

LANDMARKISM, THE BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE

THE 1976 edition of the Handbook of Denominations in the United States, by Frank S. Mead, Abingdon Press, in the section dealing with the Baptists, had the following to say about "Landmarkism:"

"Landmarkism" among Baptists is not a denomination; it is a position held by some concerning the Nature of the Church and certain details of Church Practice. The name originated with the writing of Dr. James Madison Pendleton and Dr. James Roberson Graves in Kentucky and Tennessee, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, though Landmarkers insist that their concepts go back to the Apostolic Period.

There are four distinguishing tenets of Landmarkism.

" 1, The Church is only local and visible. The expression "the church" is used only when speaking of it as an institution. All saved people make up "the family of God, not the church." While members of other denominations may be saved, they are not members of true churches.

" 2, The "Commission" was given to the Church: consequently all matters covered by it must be administered under church authority. Ministers of other denominations are not accepted in Landmark Baptist pulpits.

" 3, Baptism to be valid must be administered by the authority of a New Testament (Baptist) Church. Baptisms administered by any other authority are not accepted.

" 4, There is a direct historic "succession" of Baptist churches back to New Testament times; that is, Baptist churches have existed in practice in every century, though not by name.

" These principles are held primarily by the churches of the American Baptist Association, (the Baptist Missionary Association of America, the Interstate & Foreign Landmark Missionary Baptist

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Association of America and others - LSW), though there are an estimated 1,500,000 members of different Baptist churches which hold to the Landmark position and doctrine."

The "distinguishing" principles and practices of "Landmarkers" among Baptists pointed out in the remarks of Mr. Mead in his report above, was not intended, I am sure, to identify all the historic positions on faith and practice held by true Baptists; called "Landmarkers" in derision by prejudiced opinionated Liberals among them; but rather that it has been the Landmarkers who have believed, without explanation, exceptions or apology, the scriptures as the Word of God, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The name of "Landmarkers" for all those Baptists who refused to depart from the Scriptures, arose from several Old Testament passages (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Prov. 22:28; 23:10) which simply commanded proper respect and regard for matters established by Divine authority - "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old have set in thine inheritance . . ." In the typical language of the Old Testament as revealed in the anti-types of the New Testament, it simply demands that we must not attempt to alter Divinely decreed doctrines and principles.

When courageous Christian men like J. M. Pendleton, J. R. Graves, Zechariah Reeves and others of their time dared to oppose the presumptuous advocates of liberalism among Baptists, they were despised and maligned with a passion by those same Liberals and their followers. Such has been the norm since the days of Rome.

There are some who identify themselves as Landmark Baptists who obviously know little about who they are or what they believe. For example: one small fellowship of Baptists have, in recent years, tried to make "feetwashing" an issue and point of fellowship. Let it be remembered that the first men who bore

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the name and wrote of "Landmarkism," Pendleton, Graves and others since, never did teach nor practice "feetwashing" in the church as being in any way associated with the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Simply stated: all Bible-believing Baptists are Landmark Baptists. This was and is the historic application of the name. They are Baptists who believe all the Bible, in the original languages, as being inspired, inerrant and eternal. As Mr. Mead says in his Handbook: There are literally millions of Baptists, some of which may be in liberal, modernistic churches, who believe all the Scriptures as being the verbally inspired Word of God; and an all-sufficient rule for both faith and practice. They are Landmark Baptists in the historic sense of the term. Historically, the term "Landmark" was a term distinguishing the Bible-believers from the liberals and modernists. The name is seldom used to identify old-line or Association Baptists today, but it remains a badge of honor and courage.

As true Bible-believing Baptists, we subscribe to the belief in the historic fundamental landmarks of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints." Thus, we stand, without apology, opposed to all brands of theological liberalism. We are New Testament Baptists!

-- L. S. Walker