministers?

"4th. Is it not virtually recognizing them as official ministers to invite them into our pulpits, or by any other act that would or could be construed into such a recognition?

"5th. Can we consistently address as brethren those professing Christianity, who not only have not the doctrine of Christ and walk not according to His commandments, but are arrayed in direct and bitter opposition to them?"

These resolutions were published far and wide throughout the South, and in 1854 James Madison Pendleton, an associate of Graves, published his essay "An Old Landmark Reset." The Landmark movement rapidly gained influence within the Southern Baptist Convention, as a reaction to the laxity and ecumenical spirit that Baptists had fallen into, cooperating closely with Pedobaptist churches and ministers. (Pedobaptists are those who baptize infants as opposed to the Baptist practice of believer's immersion).

The Landmark movement eventually gave rise to two great associations of Landmark churches, the American Baptist Association and the Baptist

Missionary Association of America. Many Independent Baptist churches, some of them preferring an "unaffiliated" status outside of any association, adopted Landmark principles.

Nowadays there are thousands of churches in the SBC, ABA, BMA and Independent Baptist movements that identify with the Landmark movement. Thousands of other churches in these groups are non-Landmark - they are unaware of, indifferent to, or vocally opposed to Landmark teachings.

There is an obvious difficulty for Landmarkers, that needs to be addressed. If the Landmark principles are in any sense based on Scriptural principles, how is it that no one, over a period of 18 centuries, noticed that these principles were in the Bible? How is it that all the great men of God missed these obvious truths, until the time of J.R. Graves and J.M. Pendleton? Perhaps the old principle applies here: "If it's true, it's not new, and if it's new, it's not true."

Did Graves, Pendleton and their associates invent an entirely new system of theology in the 1850s? Or did they codify and provide organizational expression to ideas that had already been expressed and practiced by Baptists in preceding centuries? That is the question that I desire to address and explore in this essay. The Landmark movement as initiated by Southern Baptists in the 1850s will gain credibility if it can be shown that these ideas were previously held by other Baptists. It will lose credibility if no historical background for these ideas can be shown.

Of course, our final authority is not what Baptists have believed over the years. The teachings of the Bible, the Word of God, are our final authority. The only purpose of this essay is to attempt to determine whether or not Baptists prior to the time of Graves understood and interpreted their Bibles to teach Landmark principles.

Some historians have given the impression that the tenets of Landmarkism were unknown prior to 1851 and were first proposed by Graves and his associates at that time. For instance, Dale Moody has stated, "**Many Southern Baptists, unaware of the facts of Southern Baptist history and unmoved by the plain teachings of the New Testament, have followed the innovations of Landmarkism which infiltrated into the South from the North through such personalities as J.R. Graves and J.M. Pendleton.**" James Tull says that Landmarkism "embodied elements of innovation which made it, not only in

total scope, but also in separate details, a movement alien to those ecclesiastical traditions which were formulated by English and American Baptists in the 17th and 18th Centuries."

The purpose of this booklet is to show that Landmark principles were not an "innovation" in the mid 19th Century, but rather were known and practiced by some (not all) Baptists in previous centuries. My purpose is to provide historical information that will place the Landmark movement in its proper historical context.

It is **NOT** the purpose of this booklet to attack non-Landmark believers or to deny the validity of the Kingdom work of non-Landmark preachers and churches. To those readers who are non-Landmark, I affirm that your Christian work is of great value in promoting the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I rejoice in that. I do not expect or desire that all Baptists or other Christians embrace all aspects of Landmark doctrine. After all, Landmarkers differ greatly among themselves as to what principles they uphold, and how strictly they enforce them.

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UNIVERSAL CHURCH VERSUS LOCAL CHURCH ONLY

Did any Baptists prior to the time of J.R. Graves reject the doctrine of the Universal Church, and hold to the Landmark principle that the true church is local in nature? There is evidence that some Baptists before the time of J.R. Graves conceived of the Church in purely local terms. The Dordrecht Mennonite Confession of 1632 states that "**We believe in and confess a visible Church of God, consisting of those, who, as before remarked, have truly repented, and rightly believed; who are rightly baptized, united with God in heaven, and incorporated into the communion of saints on earth.**" The insistence on proper baptism foreshadows the later Landmark emphasis on this issue, suggesting that Christians who have not been "rightly baptized" are not part of the Church. See also John Smyth's confession of 1609: "**The church of Christ is a company of the faithful, baptized after confession of sin and of faith.**"

Article 33 of the First London Confession of 1644 (Baptist) gives a local-church definition for the Church: **"That Christ hath here on earth a spiritual kingdom, which is the Church, which he hath purchased and redeemed to himself, as a peculiar inheritance: which Church, as it is visible to us, is a company of visible Saints, called and separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement, in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King."**

Article 7 of the Articles of Faith of the First Baptist Church of Newport, Rhode Island, adopted in 1727, states: **"A church is a company of believers organized for the observance of the ordinances and the promotion of Christ's kingdom. Each church is independent and self-governed though in fraternal fellowship with other churches."** There is no hint of a Universal Church to be seen here.

The 1800 Doctrinal Statement of the Green River Association of Kentucky stated, **"We believe that the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful persons, who have obtained fellowship with each other, and have given themselves up to the Lord and one another, having agreed to keep up a Godly discipline according to the rules of the Gospel."** The Sandy Creek Association Confession of 1816 stated **"That the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful persons. . . ."** This same language was adopted by the Barren Creek Association in 1830.

LeRoy Hogue's treatise "A Study on the Antecedents of Landmarkism," submitted in 1966 as a doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a valuable source of information documenting Landmarkist beliefs among Baptists prior to the time of Graves. Hogue reports on the position of the Broad River Association of South Carolina: **"The Broad River Association, asked in 1812: 'What is a Church?' said in reply: 'We believe a Gospel church consists of an indefinite number of saints joined together by consent, yet we think not complete without a minister.'"**

Isaac Backus, a New England Baptist and church historian, stated, **"Christ has instituted none but particular churches. . . . Is any other visible church state instituted in the gospel, but a particular one? The church spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-18, is such an one as a brother can**

tell his grievance to, and whoever thought that could be to any other than a particular community." (Isaac Backus, "A Discourse Concerning the Materials, the Manner of Building and Power of Organizing of the Church of Christ," 1773, pp. 17, 145)

J. Newton Brown, editor of the New Hampshire Confession of 1833, wrote these words prior to the beginning of the Landmark movement: **"Christ has had, for 1800 years past, a visible church in earth - made up of the entire body of particular churches formed under the general constitution of the New Testament. . . The term 'church' is here used, it will be seen, not for the whole body of the elect which is ever invisible on earth. . . ."** (Quoted by Robert Ashcraft, "Landmarkism Revisited," Mablevale, Arkansas, Ashcraft Publications, 2003, pp. 116-117). Article 13 of the New Hampshire Confession states, **"That a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel."** There is no hint whatsoever of a Universal Church in this confession that has been very widely used by various groups of Baptists in America from 1833 to the present date.

AUTHORITY TO BAPTIZE

Landmark Baptists have been preoccupied with questions of which individuals and churches do, or do not, have the authority to baptize. They do not take the position that any religious society has the authority to administer the ordinance of baptism. Landmark churches will not accept "alien immersions" that they regard as irregular or without the authority of a true church behind them.

This emphasis did not begin with J.R. Graves - it can be found as early as the time of Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony who made a short-lived attempt to found a Baptist church in Providence in 1639. Richard Scott, who was a member of Williams' church, later stated, **"I walked with him in the Baptist's way about 3 or 4 months, in which time he brake from the society, and declared that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle."**

Isaac Backus, in his "History of New England" (1777), p. 89, commented

on this policy thus: "After gathering a Baptist church in Providence, Mr. Williams' mind got so blundered, with that notion that many try to propagate to this day, of the necessity of a local succession from the apostles to empower persons to administer ordinances, and not being able to give in to the absurdity of deriving this power through the long scene of antichristian corruption, that he desisted from traveling with that church."

I heartily agree with Backus that it was and still is a "blunder" to believe that scriptural baptism can be administered only by an apostle or by a church that can document chain-link succession from an apostolic church to our time. The records that would be needed to demonstrate such a succession simply do not exist. Roger Williams erroneously concluded that, in the absence of a clear chain of title from apostolic time to the 17th Century on the part of any church, therefore no true baptism could be administered. He was the forerunner of some ideas held by extreme Landmarkers today who would insist that only churches that can document their succession from apostolic times can administer the ordinances. No such Baptist church today can provide the documentation to prove that they have such an impeccable chain of title.

Nevertheless, we see here the seed of the idea that not all churches or ministers are scripturally qualified to administer the ordinance of baptism, going as far back as the early 17th Century.

In 1843 J.S. Reynolds published a study on English Baptists of the 17th Century, in which he stated: "The conclusion is irresistible, that they did not consider even immersion valid, when it was the act of an unimmersed administrator. The principle of action, doubtless, was, that there could be no valid baptism unless the administrator was authorized to baptize by a properly constituted church. Hence, in a vindication of the Baptists of London, published in 1615, the ground is taken, that all baptism, received either in the church of Rome or England, is invalid; because received in a false church and from ANTICHRISTIAN MINISTERS. - Crosby, vol. 1, p. 273. They refused to sanction the acts of any administrator, who derived his authority from churches which perverted the ordinance of baptism. This is firm Baptist ground, and the position is impregnable." (Cited in Graves, "Old Landmarkism - What Is It?," p. 116)

Meanwhile, the records of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, organized in 1707, show that Baptists in the 18th Century did not accept all baptisms as

valid. In 1732, the question was asked, "Whether a person, not being baptized himself, and presuming, in private, to baptize another, whether such pretended baptism be valid or not, or whether it might not be adjudged a nullity. Resolved, We judge such baptism as invalid, and no better than if it had not been done."

Admittedly, the Philadelphia Association, which affirmed belief in the Universal Church, was not a Landmark group. The Association sometimes gave non-Landmark answers to queries. For example in 1765, this query came from Smith's Creek: "Whether it be proper to receive a person into communion who had been baptized by immersion by a minister of the church of England, if no other objection could be made? Answer: Yea, if he had been baptized on a profession of faith and repentance." Few if any Landmark churches today would accept anyone into its communion on the basis of Anglican or Episcopalian baptism, even if by immersion. However, we still see here the implication that baptism, to be valid, must be by immersion and must be administered to those old enough to make a profession of faith, which would clearly exclude infant baptism.

In 1788, the Philadelphia Association responded to the First Baptist Church of New York concerning the validity of baptism administered by an unimmersed and unordained person, that such baptism was null and void:

"First, because a person that has not been baptized must be disqualified to administer baptism to others, and especially if he be also unordained.

"Second, Because to admit such baptism as valid, would make void the ordinances of Christ, throw contempt on his authority, and tend to confusion: for if baptism be not necessary for an administrator of it, neither can it be for church communion . . . and if such be valid, then ordination is unnecessary, contrary to Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 4:14, Titus 1:5, and our Confession of Faith, Chapter 27.

"Third, Of this opinion we find were our Association in times past; who put a negative on such baptisms in 1729, 1732, 1744, 1749 and 1768.

"Fourth, Because such administrator has no commission to baptize, for the words of the commission were addressed to the apostles, and their successors in the ministry, to the end of the world, and these are such, whom the church of Christ appoint to the whole work of the ministry."

The Broad River Association took a similar view in 1801, declaring, "We believe that no minister has a right to the administration of the ordinances, only such as have been called of God, as was Aaron, and regularly baptized and approved of by the Church, and come under the imposition of hands by the Presbytery."

The Georgia Baptist Association ruled against acceptance of Pedobaptist immersions in 1788, as described by Hogue: "In 1788, only 4 years after its organization, the Georgia Association was faced with the troublesome question of the validity of Pedobaptist immersion. A Methodist preacher by the name of James Hutchinson appeared at this session of the body and related his experience of grace, asking to be received into the fellowship of the church in that locality where the association was meeting. Having been immersed on his profession of faith by another Methodist preacher, he did not wish to be rebaptized. Thus his question was brought before the association. Could his baptism be accepted as valid?"

"Evidently impressed with his profession of faith and his complete renunciation of the Methodist doctrines and discipline, the body ruled that his baptism was valid. But this was not the end of the matter. [Jesse] Mercer says that many were not well pleased with the action taken and that it led to strife and confusion. In a short while, Hutchinson went to Virginia and commenced preaching in a remote area where there was no Baptist church. Experiencing a great success in his ministry, he baptized about 100 persons and gathered them into a church. But the Kettocton Baptist Association refused the church admission to their fellowship because they considered Hutchinson's Baptism invalid, the Georgia decision notwithstanding. In addition, the baptism of his people were ruled invalid because they had not been baptized by a qualified administrator. At this point, Hutchinson submitted to rebaptism, and his people with 2 or 3 exceptions followed his example. Thus the controversy ended. Mercer's comment on the matter was: 'So much for admitting a paedo-baptist administration of the ordinance of baptism!'"

Jesse Mercer, who has been described as a "pre-Landmark Landmarker," followed up on this issue in 1811, in response to a request by the Georgia Baptist Association. Hogue summarizes this letter: "In 1810 the Georgia Association resolved 'that the subject of the next circular letter, be

our reasons for rejecting Methodist, or Paedobaptist baptism by immersion, as invalid,' and Mercer was requested to prepare the letter. In compliance with the order of the association, he produced what was evidently considered to be a most significant statement of Baptist views on the matter. More than 30 years later the letter was still being quoted by Georgia Baptists in their discussion of gospel order. An examination of the letter affords the clearest indication as to why Graves felt justified as referring to Mercer as an 'Old Landmarker.'

"Mercer began the letter with the declaration that the only true gospel church is that church which is in direct descent from the apostolic church. Such a church recognizes Christ only as its head and as the true source of ecclesiastical authority. In a gospel church, the ministers are the servants of the church and 'have no power to lord it over the heritage of their Lord.' In the second section of his letter, Mercer says that those churches that have originated since the apostles and are not in succession to them cannot be acknowledged as being in gospel order. Those ministers who have been ordained to the work of the ministry by such churches as these, cannot be considered as the true servants of Christ or His church, and they therefore have no right to administer for Him. 'Those who have set aside the discipline of the gospel, and have given law to an exercised dominion over the church, are usurpers over the place and office of Christ, are against Him; and, therefore, may not be accepted in their offices.' Furthermore, those who administer contrary to their own faith or the faith of the gospel cannot administer for God and their administrations are 'unwarrantable impositions.'

"Having laid the above foundation, Mercer then came to a precise declaration of the reasons for the Baptist rejection of those immersions performed by Pedobaptist ministers. The first reason is that the Pedobaptist churches are not in the line of succession from the apostolic church and they therefore have no part in the apostolic commission. This constitutes a denial that the Pedobaptist churches are true churches. Further, the Pedobaptist ministers have derived their authority ultimately, by ordination, from the church at Rome or from self-appointed individuals, and consequently they lack divine authority for their ministrations. A third reason is that the ministers of the Pedobaptist churches maintain an unscriptural authority

over their churches and are not subject to the authority of gospel churches. Lastly, they fail to administer in accordance with the pattern of the gospel. In Mercer's judgment, any one of these defects was sufficient reason for the Baptists to hold the Pedobaptist administrations as invalid."

James Whitsitt, a pioneer Baptist preacher in Tennessee who died in 1849, came to the same conclusion with regard to the validity of Pedobaptist baptism: "We object to receive the baptism of Pedobaptists because we think it a dangerous innovation. We have no recollection that the history of the Baptists furnishes an example of the kind, and we are well assured that the common sense and piety of the Baptist [sic] were as strong 100 years ago, as they are now. This question we have before us must be a new comer, we hope it will not be very obtrusive. . . . We say again we think this is a dangerous innovation." (*Southern Baptist Review*, September, 1859, p. 388)

In 1845, Spencer Cone, pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York City, issued a letter to fellow Baptist preachers stating, "In my opinion, valid baptism could only be administered by a duly authorized minister; . . . the 'regular Baptist Churches of England and the United States' had long held the same sentiments. . . ."

"The First Baptist Church in this city, of which I am pastor, was founded in 1745, and as the Bible has not changed, she still adheres to her original confession of faith. The article on baptism closes thus: 'That nothing is a scriptural administration of baptism, but a total immersion of the subject in water in the name of the Holy Trinity, by a man duly authorized to administer gospel ordinances.' (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:40-42). The action of this church for 100 years has been to reject as invalid baptism administered by an 'unimmersed administrator.'"

TERMS OF ADMITTANCE TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

Landmark Baptist churches today take the position that baptism is a prerequisite to participation in the Lord's Supper, and that not all baptisms are accepted for that purpose - the candidate must be "rightly" and scripturally

baptized. There is nothing new about that - many Baptists, prior to the time of J.R. Graves, took that position.

Admittedly, there are and always have been many Baptist churches that have allowed for a form of open or "mixed" communion, in which Pedobaptists were allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper. But J. Davis, in his "History of the Welsh Baptists," page 95, states that most Baptists in Wales in the early 18th Century did not allow such a practice:

"After the death of John Williams, the [Wrexham] church was a long time without a pastor. They were laboring under two inconveniences: they were advocates of mixed communion, and there were but very few ministers in Wales, who sanctioned that practice." Davis states that this was the policy at the "latter end of the reign of Queen Anne," who died in 1714 - this was a long time before the start of the Landmark movement by Graves.

The Philadelphia Association dealt with this issue in a query from Cohansie in 1740: "Whether a pious person of the number of Pedo-Baptists, who forbears to have his own children sprinkled, may be admitted in to our communion without being baptized? And doth not refusing admittance to such an one, discover want of charity in a church so refusing?"

"Given to vote, and passed all in the negative. Nemine contradicente.

"Reasons annexed. 1. It is not for want of charity that we thus answer. Our practice shows the contrary, for we baptize none but such as, in the judgment of charity, have grace, being unbaptized, but it is because we find, in the commission, that no unbaptized persons are to be admitted into church communion. Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:16. Compare Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 12:13.

"2. Because it is the church's duty to maintain the ordinances as they are delivered to us in Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 11:2, Isaiah 8:20.

"3. Because we cannot see it agreeable, in any respect, for the procuring that unity, unfeigned love, and undisturbed peace, which is required, and ought to be in and among Christian communities. 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3."

The Philadelphia Association dealt with the issue again in 1786, responding to the church in Philadelphia asking if the Lord's Supper could be administered to Christians who were not yet organized into a distinct and regular

church:

"First, That the Lord's Supper ought not to be administered to persons who are not members of any church, though baptized.

"Second, That this ordinance should not be administered to members of churches in a scattered situation, without the consent of one or more of those churches; but permission being first obtained they may proceed."

The issue appears yet again in a query from the church at Great Nine Partners in 1791: **"Does any person, merely by virtue of being baptized, become a member of a particular visible church? Answered in the negative. 2. Is any such person in a proper circumstance for church communion? Answered in the negative."**

LeRoy Hogue, commenting on this query and response, says, **"While it is evident that baptism was not considered as being, of necessity, initiatory to church membership, even so, a person thus baptized and not entering into the fellowship of a local church could not partake of the Lord's Supper. Church membership, as well as scriptural baptism, was considered as prerequisite to the communion at the Lord's Table. The churches of Shaftsbury Association obviously tended toward a communion of the strictest order. . . . At this initial meeting, the [Bowdoinham] Association also voted that it was not agreeable 'to receive unbaptized persons at the Lord's Table or to hold fellowship with those who do make this their practice.'" The Bowdoinham Association was organized in 1787, long before the time of Graves and Pendleton.**

Hogue goes on to say, **"Valid baptism seems to have been an issue in the 1835 decision of the association to 'recommend to the churches composing this body to discountenance the practice of admitting to the communion of the church individuals [having been immersed] who belong to other denominations.' The implication seems to have been that their baptism was not considered valid. Possibly, however, the rejection of these persons from the Baptist communion tables was recommended simply because they lacked membership in a Baptist church. If so, the action serves to indicate still further that church membership, particularly Baptist church membership as well as baptism, was considered essential to participation in the Lord's Supper."**

The very first Baptist church planted in Illinois, constituted in 1796, was

at New Design, Monroe County. Opposition to "mixed communion" with Pedobaptists was expressed there, long before the time of J.R. Graves: **"Elder Jones informs us that Badgley had an indisposition of body for several months, and during that time the New Design church changed a rule they had previously adopted - that of working by a oneness - agreeing to work by a majority and to commune with the Methodists. This caused much distress among them, and when Elder Badgley's health returned he was called upon to administer the Lord's Supper to the said New Design church, but refused, believing it to be contrary to the sentiments of the United Baptists to commune with other orders; in consequence of which he was taken under dealings by a number of the members, but a majority sustained him. . . . This was in the year 1800."** ("A Brief History of the Regular Baptists, Principally of Southern Illinois," by Achilles Coffey, pp. 130-131)

In 1804 Isaac Backus noted that some Baptist churches had practiced "mixed communion," meaning that persons who had been "baptized" by sprinkling as infants were allowed to partake in the Lord's Supper along with those who had been immersed as believers. This compromising practice was gradually dropped: **"Though the communing of all real saints together, appeared to be of great importance, yet many found by degrees that it could not be done in that way, for they saw that if they came to the Lord's Supper with any who were only sprinkled in their infancy, it practically said that they were baptized when they believed in their consciences that they were not. And practical lying is a great sin."** ("An Abridgment of the Church History of New England from 1662 to 1804," page 192).

In 1773 Backus wrote, **"And though our opponents hold with us, that it is the law of Christ, that all should be baptized before they come to the Lord's table, yet many of them accuse us of rigidness, of unchurching all but ourselves, only because we will not meet such persons there, as we cannot believe in our conscience to be baptized."** ("A Discourse, Concerning the Materials, the Manner of Building and Power of Organizing of the Church of Christ," p. 142)

Robert Semple, in "History of the Baptists of Virginia" (1810, republished by Church History Research and Archives in 1976), reported on opposition to open communion in the Appomattox Association in Virginia in 1805: **"A query respecting the propriety of admitting unbaptized persons to**

communion was introduced at this session. The question was answered by a large majority that none but persons baptized upon a profession of faith were proper communicants. The subject of open communion has been more agitated among the Baptists in this part of Virginia than in any other; arising, as was supposed, from the high opinion which they entertained of the piety of some other Christian sects in the adjacent parts. Some respectable Baptists were induced from this consideration to think favorably of a mixed communion. It was certainly a very erroneous mode of forming an opinion. If open communion be wrong in itself, it cannot be made right by the practice of men, however exemplary they may be in other respects." (p. 274)

The question of restrictions on participation in the Lord's Supper came up again in 1821, as described by Hogue: "Baptists and close communion, as well as the doctrine of the church, continued to be the basic issues of disagreement between the Baptists and Pedobaptists. This is indicated by the numerous articles on these subjects appearing in the American Baptist Magazine. In an article by 'Simplicitas' entitled 'Address to the Baptists on Communion,' published in the July, 1821, issue, the writer sets forth the fundamental reasons for the Baptist practice on communion. He insists on 'particular communion' because this was the practice of the apostolic churches. Speaking of baptism, he decries the tendency on the part of some, in the interests of harmony and a 'general communion,' to treat baptism as a matter of indifference. He points out that to receive Pedobaptists to communion is practically to recognize their christening as valid baptism. Throughout the article the emphasis is placed upon the obligation of the believer to have his doctrines and practice on the positive commands of Christ and on nothing else. Pleas for charity, fellowship, and union are not sufficient cause to set aside the commands of the Lord."

In 1818 the Broad River Association dealt with the issue of whether or not to receive new members who had been immersed by Methodist preachers, as described by Leroy Hogue: "Accordingly, 1818, William King wrote on the subject, 'On a Baptist church receiving members into fellowship, who were baptized by immersion in Methodist Societies.' King took the ground 'that as certain priests anciently failed to show their genealogy among the lawful priests, and were rejected; in like manner should all administrators of the

ordinance of baptism be rejected, who fail to show their own baptism according to the gospel, by a minister who has himself been baptized in a regular line from the Apostles down to the present day.' Here, then, is not only a clear rejection of non-Baptist immersion but also the strongest possible assertion of the necessity of a baptismal succession from the apostles. Again, in 1829, the association affirmed that, in its judgment, immersion administered by an administrator of another denomination was not valid.

"In 1839 the Sandy Creek Association took the same position as the Broad River body in its rejection of non-Baptist immersion, advising the Pleasant Grove church by a unanimous vote that it would be inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel for a Baptist church to receive into the fellowship immersed members of other denominations without baptizing them again. The grounds on which this rejection was based are of particular interest:

"We cannot admit the validity of their baptisms without admitting they are true and scriptural gospel churches - if we do this we unchurch ourselves, for God never set up or authorized but one Christian denomination. . . .

"The Baptist is the only denomination that can claim descent from the apostolic churches, through the true persecuted and witnessing church, that fled into the wilderness for 1260 years. . . .

"That the Baptist have descended from the true church is susceptible of the clearest proof. This is not true of any other denomination. . . . Ordinances cannot be validly administered by both Baptists and Pedobaptists. God is not the author of but one of them, consequently, we cannot receive members upon baptism administered by them, without repudiating the ordinances administered by ourselves."

Hogue goes on to cite the prohibition by the Charleston Association on Baptists and Pedobaptists sharing the Lord's Supper together: "In 1802, the same association declared that Baptists could not commune with Pedobaptists because to do so would be equivalent to an acknowledge of the validity of infant baptism and the power of a church to alter the order which Christ has established in his churches. The practice was therefore deemed to be inconsistent with gospel order. In 1804 the Broad River Association

advised that a church member who communes with Pedobaptists ought not, by the rule of Scripture, be held in fellowship. The Bethel Association, on 4 separate occasions from 1797 to 1822, expressed itself as being in opposition to the practice of open or mixed communion and in 1802 declared that there were no grounds 'under present existing circumstances' on which Baptists might fellowship with Pedobaptists at the Lord's Table, as desirable an object as that might be."

Hogue cites the position of the Georgia Baptist Association, organized in 1784: "The 5th article says that 'none but regular baptized church members have a right to communion at the Lord's table.' This signifies that church membership (particularly Baptist church membership), as well as baptism, was considered by the Georgia Baptists to be prerequisite to a proper participation in the Lord's Supper. The 6th article states that it is the duty of every 'heaven-born soul' to become a member of the visible church and to be 'legally baptized' so that he may properly partake of the Lord's Supper at every 'legal opportunity.'"

Tennessee Baptists came to the same conclusion, rejecting mixed communion with Pedobaptists, as recorded by Hogue: "The Holston Association considered the question of the McPheter's Bend church in 1803: 'Shall all unessentials in religion be made terms of communion in the church or shall nothing be made a term of communion in the church but essentials in religion?' The answer of the association evidently went right to the heart of the problem that had prompted the query: 'We think it is not according to Gospel direction to commune with any who have not been regularly baptized by immersion on profession of their faith.' The Tennessee Association responded to a similar query in 1806 by saying: 'We think none have a right to commune with us but those of our own faith and order.'"

Clearly, opposition to open communion did not begin with the Landmarkers. James Tull says, "Open communion was largely repudiated by the Baptists in America from the beginnings of their history. By the time Landmarkism came upon the scene, Baptists in America were almost universally close communicants." ("The Landmark Movement in America: An Historical and Theological Appraisal," *Baptist History and Heritage*, January, 1975, p. 12)

PULPIT AFFILIATION

Pulpit affiliation is the practice of allowing non-Baptistic (Pedobaptist) preachers to share the pulpit in, and preach to, Baptist congregations. Many Landmark churches oppose this practice, and it is forbidden in Article 3, Section 2 of the Statement of Principles of Cooperation of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

The American Baptist Association requires each missionary to give "a statement of his doctrinal beliefs concerning salvation by grace, security of the believer, the body of Christ, alien immersion, the Lord's Supper, pulpit affiliation, and ecumenism." The implication here is that ABA missionaries will declare themselves in opposition to pulpit affiliation.

J.R. Graves, in his book "Old Landmarkism: What Is It?" page 176, cites the protest by J.M. Pendleton against this practice: "My opinion is, that the number of Baptists in the United States would be larger by a million today if it had ever been the understanding that there could be no ministerial affiliation between them and Pedobaptists. How strange is such affiliation! The exchange of pulpits makes the impression that these are small matters, and this impression has led many to become Pedobaptists, who would otherwise have copied the example of Christ, who said, concerning His personal immersion, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.'"

It is freely admitted that many Baptists prior to the rise of Landmarkism practiced pulpit affiliation - the Landmark movement began partly as a reaction to this common practice. However, there were those among the Baptists who objected to this practice prior to the time of Graves and Pendleton.

Robert Semple, in his "History of the Baptists of Virginia," stated that between the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists of the Blue Ridge area, "a good understanding subsists, insomuch that a considerable party were of opinion in the Association that they ought to invite the Presbyterian and Methodist ministers to sit with them [New River Baptist Association] in their Associations as counsellors, but not to vote. This subject underwent a lengthy investigation, and finally was decided against inviting. This was assuredly a very prudent determination - first, because it might tend to confusion; and secondly, because it would probably rather interrupt than promote friendship. Seeing, in most cases, as it respects the intercourse

between man and man, too much familiarity often ends in strife." (Page 350) We see here that some Virginia Baptists were willing to accept Pedobaptist ministers as valid clergymen, but that others objected to such recognition.

James Tull states that pulpit affiliation was practiced "infrequently" among Baptists in the colonial period: "In the South during the colonial and early national period there were instances of pulpit affiliation, however infrequent. Widespread practice of pulpit affiliation did not occur until Baptists gained legal freedom, social parity, and public respect. This trend was developing when Graves took residence in the Southwest.

"Historical information does not indicate how widespread such pulpit affiliation was practiced. Graves conceded that such 'union meetings' were frequent during the period. . . . The Landmark appeal to the Southern Baptist community in particular was to 'come back to the old stand points,' 'to occupy the ground consecrated by the blood of our martyred fathers, and dare to be consistent.' . . . This appeal to the conscience of the Baptist people would hardly have received a sympathetic hearing if it had not incorporated many of the doctrinal positions which Baptists had long occupied." ("High Church Baptists in the South," pp. 13, 57, 62) In other words, Graves' stand against pulpit affiliation was not something new, but it was a call to return to previous Baptist policies.

J.R. Graves stated that "It is a fact that the oldest and most successful Baptist ministers, as the venerable James Whitsitt, and George Young, deceased, and Joseph H. Borum, now living, for 40 years a pastor in West Tennessee, never affiliated with Pedobaptists or Campbellites, and they testify that affiliation is a new practice, and the forerunner of open communion."

Graves, in the introduction of his book on "Old Landmarkism," represented himself to be the first man in Tennessee to lead the charge against pulpit affiliation, but also insisted that he was only arguing for a return to previous Baptist doctrine and practice: "I was the first man in Tennessee, and the first editor on this continent, who publicly advocated the policy of strictly and consistently carrying out in our practice those principles which all true Baptists, in all ages, have professed to believe. . . . In 1846 pulpit affiliations, union meetings, receiving the immersions of Pedobaptists and Campbellites, and inviting Pedobaptists, as 'evangelical ministers,' to seats

in our associations and conventions, even the Southern Baptist, had become, with few exceptions, general throughout the South." We should emphasize the word "become." These practices, including pulpit affiliation, were not originally practiced by Baptists on a wide scale, but were a recent innovation.

The seeds of opposition to pulpit affiliation in Tennessee go back way before the time of Graves. Even Baptist preachers in Tennessee were not considered eligible to preach unless they were in good standing with, and authorized by, a Baptist church. Hogue comments on this policy, saying, "No man could be esteemed as an orderly and properly authorized minister of the gospel, qualified to preach and to administer the ordinances, unless a church had placed some degree of sanction upon his ministry, either by license or ordination. This is illustrated by the action of the Sinking Creek church in 1789 stating that 'it is the mind of this Church that any man coming in the name of a Baptist and not bringing a good authority from his Church is not permitted to preach in this Church.' It was this principle of church control that led the Holston Association to say in 1813 that it is 'not justifiable' for a church or members of a church to invite a preacher to preach in their meeting house who is excommunicated. In a similar case 18 years later, the same association had stated in their minutes that a certain William Reno 'is preaching in disorder being excommunicated, which if he persists in will necessitate us to advertise him.' As an excommunicate, he lacked church authority for his preaching. These instances furnish a clear indication that preaching was considered an official act of the church and could be done in an orderly manner only through the permission of a gospel church. It has been pointed out earlier that this was the basic principle underlying the Landmark doctrine of non-pulpit affiliation."

Logically, if even a Baptist could not fill a Baptist pulpit without the authority of a Baptist church, then preachers of Pedobaptist groups, not having valid baptism or church authority, would not be welcome in Baptist pulpits.

In the 1840s, a Congregational clergyman of Norwich, Connecticut named Hall complained that Baptists did not recognize Pedobaptists such as himself as true clergymen: "Treat us as new converts! Then they do not recognize us as members of the church of Christ! Our churches they recognize not as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ! Our ministry are no ministers of the church of our Lord Jesus! Our ordinances are not ordinances of the Lord's

church - but all is usurpation presumption, and unhallowed handling of most holy things."

It is evident that J.R. Graves, starting about the year 1851, took a strong stand against pulpit affiliation, in contrast to the weak stand that Southern Baptists had taken prior to that time. But the seeds of opposition to this practice had already been planted, which explains why many Baptists were so ready to follow Graves when he raised the standard of opposition to it, calling for Baptists do their own preaching, ordaining and baptizing

BAPTIST SUCCESSION

All Landmark Baptists hold to a form of Baptist Succession or Baptist Perpetuity, meaning that true Baptist or Baptist churches have always existed on earth since the time of Christ until now. There are many shades of opinion on this issue. Many Landmarkers are content to affirm that true churches, with beliefs similar to ours, have always existed and have passed on the torch of the true faith through the centuries, in ways that we cannot always trace or document because the original records have been lost.

Then there are those who have taken this concept to extremes, freely claiming various oddball or heretical groups from past ages as having held to modern Baptist principles, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. Some have claimed to be heirs to a link-chain succession of churches from John the Baptist until now, and have put forth bogus, undocumented chains of title. Some have gone even farther, stating that the only way to plant a scriptural church is by vote of a mother church which can trace its perpetuity back to the First Century. In reality, no Baptist church today can document such perpetuity, so if we accept such extreme teaching, that would mean that Roger Williams was right all along in the 17th Century, when he said that true churches could no longer be planted in this age.

For the purposes of this study, I wish only to point out that there were many Baptists who believed, prior to the time of J.R. Graves, in some form of Baptist Succession. Like Landmarkers today, they disagreed as to the exact manner in which Baptist principles were perpetuated through the Dark Ages, but they believed that their Baptist forebears existed long before the "politically

correct" date of 1641 which is now commonly given as the time when the first Baptist churches came into existence.

Thomas Crosby, a Baptist historian whose "History of the English Baptists" was published in 1738, taught Baptist Succession. **"In discussing the claim still made by modern day historians, that John Smith was the first English Baptist practicing immersion for baptism, [Crosby] flatly refuses to accept such a theory. In following the debate on the matter of authority in baptism, he refers to 'the foreign Anabaptists, who descended from the ancient Waldenses in France or Germany.'** Thus we have a most respected historian, well over 100 years before Landmarkism was ever heard of, recognizing Baptists as being the descendants of groups on the continent of Europe who believed themselves to be of ancient heritage. . . . In a note to the reader in the beginning of his history he indicates clearly that the Baptists, or Anabaptists as they were then often called, were of age-long existence when he says, **"Those heretical persons of the denomination of Baptists, on whom the sword of the magistrate fell so heavily, are yet upon record . . . and so exposed to the view of men from age to age."** (I.K. Cross, "The Battle For Baptist History," pp. 171-172)

Virginia Baptist preacher John Leland, at a time before the year 1790, published his sentiments on Baptist origins and perpetuity: **"The New Testament is introduced with the history of a famous Baptist preacher and his order of baptizing. John, the forerunner of Jesus, is called a Baptist 15 times in the Four Evangelists. Is it ignorance or ill will, that so often reproaches the Baptists with novelty? Is it not certain that the first preacher spoken of in the New Testament was a Baptist? Why should they be called a new sect, when they can name their founders antecedent to the founders of any other society. Did not Jesus submit to John's baptism, to fulfill all righteousness? Was not Jesus, therefore, a Baptist? These things are so. . . .**

"I have human testimony to prove that a number of reformers were Baptists, and, particularly, John Wickliff, the great reformer in England, called by way of eminence, the Morning Star." ("Writings of the Elder John Leland," pp. 79, 89-90)

"Ecclesiastical Researches," published in 1792 by English Baptist Robert Robinson, is generally regarded as teaching and upholding Baptist perpetuity.

On page 311, Robinson quotes Limborch as saying, "To say honestly what I think, of all the modern sects of Christians, the Dutch Baptists most resemble both the Albigenses and the Waldenses, but particularly the latter." Robinson adds, "A striking likeness undoubtedly there is; for, beside denying the doctrines and ceremonies of the church of Rome in common with all Protestants, [the Waldenses] held some articles peculiar to the Dutch Baptists."

In 1811, Georgia Baptist Jesse Mercer clearly took the position that Baptist churches were in a succession from the Apostles, and that Pedobaptist churches were not: "All churches and ministers who originated since the apostles, and not successively to them, are not in gospel order, and, therefore, can not be acknowledged as such. . . ."

"Our reasons, therefore, for rejecting baptism by immersion, when administered by Pedobaptist ministers, are-

"That they are connected with 'churches' clearly out of the apostolic succession; and, therefore, clearly out of the apostolic commission. . . ."

"But it should be said that the apostolic succession can not be ascertained, and then it is proper to act without it; we say that the loss of the succession can never prove it futile, nor justify any one out of it. The Pedobaptists, by their own histories, admit they are not of it; but we do not, and shall think ourselves entitled to the claim until the reverse be clearly shown."

In 1826, William Jones published his "History of the Christian Church." A review of this book in the Western Baptist Review, January, 1849, stated: "The main question at issue between our historians is, whether the Waldenses were Pede-Baptists or Baptists. The editors of Peyran and Perrin affirm that they baptized infants: this Mr. Jones denies, and maintains that they were Baptists."

In 1835, R.B.C. Howell made this statement of belief in Baptist Succession: "Those who are now called Baptists, have been in different ages of the Church, called by various names. Let it be observed, however, that . . . from the days of John the Baptist until now, they have ever maintained the same doctrinal and practical tenets by which they are still distinguished. They were first called Christians at Antioch, afterwards Donatists, then Cathari, then Waldenses, Albigenses, Mennonites, Petrobrussians,

Waterlanders, Anabaptists, and finally Baptists." (The Baptist, I. No. 5, May, 1835, p. 70)

T.J. Bowen, in 1846, wrote that "the origin of the Baptist denomination . . . can not be found in any age of the world since the days of Christ and His Apostles. . . . [Protestants] have come out from the church of Rome; we were never in it. They have corrected many Roman abuses - they yet adhere to many other abuses, such as ecclesiastical legislation, unscriptural forms of church government, affusion instead of baptism, infant sprinkling, etc. - but from these errors the Baptists have ever more been free." ("Origin of the Baptists," The Baptist, III, No. 3, September 12, 1846, pp. 45-46)

David Benedict, in his "General History of the Baptist Denomination," published in 1813, upheld a Baptist Successionist position. For instance, on pp. 127-128, he says, "We find that the Waldenses, by whatever name they were called, were constantly, for the space of many centuries, charged with the heinous crime of denying infant baptism, and that the reasons which they gave for so doing, as taken from the mouths of their enemies, were many of them verbatim, and all of them in substance, just such as the Baptists now give. Have not then the Baptists good reasons for believing that the Waldenses were generally of their sentiments?"

English Baptist minister G.H. Orchard, author of "History of Baptists," a Successionist work, first stated in 1823 his belief that "from the days of John the Baptist, until now, I believed our denomination had had an existence. . . . After some years' reading, and making extracts from authors, on the subject of my investigation, I resolved on throwing my materials into chronological order, to exhibit the feature of a connected history. This done, I became fully satisfied; and established the proof of what Robinson conjectured, that the English Baptists, contending for the sufficiency of Scripture, and for Christian liberty to judge of its meaning, can be traced back, in authentic documents, to the first Nonconformists and to the Apostles. . . . 'The Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the times of the Apostles; and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages.' This statement we consider to be proved in the following pages, where authors are quoted, supporting these facts."

Enough has been presented here to show that the doctrine of Baptist perpetuity or succession from the time of the Apostles was not a new invention by Graves and his fellow Landmarkers. Such convictions were held by many Baptists prior to the time of Graves.

CONCLUSION: LANDMARK PRINCIPLES WERE NOT INVENTED BY GRAVES

The foregoing documentation shows that the doctrinal structure of Landmarkism was not originated by J.R. Graves and his contemporaries. Graves helped to codify and popularize beliefs that had already been held and taught by Baptists for centuries, and followed those beliefs to their logical conclusions. But he did not concoct Landmarkism out of thin air. This, in my opinion, helps to give more credibility to the principles of Landmarkism.

It is not my intention to give the impression that any of the individuals or associations quoted in this booklet were consistent followers of all the beliefs of Landmarkism. It would be difficult to come up with a generally agreed-upon definition of the "consistent principles" of Landmarkism, since Landmarkers disagreed among themselves as to the essential tenets of Landmarkism back in the 1850s, and they still do today.

My opinion is that the Landmark principles are still relevant and worthy of our consideration today, as a helpful guide for churches seeking to maintain scriptural purity and to avoid the pitfalls of ecumenicalism. However, it is not my desire that any of us should hold to Landmark principles in a spirit of pride or divisiveness, or that we should separate from or contend with Landmark or non-Landmark brethren who do not agree with us on all the fine points of theology.

The two leading figures of Landmarkism, Graves and Pendleton, disagreed with each other on a number of weighty issues, such as the Universal Church, closed communion and slavery, and yet they worked together. We too ought to be able to work together and fellowship with one another in a spirit of charity.