FROM OLD LANDMARKISM: WHAT IS IT?

LAST WORDS TO MY BRETHREN

J. R. GRAVES

A Call to Baptist Conviction and Faithfulness

Old Landmarkism: What Is It?

by J. R. Graves

Chapter XIX

Last Words To My Brethren.

"A false system has for accomplice whoever spares it by silence" (Vinet.)

I have now, clearly as possible, in the limited space allotted to this work, placed before you the principles, polity, and practices which characterized our historical ancestors, and something of the terrible sufferings it cost them to maintain them at the hands of Pagans, Papists, and Protestants, from the days of the apostles until now. I wish, in conclusion, to urge a few questions upon your prayerful consideration:

1. Will you now decide, by the evidence submitted, if the scores of thousands of Baptists in America, especially in the South, in England and Germany, who now hold and witness for the principles and polity developed in the preceding chapters, have left the "old paths" and are walking in "a *new way*,and a *way* not cast up" by the Master?

Or, whether those Baptists who recognize those very organizations, which persecuted our fathers, as evangelical churches. and accredit their preachers as evangelical ministers, by associating with them upon perfect ministerial equality, and receive their immersions as valid baptisms, and affiliate with them in all things, and extend to them every token of ministerial and ecclesiastical fellowship—the Lord's Supper excepted—are traveling

"In The Ways Our Fathers Trod?"

This is the practical question of this age. It is vital to the best interests of American Baptists that it should be correctly answered. The world demands its settlement. To assist in determining this question this little book has been written. My conclusions are before you.

In the thirty odd years past, during which I have discussed and urged upon Baptists the adoption and practice of these views. I have not heard of one man, however, bitterly opposed, who did not acknowledge that these *conclusions* are logically irresistible, if *my premises are granted*.May I beg of you, who read these lines, to decide, before you lay down this book, whether the plain unvarnished teachings of the apostles, and the practice of our denominational ancestors, from the fourth to the eighteenth centuries, do not sustain my premises beyond a reasonable doubt? Turn back, if necessary, and re-read Chapter XIV, and not only note what our fathers claim, but what Catholics and Protestants, with united voice, testify they held and practiced in the face of the dungeon and the stake. Are you not compelled by facts to admit that—

1. They did not acknowledge Catholic or Protestant societies to be evangelical churches, but proclaimed them alike to be anti-Christian bodies, and their ordinances null and void?

2. That they did not accredit the ministers of the Protestant sects any more than those of Catholics, by any act as gospel ministers, nor did they associate with them in preaching the gospel or in any Christian work.

If this is not your conclusion, you may as well close the book, for further words of mine will be useless. But these historical facts admitted, let me press upon your fraternal consideration other important questions:

2. Were not our martyr fathers approved of God for bearing the steadfast and unmistakable witness they did for the divine constitution, the doctrine and ordinances of the church of Christ, and against the human societies that opposed, and the corruptions that subverted them in their day? You can not doubt it. John saw their souls under the altar and white robes given unto them, and heard the promise of their future vindication and coming glory.

3. Can you doubt that it is as much your duty and mine to steadfastly hold, faithfully teach, and as cheerfully suffer, if needs be, for these same principles, and to as boldly oppose these self-same sects and their false teachings and practices in this day, as it was their duty in that age? My brother, do not lightly pass this, but decide—upon your knees, with your Bible, your conscience, and your God.

"Must **I** be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease;
While *others* fought to win the prize,
And sailed thro' bloody seas?
Are there no foes for *me* to fight?
Must *I* not stem the flood?"

4. Have you ever stopped to think why it is that not one in a thousand to-day, who bears the name, suffer the least opposition or discomfort of any sort for being a Baptist? It was *never* so before. Why is it that thousands of our ministers finish a life ministry, and sill their advocacy of Baptist principles—or preaching the gospel, if you prefer it—never costs them one word of reproach from the teachers of error, the hatred or ill will of a living man? So that living friends even solace their grief, by inscribing on the tombstone of such—

"None knew him but to love him,
Or heard him, but to praise."

Was the boast of that eminent doctor of divinity to his praise, who said in a recent speech: "If I have offended man, woman, or child with *my* denominationalism in a pastorate of twenty years, I have never heard of it?"

That minister exchanged pulpits with Unitarians, and invited Universalists even unto his own. If the position of Bros. Jeter and Burrows is correct, that we do not thereby recognize their ordinations or themselves as evangelical ministers, but only as gentlemen, thus lowering the pulpit—which should be the throne of God's truth on earth—to the level of the parlor, that minister's course can not be condemned.

Thousands of Baptist ministers can truthfully repeat his boast, after professing to preach the gospel five, ten, and fifteen years; and other thousands are preaching today with no higher ambition than to build up large churches, and to gain an enviable reputation for being "undenominational preachers;" men of "broad" "liberal," "Catholic" views.

Have you ever seriously asked yourself if these men can be pleasing the Master? I turn to His Word and it reads: "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Has this passage no application in *our* day? Is it true, as some preachers tell us, that the days of persecution are ended? Has the offense of the cross indeed ceased? How am I to understand these declarations of my Savior: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake: but he that endureth" (Matthew 10:22). "The disciple is not above his master; if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be of his own household." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word I said unto you, The servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, *they will persecute you*."(John 15:20). Paul understood the import of this language: "Yea, and all *that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*."Do you say all this was spoken of the apostolic age, and is obsolete and utterly meaningless in this; and that the Testament would be as complete to *us* if these and all similar passages were eliminated? Is it indeed so? has *Beelzebub* become a faithful ally of Christ—

"And this vile world a friend to grace,
To help us on to God?"

If this be so, has it ever occurred to you that we shall lose many and exceedingly precious promises as well? A few occur to me: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Can it be that the blessedness of that kingdom will be the same to those who have never lived for Christ so as to be persecuted? "Blessed are ye when men shall *revile* you and *persecute* you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were be fore you." Is it impossible for *us* to gain this great reward? Is it, alas! true, that we, alone, of all the Christians who have lived on the earth, are denied the distinguished privilege of gaining this "GREAT REWARD? That we can not suffer peril from false brethren—can not so witness for Christ as to suffer reproach or even to be spoken about falsely for Jesus' sake?

If this be so, then indeed are we, of all Christians, the most *unblessed*; for the crowning glories of salvation are alike predicated upon *suffering* with and for Christ here. Among a host are these: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we be *glorified* together" (Rom. 8:17). Is it not here implied that

those only are *glorified* together who have suffered for Christ? "If we *suffer* for him, we shall also *reign with him*"(2 Tim. 2:12).

But suppose we live on such terms of amity and concord with the enemies of Christ, and those who *oppose His teachings*,that they become our friends, and speak well of us, can we hope to *reign* with Christ? Grant that we may possibly be saved "yet so as by fire," have we a promise of *reigning* with Christ? The Scriptures impress me that only sufferers, martyrs, cross-bearers, witnesses of Jesus, and for the Word of God, "have part in the *first* resurrection, and live and reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20): that only those Christians who "have not defiled themselves with *women*"—i.e., affiliated on terms of equality and friendship with false churches—are accounted as "*virgins*"unto Christ, and are numbered with the one hundred and forty and Jour thousand, and are permitted companionship with Christ (Rev. 14). If one passage more than another has influence, and *now* influences my life as a Christian and a minister, it is those words of Jesus to His faithful servant at the close of his service: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). What is this world to me if I have no good hope, through grace, of hearing these words at last from the lips of my master? How unspeakably fearful, though I have gained the praise of earth’s millions, and fail to hear the "well done" of Jesus? Oh, what can the future be to me, though I should have the praise of the angels, and fail to hear these few words—"well done, good and faithful servant"—from the lips of my Savior? I *know*,that He. whose name is Truth, will never utter them unless I have done well, and been faithful in the things committed to me. If I have failed to openly *hold* and boldly preach His whole truth, for fear of men. I may not hope to hear them, for He hath said: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels."

Let us not deceive ourselves or be deceived. Satan bears the same hellish hate towards the Savior and His church, he did the day he nailed Him to the cross of ignominy, by the wicked hands of his servants.

The carnal heart is still only enmity to God. The whole world still lieth in the wicked one, and is as thoroughly opposed to the authority of Christ as of old. False systems of religion, and false teachers are a thousand times multiplied; only they assume the character, and demand of us the name of "evangelical churches" and ministers of Christ. The words of Christ and His apostles are equally for this as for any former age; and it is tremendously true now as then—that they "who will live godly shall suffer persecution." There never was, there is not now, there never will be, till Christ comes, an exception to this declaration. If you and I are not persecuted, if we are not reviled and spoken falsely of, for Christ s sake, it is as certainly true as God's Word that we are not living godly. We are not persecuted nor reproached because we have struck an unholy truce with sin, and the spirit of this world, and with spiritual wickedness, because throned in high places. In every age when the witnesses of Christ have been faithful to their mission, they have suffered from His avowed enemies and *professed friends*.

It was not only true when the old Pagan dragon held his authority over the nations, but equally so when its ghost—a counterfeit Christianity—ascended the throne and wore the purple of the Caesars; and more *bitterly* true when Protestantism shed the blood of the saints in the days of the Reformation, and whenever and wherever it has been able to wield the sword, whether in England old or England new, on the soil of the Old Dominion or of Georgia. In every age and in every land, genuine Christianity has been persecuted by its counterfeit, and shall we by all our influence as Baptists, accredit that counterfeit as "evangelical" and genuine?

Be assured, my brother, were we only as faithful in teaching and defending Christ's precious truth as our fathers were; if we would no longer sacrifice it by sinful compromises to secure the peace and obtain the friendship of false teachers and their followers, we would not long be strangers to their bitter experiences, and we would realize that the words of Christ, and the teachings of the apostles, are of real significance in our day; though our *blood* might not be shed, yet our names would be defamed, our characters blackened, the spirit of the evil one attributed to us when preaching most faithfully, as it was to the first Baptist—for they said, "he hath a devil"—our wives, and daughters, and sons ostracized from "polite society," and we and ours would be "accounted the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things, even in this day."

A young lady was converted at meetings held at the Baptist Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and had given her name to be baptized, when she was visited by the Episcopalian rector, and informed if she should so degrade herself as to join the Baptists, who were of the lower class, she would be no longer invited into polite society, but would sink to their level.

We see and feel enough to be convinced that we have entered the Laodicean age of this dispensation, in which the Master's knock will soon be heard at the door. The love, and zeal, and works of the first age have been "left;" the faithfulness to the *order* of the house of God, and in trying and condemning *false teachers*,and the hatred of the *laxity*,and the profane *double-dealing* of the Nicolaitanes—who, professing to be followers of Christ, fellowshipped false religions as well—which characterized the churches of other ages has well-nigh died out, and instead, a strange *indifferentism* to gospel *doctrine* and denominational principles—to church constitution, to church order, to church discipline, and to pastoral support, has seized the great mass of the membership—a state denomination "lukewarm"

by the Savior, which is, of all states, the most abhorrent to him.

But, added to this, an overweening desire to be considered "respectable," and to command the admiration of the world, has taken possession of the churches. We boast of our numerical strength, *our power* and our influence, and the culture of our ministry. Could an uninspired pen so graphically have described our condition as a denomination as Christ foretold it?

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God; "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3:14-22).

Whatever other brethren may do, will *you* not, my brother, resolve, here and *now*,to join the noble few whom God is raising up to resist this flood-tide of looseness, lukewarmness, and indifferentism, which is rendering powerless the protest of the churches of Christ against sin and error?

The angel, in Revelation 18, is the symbol of a class of ministers who are to come to the front, at the close of this age, to tell Christians and the world what Babylon is, and call upon God's people to come out of her. Hear the voice of God, cast the fear of men behind you, and become a *martyr—a* witness for Jesus.

"Perish 'policy' and cunning,
Perish all that fear the light;
Whether losing, whether winning,
Trust in God, and do the right.
Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
Some will flatter, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above thee—
Trust in God, and do the right."

ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

What does faithfulness require when truth, fellowship, and religious respectability appear to conflict?

In this concluding chapter from Old Landmarkism: What Is It?, J. R. Graves addresses his Baptist brethren with an urgent appeal to examine the historic principles, church polity, and convictions for which earlier Baptists suffered.

Graves warns against doctrinal indifference, compromise, and the desire for public approval. He calls ministers and churches to measure fellowship and practice by Scripture, to resist religious error, and to recover the courage of those who maintained their convictions despite reproach and persecution.

The article closes by directing the reader to Christ’s message to Laodicea and by urging renewed zeal, repentance, separation from error, and steadfast witness for the truth.

This preserved edition presents the original chapter without alteration.

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